



# I faked having an assistant and it transformed my career

One writer's dirty secret is your next boss move.

By JULIE VADNAL

## Meet my assistant, "Alex."

She's a recent grad who just moved to New York City who I hired to help me with email. (I get a lot of email.)

No wait. Alex is actually a guy from Omaha, trying out for Broadway shows, and needs cash on the side.

Whoever Alex is depends on how I feel. It works, of course, because I made them up.

The whole concept of having a fake assistant began after lunch with a friend a few months ago, when

we both agreed that hiring actual employees would make us look baller and help us snag bigger, better gigs. And I'd seen on Insta that a former editor-turned-freelancer had hired someone to open boxes of swag and coordinate her schedule. I thought, *I've got mail and meetings—so why not have an extra set of hands?*

Unfortunately, your girl def can't actually afford to hire someone to help her out. So in order to cultivate an image that I was running a high-class

operation over here, I went home, created an email address, came up with the gender-neutral Alex, and sent potential clients their way.

"There's glamour around a person who has assistants," says career expert Lauren Berger, author of *Get It*

*Together*. "We're taught that if you're successful, you deserve to have someone dedicated to doing your grunt work."

Even though Alex isn't real, I noticed right away the low-key benefits of having a number two.

Instead of crowding my personal email with work messages, industry contacts started to write to Alex, which didn't interrupt my workflow. I also found that Alex was a smart way to have awkward money talks. When negotiating fees with new clients, I felt freer to ask for more through that third-party barrier. And Berger says most people would rather discuss cash with agents or assistants. I mean, do you think Kylie brokers her own #SponCon?

Now that I've blown my cover, though, it's probably time to retire Alex. For one, Berger says having a faux team can't last forever: If you're your own assistant, manager, and publicist, you're doing three people's work *and* your actual job. But I also learned that adding a layer between my professional and personal lives makes me more efficient and happier. Maybe one day, I'll even hire a real, flesh-and-blood employee—although if I did, would anyone even know?



## THE FAKE-ASSISTANT HALL OF FAME

I did not invent this scam, after all.

### HANNAH BRONFMAN

The wellness expert and DJ created "Virginia" to negotiate gigs.

### DONALD TRUMP

POTUS posed as his spokesperson "John Barron" back in the '80s.

### JENNIFER HOFFMAN

The former *Apprentice* contestant landed an audition after faking a publicist.