

**VAClassroom Presents...**

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# **VIRTUAL PATHWAYS**



*The Ultimate Guide to Discovering a Profitable and Rewarding Virtual  
Assistant Career*

### **I Am Living The Dream!**

For the last seven years, I have had the distinct privilege of realizing the dream of working full-time in a virtual business, free of office cubicles, 9 to 5 work days, unproductive mornings, long meetings, banter around the water cooler, and neatly pressed Cache pants!

I officially left the corporate world in 2003 and have never looked back. This virtual dream has afforded my wife and me the opportunity to invest lots of time into raising our three young daughters while working a more flexible, less traditional work schedule.

Now, I should qualify by saying that a virtual business requires great thought, time, and effort in order to become successful, but the bonus is that you have a business built on your terms and schedule, which can be very empowering!

I love the virtual work life, and could not imagine ever wanting to return to the 9 to 5 rat race! The great news is that I most likely will not have to return to the corporate world, given the rapidly exploding opportunities for working in a variety of virtual businesses. In fact, more and more companies understand the importance of enhancing employees' quality of life, allowing them to work partially—and often permanently—from a home office.

I can honestly say that there has never been a better time to start a virtual assistance business! We are experiencing a virtual assistance revolution, and many small to medium businesses are realizing the huge business building benefits of hiring a staff. They're slashing their fixed infrastructures and training costs by hiring skilled, Web-savvy virtual assistants who can hit the ground running with their pertinent business tasks. Rising gas prices and childcare costs are a further incentive to many businesses for going virtual.

A recent Harris Interactive Poll revealed that from a random sample of 1000 professionals and small business owners, 70 percent are very interested in outsourcing tasks to a virtual assistant!

The timing is ideal to set up a virtual assistance business, as we are still very much in the early days, with more and more companies realizing the power of hiring virtual assistants to take their business to new heights.

In this virtual environment, anyone with an entrepreneurial spirit and marketable skills can build a successful virtual business without investing major venture capital or expensive real estate. Every day, many profitable enterprises begin with little more than high-speed computer connections, low-scale initial investments, and top-notch skills. More and more often, people enjoy the freedom of working for themselves, on their terms, and in their work environment of choice (i.e., the corner couch at Starbucks, for example).

The virtual assistance industry is quickly becoming the career choice for many work-at-home moms. They are intrigued by the possibility of staying home and raise their children while engaging in a meaningful and lucrative career. The ability to work during their child's naptime allows moms across the world to contribute to family finances, too.

The main purpose of this eBook is to provide you with a clear roadmap, helping you successfully navigate your way to virtual business success. And several of you may be ready to begin a virtual career, but you're not sure where to begin.

This guide will serve as a starting point in helping you to build a thriving and profitable, virtual assistance business. So let's roll up our sleeves and begin our virtual journey.

## The Rapid Emergence Of Virtual Assistance Business; Are You Ready To Go SOHO?

SOHO stands for Small Office Home Office. Operating a home-based enterprise is quickly becoming the employment model of choice. With so many Web-based business applications, there is no need to make the traditional, and often dreaded, daily commute to work. Online advertising methods offer global exposure to anyone with a product or service to sell. Electronic data transfers and low to no-cost telecommunication tools like Skype make communication ultra convenient and efficient.

### What Is A Virtual Assistant?

Virtual assistance is one of the hottest and fastest-growing businesses today. Virtual Assistants (VAs) are working from remote locations, using communication and data delivery technologies like landlines, cell phones, a fax machine, e-mail, and the Internet to connect with clients and exchange work-related materials. Remote access can make any VA's business global, putting potential customers from opposite ends of the world just a few clicks or keystrokes away.

The definition of virtual assistant varies, depending on whom you talk to. Here are some definitions from a variety of recognized VA networks and associations:

*A virtual assistant (VA) is a highly trained, independent entrepreneur who provides a myriad of business support services virtually, via phone, fax and Internet-based technology to support and meet the growing needs of businesses worldwide. – VANetworking.com*

**Note:** *If you are serious about starting a virtual assistance business, then you will want to immediately join VANetworking.com, as it is the premier virtual assistant business building resource center on the Internet. The site has a fabulous forum, great weekly*

*seminars, and endless resources to help you get your virtual assistance business moving in the right direction.*

*A VA is a self-employed professional business services operator who provides almost any type of admin support service required on a remote basis from their home office using their equipment and software. – VATrainer.com*

*A virtual assistant (VA) is an independent entrepreneur who provides administrative, creative and technical services. Utilizing advanced technological modes of communication and data delivery, a professional VA assists clients in his/her area of expertise from their office on a contractual basis. – IVAA.org (the International Virtual Assistant Association)*

Regardless of the definition you choose, a virtual assistant offers a variety of rapidly expanding niche services in a broad range of categories, including administrative, creative, technical, real estate, travel, personal, internet marketing, blogging and project management.

There have been many discussions on VA forums—similar to the VA Networking forum—in regard to the importance of specializing in certain skills and services in order to become more distinct and competitive. I wholeheartedly agree; it's important not to wear too many hats so that you don't become ineffective in the services you offer.

One of the mandates of VAClassroom University is to provide relevant and in demand training opportunities to inspire virtual assistants like you. We help you carve out the right niche that can help you find the best work and income opportunities.

### **Virtual Assistants Are Partners, Not Employees**

Temporary secretaries and project consultants operate on a piecemeal basis, focusing only on the jobs at hand, and working at intervals for multiple clients. True virtual assistants provide their clients with much more than completed tasks or balanced

spreadsheets. In contrast, VAs consider the big picture aspect of their clients' businesses, becoming virtual partners who handle an overflow of important work that would otherwise prevent businesspeople from building and expanding their efforts. Many virtual assistants have played an instrumental role in helping to take their client's businesses to the next level of growth and success.

Virtual assistants help business owners make more money by freeing up their time, allowing them to get on with the business of business. It is not surprising that many VAs help small or start-up Internet business owners who would otherwise spend too much of their own time on administrative duties at the expense increasing sales and expansion. When VAs address time-consuming and stress-inducing tasks, business owners can focus on more profitable pursuits.

In some cases, these collaborative working relationships will extend to client contact management. VAs will interact directly with not only their client, but also with the customers, vendors, and associates of their clients' clients.

### **A Roadmap For The Virtual Assistant Professional**

At VAClassroom University, we receive a lot of inquiries from people who would love to become a VA but are not sure where to begin. Before you can chart your course in becoming an in demand virtual assistant, it is important first to layout the foundations for building a profitable virtual assistant business.

The first logical step to starting any new business endeavor is to seek out the right kind of advice and information. This eBook is an invaluable tool that can help you navigate every twist and turn on the exciting road to becoming your own boss. In these pages, you'll find answers to questions you had, and answers to questions that you didn't know you had.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Virtues Of Virtual Assistance - Why Become A VA?

So, let us begin with your true motivation for wanting to set up a virtual business. A key ingredient to establishing a successful business endeavor is to begin with the right kind of motivation. It is this motivating factor that will fuel your entrepreneurial spirits when the road gets a little bumpy.

Here are a few motivating factors I frequently hear:

- I am tired of the corporate rat race.
- I am commuting my life away.
- I do not want to have my kids in daycare all day.
- I am semi-retired and would like something meaningful to do.
- I desire a more flexible work schedule and life.
- I lost my job due to downsizing and want my own business for job security.
- I don't feel my talents and skills are used to the fullest in my current job.

There are plenty of compelling motivations and reasons why a growing number of professionals from traditional business sectors are increasingly entering the virtual workforce as VAs.

### V-I-R-T-U-A-L Spells Opportunity

Here are just some of the many ways that V-I-R-T-U-A-L translates into an excellent way to achieve self-employment through a virtual assistance business:

**Virtually** – The ability to work from anywhere (including that cozy corner at Starbucks). That has a strong appeal for most of us, as it offers the freedom to work where, when,

and how we want to work. Consider the prospect of working in your living room—early in the evening—in your comfy pajamas vs. working in a cramped cubicle—early in the morning—in a business suit. Another perk for working virtually is the money you save on work-related expenses, like gas fill-ups, auto maintenance, business clothes, dry cleaning, and restaurant food.

**Independence** – As a self-employed entrepreneur, your job satisfaction does not depend on the unpredictable whims of a supervisor, or the inflexible policies of a bureaucracy. As your own boss, you decide the type and amount of work you deliver and enjoy the security of knowing the person in charge always has your best interest at heart! You choose who you work with—your ideal client. And as traditional employees are losing their job to downsizing, you strengthen your business by monitoring market trends and adapting, as needed.

**Return on Investment (ROI)** – ROI typically applies to the return on a profit from an investment of funds, but in this context, we're not strictly talking about money. In a virtual assistance business, you're mostly investing in yourself – in your experience, education, and skills. By committing yourself fully to the venture, you enjoy a high return on your investment, gaining even more experience, education, and skills. You become even more valuable to prospective clients.

**Time Management** – As a self-employed VA, you design your work schedule to fit your life schedule. That puts an end to scrambling to find someone to pick up your kids at school or losing a day's productivity while you await the arrival of the plumber.

**Unlimited Opportunities** – Most traditional workers are victims of a corporate structure or bureaucratic hierarchy that pigeonholes employees into predetermined positions and limits their growth potential. As the CEO of your own virtual assistance business, you are free to take advantage of every opportunity to learn, grow, and achieve even more success.



**Accessibility** – The Internet offers 24-hour access to a wealth of advertising and marketing opportunities on a global scale. You can advertise services to your target audience in a number of ways and times, keeping your business working, even when you are asleep. Potential clients can connect with you at their convenience, through email and other Web-based communication forms.

**Low Start Up Costs** – Unlike other ventures, a virtual assistance business does not require a large initial expenditure. You can perform the work from almost anywhere and deliver it electronically so there is no need to rent an office, maintain inventory, or hire a staff.

With basic equipment - like a computer connection, telephone line, and a fax machine - you can have your home-based office up and running in no time at all, with little cost.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Virtual Success And What Makes A Good VA?

Being a successful virtual assistant requires more than just basic office skills and a desire to work in your bathrobe. To give you a better idea of what is needed to build a successful virtual assistance business, the next chapter describes some of the most important qualities that set the stage for a successful VA career.

#### Virtual Inventory: Questions To Ask Yourself

The following questions relate to attributes that can influence the success of a virtual assistance business. Each quality is important to have, but the first three are essential if you want to be your own boss and make a profit in your business.

Not answering, “yes” to these questions does not mean that you can't pursue self-employment; however, before you strike out on your own, you may need to develop qualities for optimal success.

#### Are You Realistic About Your Life?

One of the things that sets successful people apart from the rest is their ability to see things as they are, and make decisions based on accurate interpretations. Consistently unrealistic people can fall into one of the two categories, either seeing nothing but the positives or nothing but the negatives.

When running your own business, avoid the tendency to go overboard in either direction. It's more than just a matter of seeing a glass half-full or half-empty because neither of those viewpoints is inherently wrong.

In fact, both optimism and reality checks are necessary for your business venture to succeed. Without optimism, your business would come to a standstill because you

would never challenge yourself to do more, learn more, and achieve more. And without regular reality checks, your business would come to a standstill because you would take dangerous risks and make promises that you could not possibly keep.

So what is the perfect outlook for having a successful VA business? It is having a healthy balance between optimism and reality checks. When you do this, you can seize every opportunity to learn, grow, and achieve more without recklessly jeopardizing your bottom-line. It is the gift of seeing things as they are, wanting to make them better, and then reaching that goal by challenging yourself in reasonable ways.

I can promise one thing in your virtual assistant journey—you WILL experience adversity, challenges, and setbacks. It is how you choose to respond to those difficulties that will ultimately shape the future success of your business. I have experienced my share of gut-wrenching setbacks on my entrepreneurial journey, but as I look back, many of these defined my ability to stay the course in the midst of a challenge!

### **Are You Realistic About Who You Are?**

*We cannot change the cards we are dealt, just how we play the hand. – Randy Pausch, The Last Lecture.*

Okay, so that is not a fair question because people with unrealistic ideas about themselves would hardly give a realistic response! For clues about the accuracy of your self-appraisal, consider your personal history and the input of others.

Do your endeavors generally turn out as you expect or are you continually surprised by the outcome of your efforts? Surprises can be delightful but if you are frequently astonished by the results of your actions, you are probably misreading your situation.

Like the half-empty vs. half-full situation, there are two extremes in this spectrum. If your outcomes are usually disappointing, you may be making unrealistic demands upon

yourself and then feeling let down when you cannot live up to your impossible standards.

On the flipside of this attitudinal coin, you may experience dissatisfaction because you have a tendency to underestimate your abilities. You might take the easy way out, which keeps you firmly stuck where you are, depriving you of the joy and sense of accomplishment.

If you are habitually misjudging yourself, there is a good chance that you have heard so from the people in your life, many times. Is there a pattern of hearing from others that you do not give yourself enough credit, or that you do not allow yourself to experience enough challenge in your life?

Both approaches are self-defeating. They almost guarantee that you will experience a sense of failure in everything you do. To be a successful virtual business owner, you must know your true value and be able to convince others of it in concrete ways.

Realism mixed with an equal dose of optimism is a good recipe for business success. It helps you set your sights on what is beyond your grasp, but within your reach.

### **Are You Self-Motivated And Self-Directed?**

Most of us hate having someone breathe down our necks, but knowing that your nearby boss is waiting for you to finish your work is a stimulus that some of us need to get moving. When you are running your own business, you will have no one but yourself to motivate you to do what needs to be done in a timely manner. If you constantly leave things to the last minute when no one else is watching, it's time to reexamine your work ethic and work harder to increase your self-discipline.

Here is a good mental exercise to test your self-motivation, but it is only useful if you are completely honest in your response. Remember the previous section about being realistic? Honesty is a big part of that.

### A Motivational Exercise

Imagine the following scenario (or recall how you behaved in this situation if you have never experienced it):

You have a fairly demanding job that requires you to work with a boss who checks up on you throughout the day and gives you regular input. Say that your boss takes an exotic two-week honeymoon/vacation, and has no access to cell phones or the Internet during that time and you are on your own.

#### **While Your Boss Is Away, Do You Say To Yourself...**

*Wow! Now I can get some work done without constant interruptions, and then spend your solitary time doing the work your boss expects you to do while catching up on as many overdue projects as time allows?*

Or do you say to yourself, *Wow! Now I can relax without all those constant demands, and then spend solitary time doing as little as possible, working like crazy the last days before their return in order to have everything done on time?*

If your response is the second one, congratulate yourself on being an honest person (and then consider one of the major distinctions between conventional jobs and self-employment).

Traditional jobs bring in a steady wage every pay period, regardless of the time you spend emailing your friends or talking on the phone with your mother. But when you run your own business, you only earn money when you are working. Coffee breaks, sick days, and lunch hours will not generate income for you. It's something you need to appreciate before you become self-employed. If you adopt a work ethic that relies on internal—rather than external—motivation, your efforts will be rewarded.

### **Are You An Incurable Learner?**

In order to build a thriving virtual business, it is necessary to be a student of the industry and be someone who soaks up new skills and knowledge. It's necessary to keep your business as current and competitive as possible. The Internet landscape is evolving at a rapid pace, and it is easy to fall behind on current skills that businesses need you to have.

Today, more than ever, there are a growing number of web-based applications, systems and software that can benefit an experienced VA. Entrepreneurs and small businesses usually do not have the time needed to learn new skills and tools, but they know they are necessary for building their businesses. *The more you learn, the more you earn*, is a popular quote that resounds loudly for today's VA profession. Your willingness to grow your professional portfolio will increase your opportunity to earn money. While you may need to revise your service offerings from time to time, that will pay off in the long run for you, giving you more clients and increased income.

For this reason, VAClassroom University exists; to create current training programs helping you to keep as current in your skills as possible.

### **Are You Willing To Network And Market Yourself Aggressively?**

There is no shortage of innovative ways to network with prospective clients and market your business effectively. The key principle is you need to put yourself out there and intentionally market to your target audience.

### **Do You Have Solid Skills, Experience, Or Training?**

One of the major areas of growth for virtual assistants is working with small and medium-sized Internet businesses. Many of these businesses are seeking specific skills to address their evolving business demands. I should mention that you do NOT

need to take an expensive \$3,500.00 VA college program to qualify for working as a virtual assistant. No, it's quite the contrary.

While you might not realize it, your experience in the corporate world can have real value and provide a foundation for starting your own VA business. Take a moment and make a list of all your skills and job responsibilities you had in the corporate world. Now look at each one and ask yourself, how can I use this experience to help a small business owner or entrepreneur?

To be an effective virtual assistant, it is important that you possess the following skills and qualities:

- Be Internet Savvy - comfortable with research and surfing the Internet
- Be Organized and Productive - key requisites in becoming a highly sought after virtual assistant.
- Be Proficient in MSOffice - Word, Excel, Outlook, and PowerPoint and/or Mac Applications; Pages, Numbers, and Apple Mail.

These qualifications are the starting point. From there, everything else can be learned on the job, or through skill-specific training programs, like what we offer at [VAClassroom University](#).

A few years ago, I hired a virtual assistant who worked previously for many years as an office administrator in a corporate setting. She came with a bag of skills sets; master organizer, proficient in all MSOffice applications, and she was the unofficial Spreadsheet Queen! Over the course of a year or two, we trained her in a variety of support tasks for our Internet company. She eventually played an instrumental role in supporting our Internet marketing efforts. Today, she is a successful virtual assistant

with her own thriving business, and she has no intention of returning to the corporate world!

So, the important thing is to start with the foundational skills and build on them by taking courses, listening to podcasts and webinars, reading books, and accessing virtual assistant forums. You need to simply learn on the job! It is imperative that you adopt a student state of mind where you are always seeking to learn new skills. In our resource guide at the end of this book, we provide some of the best avenues to developing your skills and knowledge as a virtual assistant.

### **Would You Consider Yourself Web–Savvy?**

I should qualify by saying that being web–savvy does not mean that you must possess HTML and programming skills, but rather, be an avid Internet user and keep up on the latest trends and breakthroughs. For example, it is ideal to utilize Twitter and Facebook for connecting with prospective clients. It is not imperative that you know those programs now—as we will teach them you in a future course—but you should have a very good working knowledge of the Internet. You should also be very comfortable surfing and researching the Internet.

### **Do You Have Good Communication Skills?**

As the sole proprietor (and an employee) of your virtual assistant business, you will need to deal with clients on a regular basis, whether indirectly via email or directly via telephone. The ability to effectively communicate through verbal and written communication is a great transferable skill, and it's required to be a successful virtual assistant.

Dealing with people of all types and temperaments is not something that everyone can naturally do well. Although you can learn from mistakes, it is important to understand



beforehand that every word you express to your clients—remotely or otherwise—tells them a little more about you. It impacts your business and your business success.

As a virtual assistant, it is important to be an effective rapport builder. You should strive to connect with people be a relationship builder. It's a vital skill to have, and will help you establish healthy, long-term partnerships with your clients. Of course, there are always exceptions. In the past, I once worked with virtual staff who were not super relational, but they performed high-quality work, they met my deadlines, and they always exceeded my expectations. So while relationship building can be a key part of the process, it is also important for delivering quality service in a timely and professional manner.

### **Can You Manage A Small Business?**

An important part of owning a small business is its management, including day-to-day tasks, involving recordkeeping, supplies, invoices, taxes, and so on. If your bookkeeping or managerial skills are lacking, consider a course in basic small business management. And in our resource guide at the end of this eBook, you will find a helpful checklist of all the tasks and tools needed to operate your virtual business.

### **Are You Organized and Detail-Oriented?**

One challenge to every virtual assistance business—and every other enterprise—is making each client feel like they're your one and only client, regardless of how many others you may have. So keeping track of a variety of different (and sometimes competing) needs, desires, and projects requires organizational skills and the ability to pay attention to detail.

### Are Your Skills In Demand?

Luckily, the demand for virtual assistants is strong, and growing stronger every day. The Internet has helped entrepreneurs become owners of small enterprises that operate from home offices while transacting business virtually. These small business owners usually need someone to perform administrative work, but they have limited space for accommodating employees.

The solution is virtual assistance. When small business owners hire experienced VAs, they pay only for the services they need. There is no need to pay for any associated costs, like office equipment, office space, employee insurance, vacation pay, job training, and so on. They can avoid these additional costs because they do not hire salaried employees but instead, they contract with virtual partners. And with today's rising gas prices and the cost of daycare, many businesses are motivated to transition to a home office.

In the next chapter, you'll find a great review of some of the services most commonly performed by VAs, and the industries they commonly service. (Please use this only as a guide, as a complete and comprehensive list of all the tasks virtual assistants perform for businesses would number in the multiple hundreds. It would apply to almost every industry under the sun and over the Internet.)

At VAClassroom University, we have done the necessary legwork to determine the most in demand skills and training businesses need from a virtual assistant!

Also, a quick online search for keywords that identify your skills and a review through the classifieds online can give you insight into the demand for your skills. I recommend visiting online marketplaces, like [elance.com](http://elance.com) or [Guru.com](http://Guru.com), and doing a search for terms like, *virtual assistant work*. You'll gain more insight into what kind of skills businesses are looking for in today's market. You may find valuable clues into skills that are needed

in segments of a particular industry. For example, you could learn new skills and specialize in offering particular services, meeting the needs of businesses experiencing recent industry shifts.

### **Your Plan To Becoming A Business Owner**

When thinking about becoming a virtual assistant and leaving your corporate job, also consider the transition period. Be prepared for the incidentals that can change how you handle your family affairs. For example, do you have a backup plan for health insurance coverage? Remember; if you are currently the policyholder, you need to research changing insurance plans with a spouse or private insurance. Do you have a nest egg you can rely on while searching for your first few, steady clients? The first months of self-employment can be challenging when you do not know what your income will be. But with these transition scenarios in place, you can reduce some of the stress associated with starting your own business. You can focus on marketing yourself and doing a great job for your clients.

### **Become Part Of A Rapidly Growing Business Opportunity**

Virtual assistance is a relatively new business. It's spawned many related enterprises, like virtual assistance certification programs and virtual assistance networks. And as with other professions in initial stages, there are no rigid rules restricting its operation.

Right now is the perfect time for anyone with initiative and creativity to gain an important foothold in this emerging field. If you discover a market need for specific services, and you possess or can acquire the ability to offer services virtually, you now have the makings of a profitable small business venture, working as a VA.

## Chapter Three

### Exploring 15 Virtual Assistant Career Pathways

One of the most exciting aspects of owning a virtual assistance business is the opportunity to customize it to match your unique interests, passions, and abilities. By deciding exactly which services you will offer, you ensure that you will spend your working life pursuing activities that you genuinely enjoy. How many 9-to-5ers can say that about their jobs? I am sure there are very few.

The key is to target in-demand niches that you would enjoy working with. For example, let's say that virtual accounting and bookkeeping were the hottest areas of growth for virtual assistants. Well, I do NOT like working with numbers at all, so this niche would not be suitable for my interests. On the other hand, you might love being a bean counter and would find this work fulfilling. Well, you might have found your niche!

It is important to determine if you want to be a VA specialist or VA generalist when you start a virtual assistant business. A VA specialist focuses their services and skill development in a couple key areas, like real estate support services and virtual travel agent. Conversely, a VA generalist will develop a broad base of skills and offerings, ranging from general administrative support to Internet marketing and blogging.

While some can excel in a variety of diverse tasks, I recommend when starting a virtual assistant business to consider limiting your business offerings to only two or three select services.

In a world of ever-increasing specialization, finding your VA niche can enhance your value to potential clients. Consumers put their trust in others who invest time in developing expertise exclusively in specific areas. I liken this to selecting a restaurant. While there are restaurants that try to be all things to all people, many other restaurants

have found great success by focusing on say, Greek, Korean, or Indian Food. They have become known for the specialty food they serve.

I know a virtual assistant who recently started his business in the past year and today, is completely booked up! This VA carved out an in-demand specialization, setting up e-commerce shopping carts for businesses selling their products online. Today, he is so well known in his specialty that shopping cart providers like 1shoppingcart.com now recommend his services to their new users. It's a perfect example of identifying and tapping into the right niche, at the right time.

Another virtual assistant who also does some work for VAClassroom University provides blog design and writing services, in addition to other services. She understood that business blogging is on the rise, and now has focused her marketing strategies on promoting her blogging services. It's paying her real dividends, as she just added three new blog clients in the past month.

It is important to identify specializations that are in demand and would interest you. Below is a list of 15 common, virtually delivered services, along with specific industries that have a need for those services and, therefore, represent good marketing targets.

There is considerable overlap with many jobs in numerous fields. This list represents only a fraction of the possible services you can offer, so use it as a prompt to get thinking about which virtual career pathway you might pursue.

### **Executive Administrative Virtual Services**

Most people associate virtual assistance with this type of work, as it seems like a natural virtual extension of the onsite secretaries and administrative professionals that most businesses rely on for support. The term, *administrative*, covers a variety of tasks—ranging from clerical to creative, to legal, to personal—so you need to pinpoint which ones you will perform:

Accounting \*Bill Payment \*Business Meeting and Conference Organization \*Client Relationship Management \*Correspondence \*Database and Website Maintenance \*Data Entry \*Forms Creation \*Information Organization \*Presentation Preparation \*Scheduling \*Telephone Answering \*Transcription \*Translation \*Travel Arrangements \*Word Processing \*Statistical Reports

Because all businesses need administration services to some extent, there is a wide range of businesses you can work with. And if you have specialized skills, you can focus your marketing efforts on companies that need those skills. For instance, if you are fluent in a foreign language you can target language instruction companies or international companies that deal with the country of the language you know. You can also offer translation services, educational institutions, for example.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: strong Internet research skills; MS Office and/or Mac OS application proficiency; highly organized and efficient; basic bookkeeping skills; and strong verbal and written communication skills.

### **Medical/Legal Transcription and Virtual Assistance Services**

This is a good niche because it requires specialized training and experience in medical or legal terminology. Medical terminology services could be marketed to medical practices; medical institutions; hospitals; medical and pharmaceutical industries; medical and pharmaceutical manufacturers and suppliers; medical publishers; medical research facilities; medical advertising firms; and medical educational organizations. Legal terminology services could be marketed to law firms, court systems and governmental agencies, to name a few.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: completed medical or legal terminology course; strong computer and Internet skills; skilled in all MS Office and/or Mac OS applications; highly organized and efficient; and interpersonal communication skills.

## Website Virtual Assistance

A website assistant would maintain the entire site on behalf of their clients. Duties would include updating content, graphics, videos, and ensuring all links on the website are active. This could also involve posting new content and creating and maintaining newsletters. Many clients use a content management system, making it easy to update, add, and change content. In addition, clients might want their virtual assistant to track website stats (the number of visitors) in order to evaluate the levels of traffic (users) visiting their website. A website assistant could respond to customer inquiries via the website and liaise between a programmer and a webmaster, and troubleshooting technical issues that arise from time to time on a website.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: strong technical aptitude; basic html knowledge (beginner level); excellent attention to detail; data entry; and comfortable learning new software and web-based applications.

## Virtual Accounting/Bookkeeping Assistance

A bookkeeping virtual assistant maintains all aspects of important financial records for their client's business. This can include accounts payables, accounts receivables, payroll, payroll taxes, and other tax related issues as required by state or provincial regulations. These VAs also prepare financial statements, balance sheets, and ongoing financial reporting, as required. In addition, this VA may invoice and process payments for their client's contractors and others who their client does business with.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: working knowledge of QuickBooks (most popular) or simply accounting; Excel spreadsheet guru; basic accounting or bookkeeping skills; and excellent computer and Internet skills.

**Note:** Many small businesses are beginning to use web-based billing programs, like freshbooks.com. It would be beneficial to review those listed in the resource guide and familiarize yourself with them if this is a VA Pathway that grabs your interest.

### **Publicity Virtual Assistance**

A publicity assistant helps with all aspects of development and implementation in public relation campaigns in products and services. Publicity VAs write and distribute press releases, create electronic press kits, send out traditional press kits, and they schedule press meetings. They also gather post-press coverage information from news stories, articles, and video clips to feature on their clients' websites and blogs. They assist with the development of seasonal publicity campaigns. A Publicity VA ultimately assists with everything needed to maintain ongoing media relations.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: strong writing and editing skills; a people person; excellent Internet researching skills; experience setting up and coordinating public relations events.

### **Author's Virtual Assistance**

A virtual author's assistant provides ongoing administrative support and other tasks related to marketing, sales, and tracking a new book release. It includes pre-publishing assistance through proofreading; editing; coordinating graphic design and printing; website preparation; press release submission; marketing plan coordination; and assistance.

Also, once the book is released other tasks could include event scheduling, setting up press interviews, book distribution, sales coordination, and calendar management.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: Excellent writing and proofreading skills.



## Real Estate Virtual Assistance

A virtual assistant who supports real estate agents, land developers and brokers can provide a wide array of specialized services to these very active and dynamic professionals. Some specific tasks performed by a real estate virtual assistant include all aspects of listing a property for sale—both online and offline—sales transaction coordination, market research, and competitive analysis reporting.

In addition, Real Estate agents often delegate their online marketing activities. This includes everything from website and blog design to newsletter setup and management, to client support.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: knowledge of real estate terminology; strong computer and Internet skills; excellent market research abilities; a people person; and online marketing experience.

**Note:** *It would be ideal to access a real estate course manual to help you become more familiarized with real estate terminology and principles.*

## Travel Coordination Virtual Assistance

A travel coordinating virtual assistant arranges the fine details of personal and business travel. They coordinate air travel, hotel accommodations, vehicle rental, and intercity transportation. A travel coordinating virtual assistant works with brokers to secure the best deals for their clients.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: travel agent training (including the courses in our resource guide); an experienced traveller; a people person; strong attention to detail; and solid computer and Internet skills.

## Internet Marketing Virtual Assistance

The Internet Marketing industry offers some of the best and most in demand working opportunities for virtual assistants today. An Internet marketing VA is typically involved in marketing the client's business online. This involves setting up and maintaining systems and processes; online project management; maintaining blogs, newsletters; shopping carts; affiliate marketing programs; video, article, press release distribution; podcasting; teleseminar and webinar assistance; additional online communication coordination; and keyword research for search engine marketing.

While many of these tasks might appear technical, they are very straightforward.

If you have an interest in marketing and new technology, this hot virtual career is for you!

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: in addition to skillsets listed above, a strong aptitude for new Internet technology and some marketing experience will be helpful.

## Social Media Virtual Assistance

The explosion and ever-increasing popularity of Social Media is creating one of the hottest and in demand skills today! Online business owners and brick and mortar businesses are finding it necessary to engage in Social Media and to find support managing it. Every day, the Social Media landscape changes, whether it's a new tool to manage your Twitter accounts, a new social network or policy changes. It's essential for businesses to stay informed. A Social Media virtual assistant can provide assistance in many areas, like researching new social networks and providing a monthly analytics report on Social Media activities. They can set up profiles, update content, create and maintain Facebook Fan Pages, research and analyze competitors' Social Media endeavors, and so much more.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: VAClassroom University includes a Social Media Training track to help equip you to offer in-demand social media services. Even if you decide not to be a Social Media VA, this is the perfect way to learn how to market your services and find your ideal clients by embracing the trend and participating.

### **Blogging Virtual Assistance**

While this area would most likely fall under the umbrella of the Internet marketing virtual assistant, it does deserve a category of its own, given the growth of opportunities for virtual assistants in the wonderful world of blogging.

An assistant who specializes in blogging services can assist their client in every aspect of blog management, including blog setup, maintenance, writing, and publicity. This VA assists the client in developing a blog writing plan, and they edit, write, and post articles for their client. They also submit new content to popular Social Media and social news sites. They can enhance blog articles with graphics, audio, and video, as needed. In addition, this VA creates a targeted blog publicity plan that includes commenting on other relevant blogs and moderating website blog comments.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: strong writing, editing, and Internet research skills.

### **Online Event Coordination Services Virtual Assistant**

An online events coordinating virtual assistant can manage all pertinent details of online events, such as teleseminars, webinars, workshops, coaching sessions, virtual book tours, and more. Some specific tasks might include arranging speakers, keeping participants notified of important information, publicizing the events through press releases, and Social Media. They can also help with email marketing strategies, preparing speakers technically, and assisting speakers with any requests. During the

event, this virtual assistant would be available to troubleshoot possible issues and designate technical staff to address any problems that arise. Online events are increasing at such a rapid rate that there is a fast growing demand for virtual assistants who coordinate these kinds of virtual events. Also, a virtual event coordinator will certainly coordinate offline events, as well, like wedding, conferences and speaking engagements, etc.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: event coordination experience; natural born event planner; attention to detail; excellent at multitasking; computer and Internet research skills; and being a people person.

### **Copywriting/Editing Virtual Assistance**

Copywriting and editing virtual assistants prepare a wide variety of documents for print and online publication. Copywriting and editing projects can include sales copy, website copy, promotional copy, eBooks, and special reports. Projects can also include helping with manuscripts, articles, press releases, blog articles, newsletters, and more. There is a never-ending demand for virtual assistants with a flair for writing, editing, and proofreading documents.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: strong writing and editing skills, English major (beneficial), and strong computer and research abilities.

### **Business Coaches/Speakers Virtual Assistance**

Business Coaches who offer offline and online training courses frequently hire virtual assistants to manage a diverse range of tasks. That can include preparing press kits and speaker presentations, editing and managing newsletters and eBooks. In addition, they might provide teleconference and webinar assistance, press release submission support, shopping cart support, and transcription services.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: a people person; strong writing, editing, and computer skills; and natural born event coordinator.

### **Project Management Virtual Assistance**

While this specialty falls under Internet marketing virtual assistance, the growing popularity of the virtual assistance profession has created a new category. Many successful VAs have expanded their businesses by subcontracting other VAs and creating multi-VA teams. By subcontracting other VAs, the lead virtual assistant can now take on more clients and earn more money. In turn, the task management function extends to managing workloads within the team. Assigning tasks, ensuring deadlines are met, and maintaining contact with the client is a specialty all on its own.

Recommended Skills for this Virtual Pathway: project management experience; knowledge of online project management tools; a people person; strong organizational skills; and general Internet marketing skills.

So, there you have it, 15 Hot Virtual Assistant Career Pathways to consider!

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Preparing For Your Virtual Grand Opening

You have sold your business suits on eBay, said goodbye to your dry cleaner, and traded in your fancy footwear for sensible shoes. Now it is time to get started on establishing your new virtual assistance business. Treat this chapter as a checklist for the various stages of business preparation.

### Your Virtual Best: Deciding On Your Services

In Chapter Three, we discussed some of the services offered by virtual assistants today, but those jobs represent only the tip of the iceberg. The virtual assistance industry is new and wide open, giving you the chance to join the virtual workforce in whatever capacity you choose.

But first, there are four criteria that must be met to ensure a profitable venture.

Ask yourself:

- ✓ Can I provide this service with efficiency and skill, meeting client expectations?
- ✓ Is this service in demand and will I generate an income from this service?
- ✓ Is this a service I can provide remotely?
- ✓ Will I enjoy offering this service to businesses?

It is important to strike a balance between work interests and skills, otherwise, you could end up performing a service that you are good at but don't enjoy! So now is the perfect time to assess your skills and interests, and to ask if there is a demand for those services.

If you have a top-notch skill that can provide clients with a remotely delivered service they need, then you have the beginnings of a successful virtual assistant business. The key is to tap into the right niche at the right time in order to quickly build a thriving VA business. I am now working with two virtual assistants who have a very active client base, and both have been in the business for less than a year. With the right training, most VAs can have great success in a short period of time.

### **Is Your Work Meaningful?**

*Meaningful work* is work that provides you with the most positive emotional effects—like pleasure, satisfaction, and interest—and it is an individual-specific attribute. You may believe that no one can enjoy a job that involves rigid mathematical principles and little creative input, but there are many who thrive on doing exactly that kind of work.

You can exploit these diverse likes and dislikes by performing virtual assistance work that is meaningful to you. You will be much happier, and your clients will reap the benefits of working with someone who genuinely enjoys providing them with a service. This is so important!

### **How is the Competition?**

In addition to satisfaction, specializing in certain services or for certain businesses qualifies you to pursue clients in your niche and makes you more desirable and marketable to those customers.

By offering specialized services, you will further set yourself apart from the competition and can demand a higher wage rate. For example, Michelle Schoen runs a business called VADemoGirl. She specializes in Internet marketing services and creating web-based demos for clients. As a result of this specialization and the demand for these services, she can charge more for her services.

Before settling on a selection of services to offer, it is important to conduct some online research using as many keywords as you can think of that will connect to the work that you want to perform. I recommend doing a specific Google search that includes the term, *virtual assistant*, and your specific skills. An example might be, *bookkeeping and virtual assistant*.

Ask yourself if there are many other virtual assistance businesses offering the same services that you want to perform? Which services are being offered by fewer VAs? If the competition is tough for your services, you may want to niche yourself further by specializing in just one aspect of those tasks, or offer your services for work that is underrepresented by VA businesses.

I would recommend visiting a variety of online virtual assistant directories and perusing different VA websites to get a sense of the types of services being offered.

### **Virtual Value: Establishing Your Rates**

Oddly enough, one of the biggest obstacles VA's experience is thinking like a salaried employee long after leaving a traditional job for a virtual one. As the owner of your own small business, you are no longer an employee who must settle for what someone else decides you are worth. Determine a fair price to charge and stick to it. When quoting prices to prospective clients, remember that you are not asking for a raise; instead, you are asking for fair compensation for your time and talent.

No matter what you charge, there will always be clients who think it is too high. When dealing with awkward discussions about money, keep in mind (and remind your clients) that by hiring a VA, business owners save a considerable amount of money on unemployment insurance, medical coverage, workers compensation, job training, sick pay, and other costly expenses typically associated with conventional employment.



As a result of these expenses, the salaries paid to employees represent only a small part of the overall cost of hiring someone in the traditional workplace. Since you are not receiving these costly benefits from your clients, you have a right to expect more than 9-to-5ers, especially if you specialize in your services.

You can add a Virtual Assistant Cost Calculator to your blog or website from [http://www.virtualassistantforums.com/get\\_calculator.php](http://www.virtualassistantforums.com/get_calculator.php). It will help visitors see the savings they'll realize when they contract a virtual assistant vs. hiring in-house support.

Now, if you set up a virtual data entry business, then you cannot expect the wage rate will be super high, given the general nature of this service. However, if you are offering a specialized service in setting up and coordinating online events (webinars, for example), then you can ask for a higher rate. Let's discuss some of the methods for establishing rates that clients are willing to pay, and you are happy to accept.

### **Local Or Global?**

As the cost of living is much higher in urban areas, people in New York City will pay their administrative workers more than someone would pay in a small town, say in Iowa. Whether this impacts a business with a global pool of clients or not depends on how and where you advertise your services. Although your business operates via the Internet using virtual communication devices, you can still provide services to clients who live in your local area, or even a larger urban area.

If you target clients with local marketing tactics, like newspaper ads, bulletin boards, and word-of-mouth, your rates should reflect the general range that people in that area pay for comparable services. If you focus your marketing strategy on web-based venues, keep your rates in line with what other virtual assistance businesses are charging for the same services, at least until you establish yourself and secure a pool of regular clients.

### **What Is The Competition Charging?**

In a recent survey of 47 people who promote themselves as virtual assistants, we did some professional snooping for you and collected some interesting statistics on rates.

The greatest percentage of survey respondents (46.8 percent) charge their clients from \$31.00 to \$40.00 an hour, with the next largest percentage (45.1 percent) charging \$61.00 to \$90.00 an hour for services. This gives you a ballpark figure for what virtual assistants are charging. Factors such as skill set, education, experience, location, and specialization influenced how much someone could charge.

You can do a little snooping around on your own by visiting the websites of other virtual assistance businesses to see what your competition is charging for your same services. In reviewing your fellow VA's websites, make sure to access all the available information on experience, qualifications, and training. These factors can also influence rates.

So, if you are new in the virtual assistance realm, I would say a fair starting wage would be anywhere between \$25.00 and \$40.00 an hour, depending on your transferable skills and expertise.

### **Don't Sell Yourself Short**

You may want to charge lower rates until you secure a client base and get your business up and running, but be sure not to shortchange yourself!

Do not forget to factor in the time you spend communicating with clients via e-mail, telephone, instant messaging, etc. I recommend using a web-based time tracking tool like MyHours.com <http://www.myhours.com> to ensure you are properly tracking time with clients and their projects. It is important to establish a minimum charge policy with your clients right from the beginning to avoid any issues or misunderstandings later on.

Some virtual assistants I know have set a 5 or 10-minute minimum, so if a client contacts them via messenger or email, then they would charge at least the minimum. However, there may be times when you answer a question or two without charging—use your discretion. But it is important to be compensated for your work fairly, regardless of the amount of time you spend on a project.

If you plan on accepting credit cards, you must also incorporate into your rates the associated costs of using this form of payment. Credit card companies impose an interchange fee on merchants, and your bank may also charge you several fees for each transaction. You should shop around until you find a bank that offers the best service with the fewest added costs, and take extra charges into consideration when determining your rates.

If you discover that you need to increase your rates, do it in a manner that will not alienate your clients. It is not a good business practice to change your rates too frequently, especially with established clients. It makes you seem unprofessional and arbitrary. Consider charging new clients the increased fees while keeping the old clients at the old fees for a specific length of time. It is customary for businesses to upgrade their fees every year, so be careful when attempting to raise your rates more often than once or twice a year. Also, never spring new rates on clients for work that is underway. It is important always to give them a 30-day notice via written communication.

### **Consider Volunteering Your Services**

As a new virtual assistant, one way to build your credibility and reputation is to volunteer a few hours of your time to perform a service for a prospective client. I am not suggesting you give away endless hours of time for free. Instead, give a couple of hours

to a new client so they can test the waters and see the quality services you can provide. It's an opportunity to show your stuff. Again, this might be an option when you are just getting started as a means to kick-start your client work.

While the client may not contract with you after the volunteer time has passed, at the very least, you can get their feedback and maybe a testimonial on your services. In starting your virtual assistant business, you want to exhaust all opportunities in getting your name out there, and volunteering might be an avenue to consider.

### **Time Tracking And Invoicing**

One of the necessary evils of small business ownership is the time you spend invoicing clients and keeping track of the billable hours you charge each one. Even if you have only a few clients, you should take advantage of one of the many software programs designed to streamline these tasks.

### **Financial Management Software: My Personal Favorites**

While I have provided a variety of solutions in the resource guide at the end of this book, here are my two personal favorites that will significantly streamline the financial management component for your VA business:

**Time Tracking** - MyHours.com is a free solution

**Billing and Invoicing** - FreshBooks.com has a free trial, up to 3 clients and it includes the time-tracking component, as well.

Of course, there are many other great solutions to consider as well, and their prices range from free to expensive, depending on their capabilities. When you are just starting out with a limited budget, you will probably want to use one of the freebies until your finances improve.

Below is a summary of some of the important features to look for when trying out various programs.

If you find you're wasting time, manually doing a function that the software should do for you, you may want to upgrade from a free no-frills program to a cheap, few-frills one.

**Free Trial Programs** - Most free programs have limitations, but many programs are available on a free trial basis. Take advantage of these offers, as they give you a great way to try out different applications and features to discover what you like and need.

**Invoicing** - At the very least, an invoicing program should allow you to generate and send out invoices to your clients. These automated invoices may look more professional than what you create yourself; however, unless you pay more for a program, you will probably not be able to send customized invoices.

**Automatic Billing and Late Notices** - Some programs automatically send out bills according to the schedule you choose and follow up with late notices for those clients who have not paid within a predetermined amount of time. This is a handy feature!

**Number of Clients and Projects** - Some free programs, like Freshbooks, are only free if you are working for one to two clients or a limited number of projects, making them an excellent option during the early days of your business start-up. As your client base grows, you'll need to upgrade or switch to another program. But with many programs, the upgrade can be minimal, so it remains a cost-effective solution.

**Time Tracking** - Unless you have a natural aptitude for remembering to watch the clock or set a timer, time tracking device will make your life much easier. Some programs, like Freshbooks, keep track of the time you spend on different tasks, and they use that data to generate invoices for your clients. When you can track how much time you're spending on specific tasks, it will give you a better idea of what is involved in certain projects. This can help you quote rates that are more realistic, and less likely to

shortchange your efforts. Again, MyHours.com is likely the best free solution for tracking your time.

Many clients require an itemized invoice showing how much time you spend on each task vs. an invoice with one lump-sum balance under a general heading for a billing period. But time tracking software will make this process much easier, as you can separate tasks by project names and generate itemized bills, as needed.

### **Minding Your Money: Accepting Payments**

Long gone are the days when you performed a service, held out your hand, and received some nice green bills for your trouble. Electronic fund transfers, credit card transactions, and popular payment solutions, like PayPal, make our busy lives easier, but they also make the busy lives of thieves and con artists just as easy.

Keep these ill-intentioned people in mind when you are conducting your business. Thanks to computerized financial systems, identity theft is now a highly profitable way of life for anyone who can gain access to sensitive personal and financial information. The same high-tech printers that produce first-class images for legitimate purposes also create counterfeit checks, money orders, and other documents that are very convincing. Protect yourself and your business from fraudulent activity by acquainting yourself with the following methods of payment, as well as their pros and cons.

**PayPal** - PayPal is currently one of the most widely used payment options by virtual assistants, thanks to simplicity and speed in receiving payment. This third-party merchant offers Personal, Premier, and Business accounts, but you cannot accept credit card payments through a free Personal account. For that, you must register for Premier or Business status, which involves fees. In the United States in U.S. Dollars, these charges are 2.9% + \$0.30 for every transaction (rates approximate). It is a very convenient method of payment, as PayPal does all the work and you only need to

perform a few keystrokes and clicks to access your funds. PayPal is a safe and secure payment option that I would highly recommend. The only downside is the fees attached to the payment.

**Intuit** - Intuit Payment Network is a payment and money transfer service, similar to PayPal. Your clients can make bank-to-bank money transfers and credit card payments. There are no setup fees, monthly fees, or cancellation fees. Receivers of bank-to-bank payments pay a flat fee of 50 cents per transaction (sending money is free), and accepting credit card payments is 3.25% of the transaction amount.

**Credit Cards** through a Merchant or Business Account - If you plan on accepting credit cards, you can open a merchant's account or business account at a bank to receive the transferred funds. Depending on the bank's policy and your account holder status, you may have to open the account with a minimum deposit or pay a fee. Before you do this, learn whether you will receive free checking and transaction privileges. Ask about any possible costs that the bank adds on, such as credit card transaction fees.

Even if you do not plan on accepting credit cards, a merchant or business account is a good idea because it keeps your business affairs separate from your personal ones. This is important when tax time rolls around, as it also makes record keeping and bill paying a lot easier.

A merchant or business account also lends your enterprise a professional quality. Although this attitude may be unreasonable, some clients perceive businesses without business accounts as flight-by-nights, with disreputable concerns. Having a business or merchant account tells people that you are a serious entrepreneur with roots in the community and every intention of remaining so.

**Other Third-Party Merchants** - A third-party merchant is a clearinghouse for transactions that offers security and anonymity. Although both you and your client share financial and personal information with the third-party merchant, neither of you has

access to the other one's data (other than an account name or address for transfer purposes). The third-party merchant is, therefore, an intermediary between the two ends of the transaction, serving to protect the privacy and safety of each party.

Another benefit of this form of payment process is that most third-party merchants let you use either a bank account or a credit/debit card to send and receive money. The client sends money to your third-party merchant who then transfers the money on your instruction to whatever account you have set up to receive funds.

However, this convenience comes at a price. Although the registration and set-up are usually free, the third-party merchant charges you for processing transactions—usually on a per transaction basis, as well as a percentage basis. There are different levels of membership, with the most costly ones offering the most advantages.

**Certified Check** - A certified check reflects the same security as a cashier's check, but it represents funds from your client's account rather than from the issuing bank. Your client's bank puts a freeze on the applicable amount and certifies (guarantees) that there is sufficient money to cover the check and that no one but the check's recipient can access those funds. The client must make a trip to the bank and may have to pay a small service fee.

Again, this is a secure form of payment, as long as the certified check is legitimate. Be sure to take the same precautions recommended for a cashier's check and verify that the bank exists and that the information on the check is accurate.

**Personal Check** - A personal check offers virtually no security because there is no guarantee that the person who wrote the check will honor your right to access the funds. Although the money may be in the account when the client signs the check, it can disappear in a moment. You can be left with nothing but a rubber check that bounces right back out of your account (with a loud and costly, *THUD*). Unless you can personally vouch for the check's owner, accepting a personal check is a risky



proposition. This is why most merchants will not render services or provide goods until a check has cleared, and the money is where it should be.

### **Create A Business Policy Sheet/Terms And Conditions**

Cover your basis. Word-of-mouth may be an effective way to acquire clients, but you'll need more than lip service for legal protection while conducting business.

Especially when it comes to working with someone you've never met, it is important to obtain a client's signature on a written agreement. Whether you call this document a contract, policy sheet or something else, it helps your clients to understand what they have agreed to when they hire you. It also tells them what you agree to do for them.

Although for you, the most important aspect of this agreement might be to have an understanding of what you will be paid, other considerations need to be addressed before you and your client become working partners. (And remember, you are not an employee. You are an equal, working partner.)

### **What To Include In Your Business Policy Or Agreement**

**Name, Business, Address, and Contact Information** - Include your and your client's full contact particulars—principles' names and titles; business names; business addresses; office phone numbers (if applicable); cell phone numbers; fax numbers; email addresses; and any other available information. If problems arise and you need to contact your client, you will be glad to have documented as much information as possible. When entering into contracts with strangers, it is always a good idea to verify the contact information via the Internet or through directories.

**Work Product** - List exactly what you will be doing for your client. It's always best to err on the side of caution by itemizing each task than to use an ambiguous blanket of terms, like *administrative work*. If you are working on a per-project basis, state what

that project involves. With long-term clients who know and trust you, you may often skip some formalities, but with new clients be explicit in what you will—and by omission, will not—do. If you are offering a wide range of services, you can list them all and then check and initial items to identify the ones you will perform. You can also use different forms for different service categories.

**Lead Time For Work** - Establish a policy for project lead times.

**Regular Work** - Document to clients that they must schedule regular work a certain amount of time in advance. For example, adding in a statement like, *Please schedule regular appointments at least 48 hours in advance so that I can better accommodate your needs*, etc.

**Same-Day or Rush Jobs** - The word, *regular*, implies you will make exceptions for emergency needs or extraordinary circumstances. But you can also qualify the policy by adding that you will accommodate emergency needs whenever possible. The only problem with such a qualifying sentence is that it may encourage clients with a tendency to procrastinate to designate many of their projects as emergency jobs.

**Same-Day or Rush Jobs (Fee)** - You can protect yourself by stating that rush jobs may incur an additional fee.

**Major Work** - Obviously, even when the client schedules work two days in advance, you cannot meet that deadline if the project is a big one and you have work from other clients booked in-between. Your appointment policy should take this into account by expanding the lead-time for major work. For example, adding in a statement like, *Please schedule all major work ten days in advance*.

**Rates** - Include unit of currency, rate, and unit of measurement—hourly, per project, retainer, etc. For example, you can specify U.S. Dollars at a rate of \$35.00 per hour, or English Pounds at a rate of Sterling 50 per project. If you have a minimum number of

units, include that as well, i.e., U.S. Dollars at a rate of \$35.00 per hour with a minimum of (3) hours.

**Payment Schedule** - Have a payment schedule where you state when you will invoice the client (once a week, once a month, bimonthly, at project's completion, etc.).

**Deposit or Retainer** - If you require a deposit, indicate the amount and state you will deduct it from the balance owed on the first invoice. Retain it if you are not paid for completed work, or you may hold it as security.

**Terms** - State the payment period; say one week after submission of an invoice or 30 days after submission of an invoice, etc.

**Actions** - State what actions you will take if the payment is late (grace periods, second notices, late fees, etc.).

**Methods** - State what payment methods you accept and any restrictions involved. For example, things like waiting until a check clears before submitting work or verifying credit card status before submitting work, etc.

**Disputes** - Indicate what actions you will take if the client disputes an amount you've invoiced or demands a refund of money already paid. You can mention that payment for all services is non-refundable.

**Extraordinary Circumstances** - Outline how you will compensate the client if you are unable to fulfill your part of the contract due to illness, accident, or other unforeseeable events.

**Resolution of Disputes** - You can protect yourself in the event that a client disputes the charges on an invoice, challenges the quality of your work, demands a refund of remitted payments, or questions your work product or your fees.

**Note:** Possible responses for seeking a resolution could be to send documents to support your charges; offer to rectify problems with your work; apply for resolution through a third-party intermediary; and/or pursue a legal means to secure payment. Such issues may never arise, but you cannot anticipate what someone else thinks or the actions they might take.

**Privacy Policy** - Electronic processing and automated banking systems make every transaction vulnerable to identity theft and fraud. Reassure your client that you will treat all personal and/or financial information with strict confidence, using it only for payment and work-related purposes and never sharing it with anyone else.

**Signature** - Even when you are emailing your business contract, agreement, or policy sheet, always ask clients to date, sign, and return the document to you via snail mail, fax, or email. (When using email, you can use digital signatures when emailing documents).

**Date** - Include the date that you entered your hand or digital signature, as well as a date field for your client to do the same.

### A Final Word About Contracts

It might be a good idea to invest a few dollars and have your lawyer review your contract or agreement before you implement it.

### CHAPTER FIVE

#### Virtual Impact: Your Business Website

First impressions count, and nowhere is this fact more apparent than in the world of virtual advertising. Although the Internet has given you a tremendous variety to choose from for targeting and marketing your services, it has given potential clients the same choice in selecting a virtual assistant.

If you want people to choose your services over those of countless other VAs, you need to make a positive and lasting virtual impact on everyone who visits your business in cyberspace. Nothing in your advertising and marketing campaign should appear by accident or default. Make every word and image work hard for you by thinking carefully about what idea you want to convey, then do everything possible to get that message across quickly and effectively, making sure it's memorable.

Next, I'll review some key steps for building your online presence.

#### The Name Game: Choosing A Business/Domain Name

Just as it sounds, your business name is what you'll use to identify your business. And your domain name is what customers will use to find your business online. The two may be similar or even identical; however, each requires a different registration processes.

You can only operate under a business name that has not been registered in the applicable governing area (usually the province or state in which you reside, but rules vary). If no one within that area owns that name, it is yours.

Because domain names have global applicability, there is one centralized, publicly accessible database containing all domain names registered through the Domain Name System (DNS). This Shared Registration System (SRS) database ensures once you

register a domain name, no one else can use it unless you fail to renew it or sell the rights to someone else.

### What Are The Three Elements Registering A Domain?

**Registrant** - You will want to register yourself as the owner.

**Contacts** - This refers to agents or staff working on behalf of your company—administrative contacts, billing contacts, and technical contacts, with most owners serving as the administrative and billing contact—as well as most registrars (whoever you purchased the domain from) or web hosts acting as technical contacts. When you are just starting out, naturally you will be the main contact across all these areas.

**Location** - This is the actual name people will use to find your business online (for example, [www.topnotchvas.com](http://www.topnotchvas.com)).

### What Goes Into A Domain Name?

A domain name can contain numbers, letters, and hyphens. Other than that, there can be no special characters. Names cannot contain spaces and cannot begin or end with a hyphen.

Total character length - including suffix - should be no more than 26 characters long for a few browsers and programs, or 67 characters, for most browsers and programs. To be safe, use a maximum of 26 characters.

Try to pick a top-level domain (TLD) or suffix. It can have a global code (.com, .net, .edu, .gov, .org, or .mil, etc.) or a country code (.uk for the United Kingdom or .ca for Canada, etc.). Of the most common, .com applies to personal and commercial sites and .net refers to Internet infrastructure sites, and .org signifies non-profit organizations. I recommend attempting first to secure a .com suffix, and then if the domain you desire is

not available, you might consider buying a .net domain, or even one from your country suffix, like .ca for Canada, etc.

### **Key Points To Remember When Choosing A Domain**

If you already have a business name but no domain name, it is a good idea to protect the business name by registering it as a domain name even if you do not intend on using it that way. Otherwise, someone else may register a domain name that is similar or identical to your business name and confuse, divert, or discourage potential clients when they search for you online. And you should register your name as soon as possible to avoid losing the rights to someone else with the same idea.

Here are a few cost-effective sites for searching and registering your domain name. Most of have domains for under \$10.00 a year:

- Go Daddy <http://www.godaddy.com>
- 1and1 <http://www.1and1.com>
- NetFirms <http://www.netfirms.com>
- Register.com <http://www.register.com>

Keep the name as short as possible while conveying what you need to convey. Consider how your potential clients will search for your services and devise a short, catchy name that gives necessary service identification.

Pick a name that anyone can understand by ear without having to read or write it. Avoid confusing puns, intentional misspellings, or alphanumeric combinations. Say the word aloud to several people. If they need you to write it or spell it before they can understand it or reproduce it on paper, choose another name.

If there are specific keywords associated with your services, incorporating them into your name can bring you more clients (i.e., JCRVirtualAssistants.com).

You can register as many available names as you want. You can "park" these names—registering them without linking them to an active site—indefinitely, as long as you keep up your yearly renewal fees.

If someone else has claimed your dream name, sometimes you can negotiate with the owner to buy the rights. Domain providers like Godaddy.com and Register.com offer brokering services to help you attempt to buy your domain of choice.

Beware of domain names that are similar to ones in use, as users can easily mistype names and go to your competition's site instead of yours. One way to prevent these detours is to register all common misspellings of your domain name. You might also register other suffixes, for example, YourWebsite.com and YourWebsite.net.

Use caution when buying a used but recently lapsed/resold name. Without knowing the history of the previous owner's business, you may be buying a name that arouses negative associations in visitors' minds.

If your name is not available under your preferred suffix (for example, a .com), try the same name with another suffix (for example, .net). Think of it like telephone service; more than one subscriber can have the same number because their area codes are different.

When you order your domain name, be sure to type your name very carefully, as you cannot change a name once you have registered. If there is a typo, you will need to register again with the correct spelling. You can always try to sell the wrong name URL, or let it lapse through non-renewal.



### **Get The Most From Your Host: Choosing A Hosting Package**

Web hosting is a service that provides a web server, meaning; it's a system that makes your site accessible via the Internet. A webhost rents you a physical location in cyberspace. They charge you for using its online systems to store information, videos, graphics, and anything else on your site that needs to be available on the Internet. As with most computer driven capabilities, size matters. The difference between various web hosting packages and their prices comes down to the amount of data transfer (bandwidth) used to access the server and the amount of assigned disk space on the server.

I recommend using any one of the following low-cost hosts when starting your virtual assistant business. As you grow, you might decide to get a bigger hosting package, but you can start with the basics for now.

Here are a few of the top-rated and most recommended, low-cost hosting companies (\$80–\$100/year) that should work well for you:

- Dreamhost <http://www.dreamhost.com>
- HostGator <http://www.hostgator.com>
- InMotion <https://www.inmotionhosting.com>
- SiteGround <https://www.siteground.com>
- BlueHost.com <http://www.bluehost.com>

### **Making Your Visitors Feel Welcome: Website or Blog Site?**

A virtual presence is important in today's cyberspace economy, and it's essential for any virtual assistance business. It is difficult to convince clients of your virtual fluency when you don't have an online business location.

Now, a big question for virtual assistants is whether or not they should set up a static website or use a blog site. Let me explain the distinction. A blog site is built on blogging platforms like WordPress. It enables you to upload easily videos, podcasts, audio and copy to your website.

Here are more key benefits for creating a blog site (like WordPress) for your new VA business:

**Cost-Effective.** For under \$500.00 you can have a WordPress designer create a compelling blog site with all the bells and whistles you would need to manage it yourself.

**Encourage Participation.** A blog site makes it easy to share relevant and current information that might interest your prospective clients, and it allows them to comment on your site and content.

**Search Engine Exposure.** With any new virtual assistant business, the most challenging initial task is getting noticed by prospective clients. But search engines LOVE blogs, so they quickly index the ones that offer relevant and fresh content. It is a proven fact that blogs will usually get seen faster in search engines than when people visit websites directly.

**VERY User-friendly.** Some virtual assistants work with a webmaster and need to send them instructions whenever they need to change or add copy to their website. But when you have a blog web site, like WordPress, it's quick and easy to add copy, videos, podcasts, and images yourself. Blog sites can be fun and addictive, given how simple it is to add all sorts of cool things to it.

Here are some examples of blog/WordPress websites that belong to other virtual assistants:



- BU Virtual Office <http://www.buvirtualoffice.com>
- Virtual Miss Friday <http://www.virtualmissfriday.com>
- JK Virtual Office <http://jkvirtualoffice.com>
- Jackie Johnstone <http://jackiejohnstone.com>

A static website makes your customers feel welcome, but a blog/WordPress website invites them to come in, take off their shoes, and make themselves comfortable. Which place would you rather visit?

There are many WordPress themes available for download that will work a WordPress installation. Some of my favorites are:

- StudioPress <http://www.studiopress.com>
- WooThemes <http://www.woothemes.com>
- ThemeForest <http://www.themeforest.net>
- ElegantThemes <https://www.elegantthemes.com/>

### Make It A Bestseller: Pages For Your Site

Regardless of whether you create a blog website or static website, the following list of web pages gives you an idea of what kind of information you should give to your visitors. By customizing these pages, you can create a website that lets potential clients know you are the best VA for their needs.

**Home Page** - This is the public face of your virtual business and the first page that many prospective clients encounter, so make sure that they stay put. Create a home

page that is attractive, professional, and as organized as possible (so your visitors know that you are, too). Nothing makes people click off of a site faster than when links are hard to find, or the site is difficult to navigate and obscured by annoying pop-ups. Because virtual assistance is a relatively new field, you will want to give readers some excellent reasons—especially financial—for working with you instead of hiring a salaried employee.

Recently, I have been talking with virtual assistants at VAClassroom University about including personalized videos on their homepage as a way of creatively engaging prospective clients. Video Marketing is *THE* fastest growing marketing channel on the Internet. Taking that into consideration, it makes sense to do this for your new VA business, too.

**About Us Page** - Use this page to sell yourself to visitors by describing the history of your small business and emphasizing your background, experience, and skills. If you are a new virtual assistant, focus on the transferable skills that you bring from other work you have done that makes you an ideal virtual assistant. This page might also be an ideal place to share your business philosophy and values.

**Contact Page** - If visitors cannot get in touch with you, nothing else on your site matters. Give potential clients a number of contact options—telephone, cell phone, fax, email, Skype, etc.—so they can reach you in the manner they prefer. In the resources section, I have included some low and no-cost telecommunication systems to consider for your business.

**FAQ Page** (Frequently Asked Questions) - Your experience and a quick Google search will tell you the most common questions that people have about your specific services. Ask and answer them on your own FAQ page in a self-confident and reassuring way. Imagine you are hiring a total stranger on a freelance, virtual basis and think of reservations you would have in that situation. Do not forget questions like, *why is it*

*better, cheaper, and easier to hire a VA than a regular employee?* and then answer that question, emphasizing their financial benefits. I would recommend doing a search in Google for phrases like, *virtual assistants FAQs*. You will likely find that you can use some of the questions other VAs are using in their FAQs for your reference.

**Subscribe Page** - If you host a blog website or publish a newsletter, give people a chance to receive your pertinent announcements and updates by signing up on this page. The Subscribe Button can be your secret weapon to building a list of viable prospective clients.

**Service Page** - This is the meat-and-potatoes portion of your business menu. It gives prospective clients a rundown of the services you offer. You can either list your rates here or ask clients to contact you for a quote. Once again, you can research other VAs offering your same services to see how they are presenting them. Regardless, I always recommend crafting your offerings into benefits for the prospective clients viewing your website.

For example, a feature like, *Managing Your Blog Maintenance Tasks So You Can Focus On Writing Great Posts*, is a great example of a well-crafted offer. As you can see, I identified a key benefit to the client when they hire me for blog maintenance services. This approach will make your service page more memorable than if you were to just list your services.

**Testimonials** - If you have satisfied clients, ask them to write promotional reviews of your services. Prospective clients visiting your site would like to hear what other businesses are saying about your service. Now, if you are new and do not have any testimonies yet, you might ask for one in exchange with a business as part of a first time client discount, or you can volunteer a couple hours of work in exchange for a testimonial from satisfied prospective clients.

### **Take Your Website For A Test–Drive**

It is essential to test–drive your site before hitting the virtual superhighway. Gather initial impressions from a variety of people both within and outside of your field. If you decide to join VAClassroom University's Training Program after finishing this book, we will provide you with live coaching and a discussion forum for your new business start–up. This could be a key, and very worthwhile resource for you, especially if you are just starting your virtual assistance business.

### **To Stay Or Not To Stay: The Importance Of Design Styles**

A study by the U.S. marketing research firm, Marketing Sherpa, revealed that 60 percent of all first time visitors to your website will stay less than eight seconds. Many visitors make a split–second decision to either stay on your site or leave! Therefore, this only gives you a few seconds to make a good impression, causing them to read further into your site.

You may feel that the content on your site is the best it can be, but if no one stays long enough to read it, you have wasted your time, money, and effort. Your blog or website is your calling card, and it is important to give off a good first impression to visitors, and a compelling reason to make them want to stay.

Give as much thought to orderliness and convenience on your website as you do the appearance. A visually stunning home page will not serve you well if your beautiful medieval calligraphy is difficult to read. Virtual visitors have a very short attention span, and they tend to click off rather than invest more time in a frustrating experience.

Let your design style match the services you offer. As an oversimplified example, VAs who offer graphic design services need to have a beautiful site that demonstrates their ability to make other websites just as beautiful. You most likely would not hire an interior designer who lived in a dump, would you?

By the same token, clients will not engage a VA to help organize their business if the VA's website has a cluttered, disorganized feel to it. Give your virtual presence the very qualities you are promoting. Make it your own and create a logo that associates your site with the services you offer in a positive way.

Here are a few guiding questions to keep in mind when putting together your virtual assistant website:

### **Is Your Design Professional or Amateurish?**

In surfing many different virtual assistance websites, some sites came across as a bit, homegrown. They had heavy text, spelling errors, page formatting issues, and confusing navigation. As a business owner, I am always looking for new virtual assistants to hire, but the low quality and less professional websites raise questions on whether or not I could trust this person with key projects and tasks for my business.

If you plan to market your business effectively as the crème de la crème of the VA industry, then it is imperative to have a professional website appeal that speaks to your credibility as a *Superstar Virtual Assistant!*

### **Is the Layout or Navigation Confusing or Unclear?**

In today's web-centric world, a level of simplicity is evident among many popular websites that present clear navigation and straightforward headlines in a simple, user-friendly format. Now, I am not suggesting that you copy these examples, but instead, take note of the simplicity and easy-to-read layout these sites provide. Make it naturally easy for users to navigate your content and pages.

Are the graphics and images relevant to the site content? Can generic, feel-good stuff, be found that's unrelated to the prospective client? Be careful only to add images to the site that resonate with the audience you are targeting, and that are relevant to your

business. Sites that seem to plop an irrelevant image in a prime location on their homepage often mystify me. These often serve no real purpose, other than filling up space. If you are not able to find a relevant image that adds value to your site image, then I recommend doing without one.

### **Is the Wording in the Headline Clear and Compelling?**

Is it directly selling the benefit of your virtual assistant services? It is important to have a key tagline in your header, or a headline below your header that clearly sells the benefit of your site and service, and ultimately prompts your prospective clients to read on. I recommend headlines in a color, so it stands out, like maroon, red or another sharper color from what you're already using. It should stand out from the rest of your content.

In researching many virtual assistant websites, I came across a few fabulous headlines and taglines. (Kudos to the virtual assistants who pointed them out to me.) Check them out:

- *Giving Business Owners Freedom by Managing the BS, Etc.* at <http://www.bsetc.ca> (That's a *brilliant* play on words and very *compelling*!)
  
- *Committed to Assist You Virtually Anywhere* at <http://www.ultimatebizassistant.com> (This website speaks as an *accessible* and *versatile* resource for my business!)

In summary, a powerful headline can be the determining factor for a visitor to either read on or move along to the next site.

### **Is The Website Content Readable And Relevant?**

It is important to use good font size (12/14 pt.), so the user does not strain their eyes reading your content. By nature, Internet users are skimmers and scanners. It is ideal to include shorter paragraphs, bullet points, and to highlight or bold key phrases for further



emphasis. Your headline and supporting copy should clearly answer the WIIFM (What's In It for Me) question. You should communicate the selling benefits of your services effectively, as opposed to just describing what you do.

Here is an example:

Feature: Blog Commenting and Forum Marketing

vs.

Selling Benefit: Be the voice of your company on relevant blogs and forums, allowing you to focus on your priority tasks.

Do you see the difference? This example shows the key distinction between *descriptive web copy* and *marketing copy*. This selling benefit clearly communicates to the potential client that they will save time and accomplish more as they outsource this task.

### **Is The Website Conversion Friendly?**

In other words, do the layout, headline, images, and copy move a prospective client toward a specific action? This action might be opting into your newsletter, or receiving a free report on something like, *How to have a clutter-free work life*. You might provide other compelling enticers, like a contest or your special, seasonal VA bonus package. It is important to employ various tactics to engage prospective customers. You can also use a live chat tool to connect with visitors immediately while they are viewing your site.

Think over these points and the questions within. They are worthwhile to ensure that you are providing the most compelling website experience for your visitors.

### **Suggested Key Web Design Elements For A Website**

- A logo that's visible, typically at the top left of the page
- A headline that's compelling, clear and concise; *the hook*, drawing users in

- Bulleted Features and selling benefits that answer the WIIFM question
- Testimonials on the Home Page that are visible and effective
- Navigation and Links that are easy to follow
- Optimized Images relevant and in a size that does not affect load times
- Keyword-rich web content
- Call to Action that's clear and apparent
- Special Promotions because it's the perfect place to promote special offers
- Opt-in Boxes for newsletters and blog updates
- Contact Us Buttons should be easy to find

Also, consider an introduction video of yourself talking about your business and services on your homepage. This personalized approach is very effective in encouraging your audience to stick around. For example, before we added a video to our homepage, visitors would spend an average of about a minute on our site. Then after we added a two-minute video, visitors began to spend over three minutes per visit on our site!

### **Success By Design: Finding A Good Web Designer**

The designer you choose makes all the difference to your site's appearance, functionality, and effectiveness, so keep the following things in mind to get the best one for your money.

**General Experience** - Look for a designer with solid experience in creating websites for a living, and not one who has simply taken web design courses to set up sites as a sideline business.

**Specific Experience** - If possible, find a designer who has experience in building sites for virtual assistants who provide similar services. Such a designer will know what

features and functions your competitors are using and which ones you need. If you join the [VAClassroom University](#), you could consider posting a request there for a good designer. One of our experienced VAs can most likely point you in the right direction. You can also contact our support desk where we recommend great designers, as we have in the past.

**Education** - Is the web designer's training current? Will the website reflect the latest developments in website design technology?

**Site–User Compatibility** - Your website must work for everyone, regardless of the specific operating system or web browser the visitor is using.

**Important Features** - Ideally, look for a web designer who can provide you with the following: design and development; content; maintenance; graphics; hosting; virtual marketing and promotion; and database creation.

**Designer's Site** - This is the showpiece for the designer's work, so if you do not like what you see, look elsewhere.

**Independent Freelancer vs. Hiring a Larger Design Team** - Price may decide this for you, as large-scale design firms charge more for services than independent contractors. A freelancer may be willing to spend more time working with you. When you hire a freelancer, you'll know that the same person who designed the samples you admired will be your designer, as well. With a larger design firm, you will get whomever the company assigns to work with you.

**Referrals and Testimonials** - Check these out thoroughly and ask for links to sites that the designer has created in the past, so you can see these, as well.

One More Tip: It is important to start your new designer off with a small project so you can properly assess their design skills and ability to meet deadlines. You might ask them to design your logo first, for example. If this goes well, you can proceed with a full

design of your website or blog. In the past, I have selected two designers and assigned them each a small project. Then based on the results, assigned the larger project to the better designer. That is a good option to follow, as well.

I recommend posting your project request on popular freelance sites like:

- Upwork: <http://www.upwork.com>
- Fiverr: <http://www.fiverr.com>

### CHAPTER SIX

#### Marketing Yourself Effectively

As a virtual assistant, the interview never ends until you have enough steady clients to meet your personal and financial goals. Until then, every person you come across is a potential client; this includes the friends, relatives, and associates of every potential client. You need to be the champion of your cause, and a professional who is not afraid to tell people what you can do for them.

#### Mass Appeal Marketing Strategies

If one phrase could capture the essential principle of your business promotion, it would be, *leave no stone unturned*. Marketing yourself is a full-time job, even if you intend to work only part-time. You just never know who or what will lead to your next working relationship, so take advantage of every opportunity, both online and offline, to advertise your services and establish contacts. Below are a few ways to market your business without spending a fortune:

#### Pinpoint Your Target And Take Aim

Go straight to the folks who need the services you offer. For example, if you intend to write press releases for musical performances or entertainment productions, market yourself where those enterprises congregate. Look for trade publications, performance venues, musical theaters and rehearsal halls. Find online entertainment sites, such as forums, social networks, chat rooms, websites, e-zines, classifieds, and anything else that caters to people in your target area. To determine where to focus your marketing efforts, imagine you are someone in your desired field, and consider all the places you would visit and the resources you would use.

If you are going to set up a business for blog maintenance services, then connect with those who own blogs to see if they would like to outsource ongoing tasks. The more specific and focused you are with your marketing strategies, the better results you will see!

### **Think Small**

Small business owners often hire virtual assistants so they can save money on employment-related expenses and dispense with tasks that keep them from running their business. Access all the Internet sites, publications, and services geared toward small business owners and do anything you can promote your services, such as posting ads, writing blogs, and joining in chats. You are now a small business owner yourself, so those resources will be helpful to you in their own right. With the rapid growth of social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, Social Media platforms are quickly becoming ideal avenues for connecting with small business clients.

### **Think Big**

Canvassing a large audience is worth it if you get even one steady client or a promising lead to possible work. You should exploit the Internet's global applicability by placing ads in free online media, networking, and educational sites. Again, networking in Social Media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter can connect you to prospective clients all over the world! In today's economy, large businesses realize the need for specialized skill sets, but they may not have the funds needed to hire someone on staff. As a VA, you can be in the unique position to help them while working from home.

### **Think Local**

As a VA, you can work for anyone, anywhere, even businesses in your neighborhood. Join community organizations, volunteer at charity events, participate in discussion boards, create blogs in local forums, or offer advice in the town website. The nearest

chamber of commerce or town hall is a good source for information on what is happening in your area. Advertise in local editions of print newspapers, classifieds, magazines, and event calendars, as these publications usually charge very affordable rates to advertise.

### **Impress People**

Blogs, Facebook Fan Pages, and other social networking sites are ideal for connecting with prospective clients and sharing insights on relevant topics. If you establish a strong online network of business people who know you and appreciate your insights, this could lead to a variety of new client opportunities.

### **Network Like Crazy**

There are many free resources devoted to helping virtual assistants with advice, information, directories, support, and a host of other things that can make your life easier. Learn from the disappointments and victories of other VAs and find answers to your questions at venues, like [www.vanetworking.com](http://www.vanetworking.com).

### **Image Booster: Design A Killer Digital Marketing Kit**

As the owner of your own virtual assistance business, you are trying to sell yourself. Take a lead from the advertising world and design a marketing kit that makes an impact on potential clients. Use whatever creative energy you have, or can beg, borrow, or steal, to produce an impressive kit that showcases your skills. And remember – *presentation is everything*. You want this material to be visually appealing, even if you are offering services that have nothing to do with design or art. People should consider your kit to be professional and pleasing, just like you.

I recommend just putting together the marketing kit in a .pdf file format, or a PowerPoint presentation so it can easily be presented, both offline and online. This marketing

material should serve as a primer for your virtual business and services. Your presentation should direct users to your website for more details, information, videos, and other promotional content.

Since you will most likely target a good portion of you prospective clients online, you should exhaust all channels when it comes to presenting your business to prospective clients:

- Have a compelling, user–friendly website.
- Setup business profiles on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram, etc.
- Create a professional .pdf file and PowerPoint presentation.
- Make a brief presentation video for YouTube to share with clients.
- Add the YouTube presentation video to your website.

It is a good idea to prepare a marketing kit for local clients who are offline that you believe could benefit from your virtual assistant services. I know a VA who networked herself very effectively in Ottawa business associations and has landed a number of key clients through these offline venues.

I have never met any of the virtual staff I have hired, as all the hiring was done online; however, I believe it's very important to maximize both offline and online marketing channels.

### **Important Items To Include In Your Offline Marketing Package**

**Pocket Folder** - This is the presentational packaging for your documents, so it needs to be durable and attractive. Do not even think about using one of those nasty looking buff manila ones that shout LIMITED BUDGET to everyone who sees them. High–quality



folders are pricey, so shop around at discount stationery stores or even eBay for a better price. You can also check prices at the larger chain office stores, like Office Depot and Staples, in their print and copy centers. Remember, people are hesitant about discarding anything that looks like the result of considerable forethought and expense, and the longer people hold on to your folder, the better it is for your business.

**Professional Template** - Here is where the creativity comes into play. You'll need to devise a logo and slogan to use with your contact information. Although it may contain the same information as your letterhead and serve the same purpose, it should look different. This template will serve as the basic setting for all your other documents, so consider investing in professional bulk printing. You can then feed those sheets into your printer as the backdrop for all the different documents you create. In this way, you can easily change the documents themselves while printing them onto the same template.

**Portable Billboard** - Use this sheet for "wow" factor, to advertise the special qualities that make you a good VA—education, experience, personality, humor, honesty, sociability, diligence, creativity, imagination, and so on. Consider how you would promote yourself on a big, attention-grabbing billboard, and then create a smaller version of it here.

Do not be afraid to refer to character traits or personal habits when it comes to selling your services. Studies show most interviewers decide the fate of the applicant within two minutes after meeting them. The lesson is *people often hire for reasons that have nothing to do with experience and skills, and everything to do with emotional responses*. You can exploit this tendency through exposing the human qualities that people respond to most often, even more often than background and qualifications.

In your miniature billboard advertisement, promote your achievements and strengths. Stress whatever suits you for your job if you lack work experience. For example, if you

are offering client relationship management or public relations, emphasize your ability to get along well with others. Mention your club presidency, reputation for settling disputes, or successful recruiting campaigns. Present what's best about you, in a format that is easy to read, like, and remember.

**Samples** - Include samples of your work if your services generate a product, like writing ad copy, business proposals, and press releases, or example.

**Testimonials** - If you have satisfied clients willing to write good reviews on behalf of your services, include them, as well. If you have no testimonials, include a sheet that highlights companies or people you have worked for, or anything you have done in the past, even if you were not paid to do it. Experience is experience, regardless of whether or not you made money while doing it.

**Virtual Assistance Money Savers** - Include a page that offers a laundry list of financial incentives for hiring a virtual assistant vs. a conventional employee. You can include their saving on expenses for things like workers compensation, medical insurance, sick pay, vacation leave, office space, computer equipment, etc. People relate more to stories about individuals rather than reports and statistics, so do some research to find success stories from people who have saved money by using VAs (preferably local businesspeople). VA networking sites and forums are good sources to find this information. Prepare a write-up about these cases, and include them in your kit.

**Resume** - Add a resume to your kit, especially if it is impressive.

**Business Cards** - They are small and easy for people to carry in their wallets, so include a few in every marketing kit. Vistaprint.com is a great place to have your business cards done.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Virtual Control And Managing Your Business

In your pursuit of self-employment, it is important to consider the logistics and day-to-day details of running a highly productive and successful virtual assistant business. In this chapter, you will find tips to help you make your new virtual working life as pleasant and productive as possible.

#### Remotely Interested: Managing Your Clients' Affairs

As a VA, you are charged with the task of running your own business AND your clients' business, too. That can be a tricky juggling act, especially if you are taking care of projects for several different companies or individuals. The following suggestions will help you keep things running smoothly while maintaining your sanity ☺.

#### Who Is In Charge?

It is okay to be a control freak when you are self-employed because you are now the only one responsible for earning your income. No matter how hectic things become, remember that you are in control of your work; it is not the other way around, even though it sometimes seems to be. Manage your affairs instead of letting them manage you.

#### Fix Structural Defects

To some, the word *structure* has extremely negative connotations. If one of your main motivations for self-employment was to escape the rigidity of a conventional job, you might resist the notion of imposing structure on your new life, too.

If that's the case, then you must rekindle your relationship with this important business ally. As an entrepreneur, you can certainly rejoice in the fact that you now have the

freedom to be flexible in constructing your career, but there must be an underlying structure that defines your priorities, schedule, and day-to-day business operations.

Take a look at this interesting office setting ☺ :



Does this look like your home office? Probably not! Recently, my wife and I were looking at a house, and the owners, a semi-retired couple, were keenly interested in what I did at VAClassroom University, training virtual assistants to build successful virtual businesses. They wanted me to send them information to see if it might be a good fit for them. Well, let me tell you, the above office is clean compared to what I experienced walking into their home office. *Oh, boy!!* Now, do not get me wrong; they might work out to be fabulous virtual assistants, but they might first benefit from a visit by the reality TV show, *Clutter-Free My Life*, first ☺ .

While many of you may not have a home office similar to the one above, my next question to you is...



Does your mind look like this? In other words, do you have difficulty setting clear priorities, identifying daily goals or multi-tasking multiple client projects in a given day? Your answer might be a definite YES as well, which is great. But for others, this is an area of difficulty that hinders them from becoming a productive and effective virtual assistant.

Management consultant and author of the national bestseller, *Getting Things Done*, David Allen talks about the sheer importance of emptying your mind on a regular basis in order to focus in on your most important task at hand. For many of us, myself included, our minds get so jam-packed with work priorities and tasks—as well as non-work-related things—that it becomes difficult to achieve maximum productivity and focus.

Author David Allen says when you are working on a high-priority project and other tasks and thoughts start filling your mind, empty them immediately. In other words, make note of those other tasks on paper, a phone, or a computer, and come back to them later. This enables you to quickly re-focus on the important task at hand. In our training courses at [VAClassroom University](https://www.vaclassroom.com), we go into more detail on how to set up the proper workflow system to ensure that you can empty your mind in the most organized fashion possible!

Next, I would like to run through some quick-and-dirty productivity strategies that can help you stay focused and effective in your new virtual assistant business.

**Take Your Time** - Assess how much time you must devote to each client's needs and how often you must address those needs every day, week, or month (depending on whether you work part-time or full-time). Create a schedule for your work hours and clients, and keep it where you can always see it. Get in the habit of working for client A during specific times, and client B during other times. We recommend some web-based project management tools to help you stay on track.

**Remember the Five P's: Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance.** There is no such thing as being too well prepared for your job. Plan ahead for everything you do for your clients, especially if your job involves contact with the customers, associates, and vendors of your clients. Make sure you are fully up to speed before making phone calls or sending emails. In addition, I recommend having a short planning session with your client before the start of each project to ensure the project expectations, details, and time frames are crystal-clear.

**Beware of Time Bandits** - When you work at home, it is easy for distractions to destroy your focus and concentration. Do whatever you can to prevent anyone or anything from robbing you of your productivity. This may mean closing doors, disconnecting phones, removing TVs, and wearing earplugs. If you can, reshuffle your activities so that your working time falls during the hours of least distraction. Just say no to Oprah, or at least record her ☺. This is especially true for WAHMs. Multi-tasking can be detrimental to your productivity and a drain on your energy. It is essential that you establish "work time" with your children so that they learn to understand and respect that time. This serves two additional purposes: 1) your kids know that they will have your undivided attention when you are not working; and 2) they learn to play on their own for short periods of time without interrupting you.

**First Things First** - Keep a running record of your projects arranged in order of importance. Create a schedule in whatever format is easiest for you (a computer chart, paper file, or notebook entry, etc.) and enter every project as you receive it. Consult your schedule every day when you start work and perform tasks in their proper order within their respective client-based time allotments.

**Watch the Calendar** - Some people prefer a schedule of projects arranged by date order, especially if work follows a regular cycle. Use a computerized calendar template to list work assignments on the dates you need to begin working on them. If you accumulate paper from clients, purchase an accordion file with separate slots marked from 1 to 31. On each sheet you handle, write the month and date when it needs to be addressed and put it into its proper compartment. Check the file every day to see what needs to be done that day and what will be coming up in the near future.

**Establish your MITs** - MITs are your Most Important Tasks. This vitally important task should be repeated daily, weekly, and monthly to ensure you are keeping check with the high priority tasks for your virtual business. Following my MITs regularly helps me to stay on track and not get lost in low priority or trivial tasks.

**Divide and Conquer** - Create separate computer folders for each client with every project in its own file. If you accidentally delete, change, or reformat a file, it will not affect all your work, but only that one file. If you keep paper files, use a different color for each client.

**Ignore the Mailman** - It is hard to get much work done when you keep breaking your rhythm to read, save, delete, share, or answer every new email that comes your way. Turn off your computer speakers if you do not need the audio function and generate some solid work output instead of reading your mail as it arrives, especially if you are on a client's time clock. Set aside specific times of the day for "mail call" and tend to your emails only during those periods. Pretend that the postman delivers your email only



once or twice a day, just like your snail mail communications. This is called batching. You take certain repetitive tasks, like checking emails, and set aside specific blocks of time to perform those tasks. It's hugely effective, especially with email!

This is also true of participating in the social networks, like Twitter and Facebook. Both can draw you in and make you want to read more, connect more, and network more. But, they can also rob your day of precious time. Before you know it, an hour or two has passed, and you haven't gotten any work done. Set aside a specific time of day when you will network on Social Media platforms, and stick to it. You may even want to change up the time every day so you can engage with different people.

**Keep a Master To-Do List** - I recommend identifying the place or location to keep tabs on your to-do list. In my past corporate position, I used Sticky Notes to keep tabs on things that I needed to get done or important reminders. But for some reason, Sticky Notes only created more distraction and disorganization. Now, in keeping with Allen's concept of emptying your mind, I keep a notebook with me, and I write down any important to-do tasks as they come to mind. Once they are written down on paper, I stop having nagging thoughts about those tasks and can focus on what I am doing in the present. It does not matter where you keep your to-do list. The important thing is that you keep it in just *one location* and consistently empty your mind of new tasks as they come up.

**Build Recovery Times Into Your Day** - Performance psychologists have studied and revealed that the average individual can only achieve maximum productivity for about 90 minutes before fatigue and energy loss will set in. After that, work quality may start to diminish. This finding fits me to a tee because I start getting distracted and tired after focusing on a task for more than 60–90 minutes. Therefore, I recommend taking a 15-minute break every 60–90 minutes. Get up and do something non-work related, like taking a walk, grabbing a snack or a cup of coffee, or calling a friend. For those 15 minutes, do your best to shut work completely out. This will help your body replenish



energy so you can recharge and be ready for your next project or task. When I implement regular recovery times in my day, I notice a huge difference in productivity, both night and day!

### All In A Day's Work

Without a boss around to feed you work, you may be tempted to idle away time that crops up, in-between assigned projects. Resist the urge to waste those hours and put them to good use, instead. It will help you stay productive and on top of your virtual game.

**Acquire New Clients** - Remember, you would not have this downtime if you had enough clients to keep you busy. You might look at new improvements to your website, setting up profiles, and joining groups in social networks like Facebook and LinkedIn. You can distribute your business cards, deliver some of your marketing kits, and contact some business leads. Make the rounds of your community businesses and establish new connections. Check the online classifieds and community boards for promising VA work opportunities.

**Research for Your Clients** - When you have free time, you can also research business issues that are important to your clients and see if you can find interesting developments or news items to use to your advantage in securing their account. For example, if a client's competitor has just acquired a new product line of designer handbags, send the information to your client with the suggestion that someone (you) work on acquiring a comparable line of goods. Even if you do not get the job you mentioned, the good-faith contact may prompt your client to send some work your way.

**Update Your Pricing Model** - Conduct online research to see what other VAs are charging for their services and note how different factors can affect the prices. You may find that your fees are not as high as the market average. If so, update your website

quotes, change your marketing kits, and redo your business contracts to reflect your improved prospects.

**Expand Your Services With Training** - Take some additional training to expand your service into profitable in demand niches. At VAClassroom University, we offer several popular courses that can equip you with key marketing support skills that many businesses are seeking, right now. It is important to adopt a "continual learner" mindset, and always be looking for ways to hone your skills and tap into hot new niches.

Visit virtual assistance networking sites, community boards, chat rooms, and discussion forums. These are good resources for connecting with other VAs, learning the latest industry news, and finding new leads. If you want someone to help you word your business policy or solve a business problem, you can exchange ideas with people who are also in the virtual assistance business.

### **When Time Flies: Effective Scheduling**

Time has a way of sneaking up on you when you are working, and as a VA, you need to be especially careful about the way you manage your schedule. It is important to divide up your time to reflect the variety of your clients' needs, and track of the hours you devote to each one. The following tips can help you maintain a schedule that will keep you busy without overwhelming you.

### **Give Yourself Breathing Room**

When you are just beginning your new virtual assistance business, it is natural to want to take on as many clients as you can get, and generate as much money as possible. This is especially true if you have given up the security of a steady paycheck from a traditional job for the uncertainty of an erratic income from a virtual business. It takes time to adjust to such a transition, and part of that adjustment is recognizing that you are now in business to please more than one boss from one workplace. You will now

have to accommodate clients from different companies and learn the ins and outs of each of those separate businesses. It takes a while for any employee to feel comfortable at a new job, but in your virtual assistance business, there is a breaking-in period every time you gain a new client.

Take this into account when you begin scheduling your work hours. In your eagerness to please clients, you may want to promise the moon, but it will backfire when you cannot make good on your claims, and your credibility will suffer. Until you determine exactly what your new business will involve, follow these suggestions:

- Add some extra leeway to the time you give yourself for each project. If you think a job will take you thirty minutes to complete, schedule in an hour.
- Decide how many hours a week you want to work, but schedule in only 75 percent of that time. If you plan on working 40 hours a week, take on only 30 hours of work per week.

Following these precautions can:

- Protect you, should something unexpected occur. One of the principles of Murphy's Law is, everything takes longer than you think it will. Equipment fails, clients phone, and creativity can desert you, so be ready for anything.
- Allow you to better accommodate same-day rush jobs that your clients require from time to time.
- Give you time to communicate with clients to make sure you meet their expectations. This can happen in planned phone calls, or via email.

- Help you to take on those random out-of-the-blue jobs from new clients and maximizes your chances of turning those people into regular clients.
- Plan for periodic breaks. You need to leave your workstation and do something else for a few minutes, several times a day, to stay mentally fresh and alert.
- Offer you the chance to catch up on your administrative tasks, like bookkeeping, invoicing, and filing, without eating into non-working hours.

### **What To Do When Virtual Business Emergencies Happen**

I want to tell you about one of my business emergency horror stories that very few people know about. (I guess a lot more will know now ☺!)

A couple years ago, I was two weeks away from the launch of a new Web business and had many top priorities and last-minute tasks, on the go, to get ready for this BIG launch! I had taken my laptop over to a family member's house to give them a sneak preview of my business before we went live to the public. After my time there, I had some boxes that I needed to take home, so I set my laptop bag on the ground while I loaded the boxes into the van. Do you see where this is going?

I closed the trunk and got into the van, started the car, and began to back out of the driveway until I heard a *CLUNK*. I remember saying to my wife, what is that noise? I think I just ran over something. Then the most terrible, horrific thought came to mind, I just ran over my business laptop! You might be thinking, how could anyone possibly be that thick skulled, to run over their work laptop? Well, I think with the stress of this new

business launch, my mind was whirling 24/7 and well, it just happened. Yes, I ran over my laptop and crushed my hard drive good! Fortunately, my computer tech was able to recover a lot of my important files, but phew!

So, while my first few minutes after the incident were not so pretty, I was still able to clear my head, buy a new laptop, and get focused and ready for my big launch!

Now, if your natural reaction or coping strategy in an emergency like this is to panic, you are in good company. Panic is a perfectly natural reaction to something that seems both disastrous and insurmountable. Although you can never foolproof your life to escape calamities altogether, you can make them less likely to occur, and you can teach yourself to respond to them in more productive ways ☺.

### **Take Precautions**

You might not be able to predict where and when a crisis will occur, but you can identify some common culprits and do your best to keep them from causing problems. For instance, losing the use of your computer to crash or malfunction is big trouble for any virtual assistance business. Keep all your equipment in tip-top shape and make sure that it benefits from the routine maintenance, like disk cleanup, program updates, and technical service. (Be sure not to leave it lying under your tire when backing out of the driveway, either ☺!)

### **Have a Backup System in Place**

If a storm knocked out your power lines and left you without electricity for three days, would you be prepared? What if your computer crashed just after you finished a major project but before you could send it to your client? What if you agreed to a rush job for a desperate client and then had to spend ten hours in the emergency room with an injured child?

You can hope that nothing like that ever happens, but life refuses to play by any set rules. You need to create your personal emergency response system. Sit yourself down and try to visualize some common scenarios that would jeopardize your work product. Then devise a backup system, a sort of rehearsal for the real thing that will at least save you time in a crisis.

### **Start With Your Equipment**

If you could not access your computer, printer, fax, or another machine that you rely upon every day, is there another one you could use? Survey your friends to see if any of them have a machine that you could use in a pinch. Or visit your local library or Internet café to take care of your highest priority tasks. There is also a variety of web-based programs you can use when you don't have access to your desktop.

Follow the same procedure for situations that force you to abandon a major project or rush job. You might have another virtual assistant who you know does quality work and delegate a couple important tasks to him or her to ensure that your client remains a happy camper. This might cost you some money, but it can save your business from losing an important client.

### **Learn To R-E-L-A-X In An Emergency**

Panic may be instinctual, but it does you little good in any situation that requires action because it freezes your normal thought processes. Instead, practice the following steps whenever an emergency occurs. Over time, you can train yourself to react in this more adaptive way.

#### **Retreat, But Only For A Few Minutes**

Just go to a calm place, and either sit-down or laydown in a comfortable position, and clear your mind from disturbing thoughts. This may be difficult to do. Remember, you

are not ignoring the problem. You are simply refusing to think about it for a very short time, and it will be there when you finish. Take long, deep breaths and do whatever relaxes you most. When you are feeling calmer, proceed to the next step.

### **Examine Your Options**

You always have a choice in an emergency, even if it is choosing to do nothing. Of course, that reaction will not get you anywhere, so focus on what you can do to minimize losses, fix problems, and get back to your normal working life as soon as possible. Ask yourself, given the circumstances, what can I do to make the best of the situation?

### **Let Go Of Useless Second–Guessing**

During a work–related emergency, it is normal for illogical impulses to interrupt rational thoughts as you try to determine what to do. You keep thinking, if only this had not happened, or if only I had not hit that button and erased my whole file, or, why did I not check with the client on that point before I spent a whole day doing the wrong thing? Hindsight is always 20/20, but you have to deal with the here and now. These thoughts will only lead to wasting more time, and none of them will change the emergency that occurred, and you need to deal with it as best you can.

### **Act Now**

Do whatever you can to minimize your losses and maximize your recovery. Some of the following actions can help.

### **Give Clients a Heads–Up**

If there will be a delay in the completion of their project, your client needs to know. It is much better to be upfront in disclosing the situation, especially if the delay is inevitable and the clients will eventually learn about it. Sneakiness is not a trait that

businesspeople admire in their virtual assistants, and your clients may even surprise you by being more understanding than you expected. When you work with other online entrepreneurs who also work from home, they tend to be more understanding when things happen to prevent you from meeting a deadline, as long as it doesn't happen all the time, and it doesn't interfere with one of their major deadlines, like a preview call or product launch.

### **Enlist The Help Of Others**

This includes people you know and those you can hire. This may mean using someone else's equipment or space, or getting someone to do your chores while you attend to business. Do not be afraid to ask for personal or professional help. It is not a sign of weakness, but proof that you are a human being like the rest of us, and smart enough to know when you need assistance. If you can, take precautions to avoid such an emergency in the future.

### **X-Out This Emergency**

When you have handled this problem as best you can, mentally cross it out and label it, *Under Control*. Congratulate yourself on dealing with another difficult situation in a professional manner, and remind yourself that doing so will only get easier as time passes.

## **Satisfaction Guaranteed: How To Keep Clients Happy And Loyal**

As a virtual assistant, you are the owner of your own small business, but your enterprise cannot succeed without that crucial external factor, your clients. Having to depend on a steady flow of new clients is risky, at best, so the wisest course of action is to do whatever you can to hold on to clients once you attract them.

Here are some suggestions to help you please your clients and keep them coming back:



### **Mind Your Business Basics**

Quality and delivery are the essential features for any client-based business, and without them, very little else matters. If you do not deliver a job well-done in a timely manner, your new clients will never become your old clients.

There is no wiggle room when it comes to quality and delivery. Most people are reasonable about rare and extraordinary circumstances that affect deadlines, but if you are starting out as a VA with no business history to speak of, you need to build a reputation for yourself. You must prove that you can provide essential services when needed. Even if you meet deadlines on a steady basis, that will not help you if the quality of your work is poor.

### **Be Realistic With Your Promises**

What is the best way to ensure that your clients are always happy with your quality and delivery? First, don't make promises you cannot keep. If you have not gotten around to learning a new application, do not take on jobs that rely on that system until you are comfortable working with it. If you suspect that you cannot meet a deadline, do not promise you can. Clients are not interested in hearing excuses. They are only interested in hearing that you have done what you said you would do; what they paid you to do.

### **Use A Self-Discipline Booster**

Nothing motivates us quite as much as money. If you know that your self-discipline is weak, strengthen it with monetary incentives. Offer a slight discount to clients if you deliver two consecutive projects past the deadline or offer same-day rush delivery for an extra fee. Set up a situation that will give you a financial inducement to be more productive and finish work on time.

### **Go To The Source**

The best way to find out if your clients are happy with your services is to ask them. If you are uncomfortable approaching this subject directly, create a follow-up survey that asks about a client's satisfaction with factors like quality, reliability, and timeliness. In the survey, you can also submit open-ended questions that let clients write in their views, asking questions like, how can I improve your services, etc. Clients will appreciate the fact that you value their opinion and want to accommodate their wishes.

### **Say Thank You**

You can send an emailed or snail-mailed thank-you card or postcard to clients after you have finished a project, or at periodic intervals throughout the year. Let them know that you appreciate their business and look forward to working with them again. You might want to send them something at Christmastime, thanking them for their business.

### **Make Things Right**

If your client is unsatisfied with your work for any reason, take any complaints seriously and do whatever you can to rectify the situation and make your client happy. You have to decide when it pays to duplicate your efforts and when it does not. In most cases, it is well worth your time (even unpaid time) to hold on to a client. Nothing demonstrates your investment in a client's business better than your willingness to make things right, and one steady client may lead to more steady clients through word of mouth and referrals.

On the flip side, if you have an unreasonable client that keeps imposing unrealistic deadlines on you, you might need to reevaluate and see if you want to continue working with this particular client.

### **Stay in Touch**

It is a good idea to send periodic newsletters or emails to clients. This is a non-aggressive way to remind them that you are still available for any projects, and it may spur them into sending more work your way. You can include any new developments in your business, like new equipment, new training, or news about the advantages of hiring a VA. You can also send clients information you have found that relates to their business, as this shows them that you are still invested in their success.

### **Communicate With Care**

If you decide to send post-project surveys, thank-you cards, newsletters, or any other communication, do so sparingly. Business people today have to weed through a lot of mail, and contacting them too frequently will only annoy them. That is the last thing you want to do to a client you are hoping to keep.

### **Think Like A Partner, Not An Employee**

Avoid a piecemeal approach to work. Instead of simply doing the job at hand, sending it off, and forgetting about it, consider the big picture and come up with ways to impress your clients with your initiative. For example, if you notice that your client's website content is out of date, suggest that you update it for them. If several of your client's customers have expressed a wish for a particular product not currently offered, let your client know about it. Whenever you are doing work for a client, try to go the extra mile by thinking like a partner. You want to make yourself indispensable to your client's business.

### **Stay Current**

Stay on top of the newest virtual technology. If there is a development, that can make things easier, better, or more profitable for your clients, learn how to use it and be sure to tell your clients about it. The virtual world operates at a fast pace, and you must keep in step to remain a valuable part of it. Doing so will give your clients the benefits of any new technology and it will make you more valuable as a VA.

### CHAPTER EIGHT

#### **Virtual Victory; Define Your Pathway To Success**

There are few things in life as rewarding as a successful small business that you created with your initiative, skill, and courage. That last attribute of courage is especially important in any entrepreneurial venture. Although many people consider the prospect of owning their business at some point in their lives, few of them are brave enough to put their ideas to the test.

That may be why so many aspiring small business owners encounter negativity from others who learn about their plans to venture out on their own. Friends, coworkers, and family members often try to discourage any attempts at self-employment, giving voice to the fears that have kept them from realizing their dreams of small business ownership.

If you are pursuing self-employment as the owner of your own virtual assistance business, you can overcome this resistance by remembering the growing number of fellow entrepreneurs who have built successful careers as virtual assistants. That number is growing every day, as more and more people realize they cannot count on corporate structure in an uncertain economy to provide security and give their lives meaning. For those important values, they can only rely on themselves.

If you too want to gain more control over your life, put your entrepreneurial spirit to work as a virtual assistant. The industry is still in its infancy, making it the perfect target for anyone with self-discipline, self-confidence, and self-realization. The Internet will provide you with a way to earn a living, along with the information, support, and advice you need from others in the same business to keep your business going.

As you join the industry's growing roster of self-employed entrepreneurs, use this eBook to help you through the various stages of your venture. Your success will reflect

the strong sense of financial independence and personal fulfillment that you share with others in your field, and you will appreciate the tremendous difference that your efforts have made in your life.

It is a journey well worth making, so enjoy every step on the way to your successful new life as the owner of your own virtual assistance business.

### CHAPTER NINE

#### Virtual Resources – Cool Tools And Hot Spots

Here is an array of super-cool products and sites available to anyone with computer savvy and techno curiosity. Some of these timesaving and user-friendly goodies have the added advantage of being free. So if you have not checked them out, be ready to make your working life much more productive.

#### Virtual Professionalism; Cool Tools for VAs

With the ever-increasing availability of high-tech virtual solutions, you can now access more features than ever before to achieve a new level of professionalism and efficiency.

Here are just a few of the many virtual tools you can incorporate into your virtual assistance business:

#### Thank You, Web Applications

If you use a simple web browser—like Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, Safari, and Firefox—you can access a number of web-based applications (web apps) that are often important benefits to VAs. You no longer need to purchase a separate desktop computer program for every function, which probably explains why web apps have become such popular virtual tools.

In our *100 Tool VA Guide* at [VAClassroom University](http://VAClassroomUniversity.com), I've compiled an up-to-date list of tools and apps that can help simplify your processes and free up your time. Be sure to check it out.

### Virtual Communication Websites For VAs

As you work to build your virtual assistance business, you may sometimes wish that you could have your very own virtual assistant guide to help you through the different stages of your new venture. You can enjoy the benefits of having many such guides at your disposal, as advice, support, knowledge, and experience are available to you 24 hours a day through your computer.

Visit the following Internet locations and access the input of people who share your professional interests and goals. Better yet, create your own virtual assistance venue and get your name circulating on the Internet!

### Blogs

The word *blog* is a shortened from the term, *weblog*. It refers to a website that displays posts by one or more people (in chronological order) and usually offers links to other posts or commentaries. The format on a blog lets you see the progression of communications in order of date. There is usually a list of old posts by category, as well as an archive of old posts grouped by date, month, or year (depending on how often the author contributes to the blog). A blog is something like an author/s' virtual diary that connects different parts.

Keep this diary analogy in mind as you surf for blogs. As is true of virtually in any medium, blogs differ widely in tone, content, and usefulness, as they express the personal view and purpose of the authors. But that only makes blogs more interesting, as you can come across some very unexpected entries, just as you would if you stole a peek at someone's diary.

Virtual assistance blogs reflect the thoughts and experiences of the author (a virtual assistant). You can gain important insights into the virtual assistant business when reading these blogs. The Internet gives global exposure to virtually anyone with an



agenda to promote, so expect to find a fair amount of marketing worked into some of the blogs you read, but read them. Many bloggers are virtual assistants with an extensive background in the industry, so it is worth your time to read what they are writing.

Here are a few of the many virtual assistance blogs on the Internet, along with their links:

- VA Networking [www.vanetworking.com/blog](http://www.vanetworking.com/blog)
- The Virtual Assist <http://www.thevirtualasst.com/blog>
- New VA Advice <http://www.newvaadvice.com/>
- Virtual Miss Friday <http://www.virtualmissfriday.com/michelle>

### Networks

Networks are the most comprehensive resource for information and communication you can find, offering a wide range of features to their visitors. One network can include articles, forums, postings, job listings, tutorials, news, and a host of other services. You can choose simply to access available content, or you can interact with other users via blogs or forums. Because of their inclusiveness, networks make excellent starting points for any inquiry, usually providing links or referrals to other resources in addition to their own content. Here is a list of several well-known virtual assistance networking sites.

- Virtual Assistant Networking Association: <http://www.vanetworking.com>
- International Virtual Assistants Association: <http://ivaa.org>

## Groups And Forums

Online forums work like traditional forums but without all the pushing and yelling. They are venues for open discussions with other users and by accessing them you have the opportunity to interact with people who have posted news, information, questions, answers, or anything else pertaining to the subject under discussion.

You do not have to be a Chatty Cathy or a Talkative Tom to appreciate this format, and you can remain anonymous by using a non-identifying screen name. Your level of participation is totally up to you. You can simply view posts and the responses to those posts, or you can join in the conversation when you have a question to ask or a contribution to make.

Most forums have moderators who act as traffic cops, stepping in when needed to direct visitors to appropriate locations or to set up special access links for specific purposes that come up during the course of a dialogue. Forums can get you the answers that you want from people who work as virtual assistants. If you need an honest appraisal of a new product you are likely to get a more impartial opinion from someone in the industry who has actually used it rather than the manufacturer who only wants to sell it to you.

If you have not eavesdropped on any forums yet, here are some good places to start:

- Virtual Assistant Networking Forum [www.vanetworking.com](http://www.vanetworking.com)
- Virtual Assistant Forums <http://www.virtualassistantforums.com>

And at VAClassroom University [www.vaclassroom.com/university](http://www.vaclassroom.com/university) once you become a member you have access to our private Facebook group for members only, where we answer questions, offer support, and exchange ideas with other virtual assistant members.

Another important benefit of participating in forums is the support from other VAs. While you may have a great support system at home, nothing beats the understanding and reassurance from another business owner who has experienced what you are going through. Sometimes you need to brainstorm, sometimes you need to vent, and sometimes you just need to hear words of encouragement. Your participation in these forums will help you weather the storm and celebrate success with your new friends and colleagues.

### **Social Networking As A Virtual Assistant**

Social networking as a virtual assistant is a great way to build your network of peers and business contacts online. This will give you the opportunity to meet like-minded people with whom you can share your expertise and learn more about the areas you wish to gain knowledge. To get the most benefit from your social networking time it's wise to choose the groups and networks in which you can actively participate. Try to allot at least 15 minutes per day to check for new connections, answer questions, and share useful information. Preferably, you should batch your time and try not to randomly network throughout the day.

New social networks are springing up every day; however, some of the popular social networks virtual assistants are currently participating in include:

#### **Facebook**

Facebook can be an effective networking and lead generation tool for your business. If you are using Facebook for business, you should maintain your profile with business-related information. Check for terms, like *virtual assistant Facebook groups*, or *small business owners groups*, and other groups of interest in your niche. Also become a fan of related Facebook pages.

### Twitter

Spend some time learning how to use Twitter as a business tool. You can set up a profile and search by keyword for the type of people you wish to find and follow themes like *virtual assistant*, *Internet marketer*, and *Internet business owner*, etc.

### LinkedIn

Build a profile on LinkedIn and seek out business contacts. Search for niche groups within LinkedIn that relate to your expertise or target market. Submit answers to frequently asked questions and become a subject matter expert.

### Get Connected Today

If you have a question, problem, or interest, that relates to the virtual assistance industry you can find what you need at one of the many Internet venues devoted to your business. Take advantage of this chance to connect with other VAs and learn from their experiences. It just might open up a whole new world of opportunities for you.

# CHAPTER TEN

## Transitioning To Self-Employment

If you are currently running in the corporate rat race and dreaming of the day you can quit and start your journey to self-employment, there are a few things to consider before handing in your resignation. Nothing can be more fulfilling than starting your own business, and being prepared can help you transition more quickly and successfully.

### Have The Right Mindset!

As trivial as it may sound, preparing yourself mentally for success is a big part of how you start your business and how you will continue. If you go into this with a, *well, I'll give it a try and see how it works* attitude, you might have some challenges keeping the course when things get tough. Preparing yourself for success is different for everyone, but a critical first step in the right direction. Do what works for you. You might try daily positive affirmations, publicizing your goals in your office, or even blogging about your goals to hold yourself accountable.

Think about it this way – do you see successful athletes coming into the game with their head down, doubt on their faces and shrugging their shoulders like, well, I hope we win? NO! They go into each and every game with a positive attitude, a winning attitude, and they exude success. This is no accident. You can take your cues from one of your sports heroes, authors, speakers, coaches or a colleague. See how their attitude helps them succeed and find what works for you.

### Test The Waters

It takes a while to get a base of regular clients in order to comfortably determine what your average monthly income will be. Consider starting out slow and take on a few clients and assignments while you are still working. You'll have a night-and-weekend–

job for a few months, but it will help you establish realistic income goals and practice marketing yourself and your business. That way you can work out any kinks without the added pressure of having to work X hours to earn X income.

### **Have A Nest Egg**

Starting your virtual assistant business while you are still working your regular job will also help you earn some extra money. This nest egg will help you get through some challenging months when you may not work as much as you need, or allow you to take some courses to expand your skills and services to move your new VA business into the next level!

You'll also need some extra money for general office supplies like ink for your printer, paper, headphones to talk with clients and take notes at the same time, and possibly a more comfortable and ergonomic chair.

### **Research Insurance Options**

If you and your family are on your insurance plan at your current job, you'll need to plan how that will transition to new coverage. This may mean switching to your spouse's insurance plan or purchasing prior insurance. Make special note of any changes in coverage, increase in monthly costs and deductibles as these costs can add up quickly.

### **Plan For Retirement**

Contributing to your retirement fund is just as important as a self-employed business owner as it is working "for the man". You will need to be diligent about researching options to save your money and make the payments. Consider adding this to your monthly or quarterly calendar to make sure it gets done.

### **Schedule Time For Networking**

As a new business owner, it's important to remember that you always need to be marketing yourself and your business. A key to being successful and sustaining that success is networking - both on and offline. When working for someone else, you are always networking whether you realize it or not. Talking with colleagues, executives, business partners and vendors is somewhat an expectation when you work outside the home, but you need to continue those same networking practices for yourself.

There are several networking options available for you to get yourself and your business out there in front of everyone. Of course, there are the social networks that we've already discussed. But, there are also networking opportunities in your local community. Take the time to research local Toastmaster meetings, professional networking associations, and business luncheons. These types of events will help you keep your social interaction skills fresh while marketing your business and meeting new people.

Your new contacts can be an important resource for your business. They can become a new client, refer clients, or provide you with a service for your business.

### **Give Yourself A Break**

Part of the allure in starting your own home-based business is being able to work around your schedule. Whether you need to work around your kids' school schedule, doctor's appointments or volunteering at the local hospital, having flexibility is a wonderful thing. But it can also be a huge responsibility. You may start out thinking you need to work the same 40 hours at home as you did at work.

While it may be financially necessary to work 40 hours a week, it's also tempting to want to work as many hours as possible to earn as much money as possible. Try to give yourself a break and get some breathing room. You don't want to spend every minute you are at home working. As home business owners, it's already difficult enough to

separate work time from home time. Don't schedule yourself the maximum number of hours every week. This can lead to quick burnout and will not give you any additional flexibility in your day for the incidentals in life that come up.



### CHAPTER ELEVEN

#### **A Special Section For Work–At–Home Moms (WAHMs)**

Many women are leaving the corporate world to stay home and raise their children. Unfortunately, the days of being *just* a housewife are gone for most. Women of today are major contributors to the household income, so replacing that income to stay home with the children has been a hot topic.

Starting a virtual assistance business is the ideal solution for many. It allows you to continue your career path, earn money to support the family, build new skills as a business owner and, most importantly, stay home to raise your children. But while the career path is ideal, there are special topics for aspiring WAHMs to consider.

#### **Put Your Children First**

The wellbeing of your children, and their health and intellectual growth is a huge priority. As a mom, this is probably one of the main reasons you want to stay home and raise your children. You want to be in charge of how they are raised, what they are eating for lunch, and what they are learning.

When you start a home–based business, it can be easy to forget these priorities. Take the time to schedule your work around the activities that will help your children grow and be nurtured. If you have older children, you can even include them in some of your work activities to teach them about money, time management, and customer service.

#### **Set Boundaries With Family And Friends**

When you decide to be a stay–at–home mom, almost everyone thinks, *how lucky! You get to sit around, play with the kids and watch soap operas all day.* Stay–at–home

moms have arguably the toughest job on earth, but when you add a home-based business to that, it gets tougher.

One thing you'll need to do early on is set boundaries with family and friends about your "work time". You need to be crystal clear about when you can have visitors and phone calls, and when you are not available. While it might sound rude at first, it's necessary to set these strict boundaries to avoid unpleasant discussions later. When people drop by unexpectedly or call you to take care of the kids while they run an errand, you'll need to give them a friendly but firm reminder, *I'd love to help you out, but remember, I'm working right now.*

### **Create A Support System**

Very few people know what it's like to start a business, let alone start a home-based business as a virtual assistant and stay home to raise children. There are many online social networks and forums to give you support, understanding and encouragement for those times when you are having a tough day.

Aside from your online friends and colleagues, it's critical to get your family's support in your new business venture. One way to get their support is to share your business plan, aspirations and dedication to the business. This helps everyone feel that they are part of your success and helps them understand when you need to dedicate your time to your new business. Keeping the lines of communication open is also another critical step.

Give your family periodic business updates so they can celebrate your success with you!

### Separate Family Time from Work Time

Working from home makes it challenging to "go home" at the end of the day. When your office is a couple of doors away, it's easy just to run in and check email or print a document or network on Twitter, etc. You get the picture.

It's essential to separate work time and family time so that your family knows when they can't bother you. It also helps you enjoy your time with your family when you are with them. That way, you can devote your entire time to being "in the moment" with your family, and savor the experience.

### Be Realistic About The Hours You Can Work

You might start out calculating your number of available hours to work each week like this:

***Kids' nap:*** 2 hours a day x 5 days = 10 hours.

***Spouse comes home*** at 6 p.m., and I can work until 10 p.m. That's 4 hours x 5 days = 20 hours.

***I can wake up and work*** 2 hours before the kids get up. That's 2 hours x 5 days = 10 hours.

Yeah! I can work the same 40 hours per week and earn big bucks!

***STOP!***

While the potential income opportunities of working 40 hours a week can be tempting, it's not realistic to think you can work a full 40 hours a week, every week. Even if you had a steady stream of clients and a backup waiting list of work, working this many hours can create new challenges that are somewhat avoidable.

First, you have to prepare for the unexpected. Children do not always sleep when you expect them to, and for the amount of time you want. If you have more than one child, they can tag-team you and sleep at different times, wake up at different times, have a stomachache, have a headache. The list goes on. If you schedule work for the maximum number of hours per week, you will find yourself scrambling to meet the deadlines.

Second, you need to account for time for you to rest and recoup. If you are working late and getting up early to work some more, you are burning both ends of the stick. Your health and well-being are more important than ever. Moms don't get sick days, and neither do self-employed business owners. If you are sick and can't work, that's like a deduction in your paycheck.

Third, scheduling yourself to work the full 40 hours a week will not give you time to network, increase your knowledge and skills by taking courses, or market your business. All these things are necessary to help your business grow and sustain a profitable income.

Take that time you calculated and chop it in half. Working 20 hours a week might be more realistic. Once you've found steady clients and can maintain those 20 hours comfortably while networking, improving your skills and marketing your business, then you can consider gradually increasing the number of hours.

### **Recognize Your New Learning Curve**

While the term, *mommy brain*, has roots in comic relief, there is something to be said about the time it takes to learn a new skill or concept when you are a work-at-home mom.

Learning a new skill takes patience, time and hard work. When you have your kids in the next room playing one minute, then screaming and fighting the next, it's difficult to

concentrate on the task at hand. Keep these things in mind when taking courses to expand your skills. Look for courses that are self-paced with videos or audio, have worksheets or printable documents to follow along and take notes, and, most importantly, unlimited access to training materials. This will help you take the time you need to learn and provide the opportunity to go back and refresh your memory when needed.

### **Ask For Help**

Sometimes you have to stop and realize that you can't do it all alone, and you need to ask for help. Whether you need someone to watch the kids for a few hours a week so you can get some work done or hire a housekeeper, it's okay to ask for help.

It is not a sign of weakness. It does not mean you are a bad mother or a bad business owner. It means you realize that your time is valuable, and you want to spend it on the things or people that are most important. Think of it this way, if you hire a housekeeper to clean your house once a week, that's four more hours you get to spend with your kids and family. If you need a housekeeper, but can't afford one, consider trading your services. Maybe the housekeeper you want to hire needs to find more work. In exchange for her services, you can offer to create some marketing flyers and advertisements for her services.

### **Find *YOU* Time**

This is one of the hardest things for moms to do, but you have to find some time for yourself, even if you can get out of the house for 30 minutes to get a cup of coffee by yourself, take a walk or whatever. You need time alone to let go of the daily stress of raising your family and having a business. It would be great if you could get some "me" time every day, but even once a week will be helpful. This time away will make you a better mom, a better spouse, and a better business owner.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### Beyond Virtual Assistance

Starting your virtual assistance business is only the beginning of a fruitful career. After you have had some experience as a virtual assistant, you will learn some valuable skills that you can use to take your career to the next level.

Many doors have opened for virtual assistants who have taken courses at VAClassroom University. We have students now teaching social media at local community colleges, local chamber of commerce events, and consulting for major companies. While students took the many courses to expand their skills and service offerings, their expertise put them on the map to bigger things. This is where networking offline pays off with your professional circle of influence.

Some VAs have started a second career helping others start their own virtual assistant business by creating informational products, holding weekly classes and coaching them and helping them build a virtual assistance business.

### Project Manager

VAs can begin by subcontracting with an established VA to get experience. Being a part of a multi-VA teams can be very beneficial for many reasons. One reason is that you will get exposure to other services that other VAs are offering and how each person has to do his or her part to complete the project. For example, if clients are going to launch a product, they need a sales letter, a squeeze page, a preview call, their shopping cart set up, auto responders ready, etc.

When you get to see a project from start to finish, and you learn what needs to get done, you might see the need for project management. That means someone is in charge of making sure deadlines are met within the budgeted number of hours. A

project manager is responsible for coordinating the tasks, assigning them to the subcontracting VAs, and following up, coordinating approvals with the client, customer service, and more.

By taking your VA skills to the next level, you can capitalize on this new expertise and offer it as a service to multi-VA teams or clients who have multiple VAs in their business.

### **Online Business Manager**

Taking the Project Manager position one step further is the Online Business Manager. An OBM, as it's commonly called, does more than coordinate the VA team. The OBM also helps the business owner strategize to take their business to the next level. In this role, the OBM acts as a project manager and a coach to help the business owner focus on growing the business.

In this position, an OBM works with fewer clients but has larger responsibilities. The income potential is also higher because this is a very specialized in demand skill.

As an estimate, OBMs earn about \$65 per hour, plus commission.

For more information about becoming an Online Business Manager, you can go to [www.OnlineBusinessManager.com](http://www.OnlineBusinessManager.com), or you can get the book, *Becoming an Online Business Manager: Playing a Bigger Game with Your Clients and Yourself*, by Tina Forsyth.

## Virtual Business Setup Checklist

Here is a quick checklist of to-do items for your new virtual business:

- ✓ Find a Business Name.
- ✓ Register your business name and obtain a Tax Identification Number.
- ✓ Pick your domain name (something related to the focus of your business).
- ✓ Establish your niche (the focus of your virtual business).
- ✓ Define your target client audience.
- ✓ Define your specific services.
- ✓ Set up your hourly rates and fees.
- ✓ Create a business policy sheet (and possibly have lawyer review).
- ✓ Recruit a website or blog site designer.
- ✓ Set up your website or blog and complete content for all pages (About Us; Services; Contact Form; a Policy Form, etc.).
- ✓ Find the right website or blog host.
- ✓ Prepare marketing materials (a presentation in both PowerPoint and PDF; business cards; a portfolio, etc.).
- ✓ Build your business/marketing plan.
- ✓ Setup a virtual office (include equipment outlined in Business Start-up Cost Breakdown sheet).
- ✓ Join online business networks, forums and communities to liaise with other VAs and connect with prospective clients.



- ✓ Define your schedule (especially if you are still working in another job or you are a work-at-home mom).

### Virtual Business Start-Up Costs

Here is an overview of the potential costs you may initially incur in your business:

**Note:** Basic costs – computer, desks, office equipment, etc.– are not included.

#### Business Item Costs

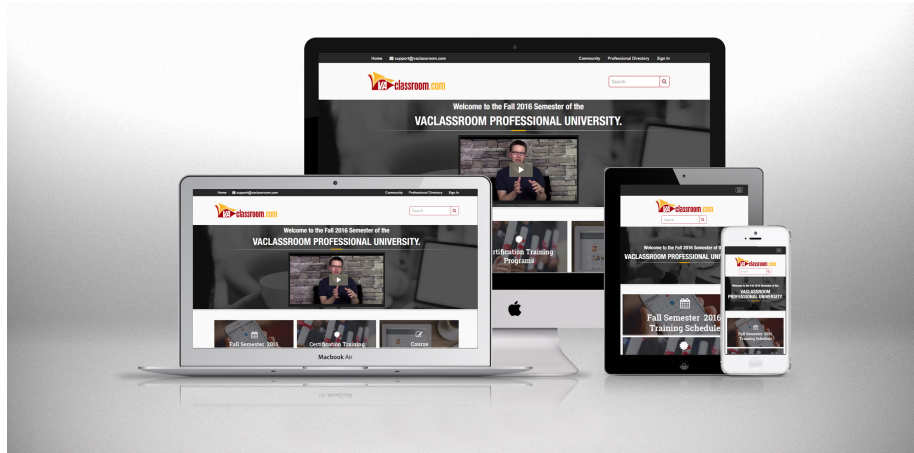
Domain Name	<\$10.00/year for one domain
Business Name Registration	\$150.00
Website or Blog Site Design	\$500.00
Website Host Server	\$70.00/year
Business Phone/Skype Line	\$50.00
eFax System	\$10.00/ month
Business Cards/Marketing Materials	\$75.00
Invoicing Tool (i.e., Freshbooks	\$14.00/month
Basecamp (i.e., Project Management)	\$24.00/month
Financial Software (i.e. Quickbooks)	\$69.00

### **Total Start-Up Costs < \$1000 To Set-Up VA Biz**

For less than \$1000.00, you can set up all you need to get your virtual business moving in the right direction! There may be other software programs you purchase along the way, but this is a good overview of the initial costs required. Now, if you do not own a laptop, you might consider picking one up so that you can further enjoy the freedom of location with your new virtual business!

In addition, I would highly recommend investing an additional \$500–\$600 in VA Business Training through online courses, as well as skills training courses at [VAClassroom University](#). Our industry leading programs will enable you to quickly establish a thriving virtual assistant business for yourself!

## About VAClassroom University



In 2008, we first launched VAClassroom and fondly remember those initial seven students that said YES to our first program. It was a very humble beginning and at the time, I honestly never thought that we would go from that very first class to delivering over 100 courses to 10,000 students in 40+ countries around the world.

**VAClassroom has now become the premier online training hub for existing and aspiring Virtual Assistants seeking to build a rewarding and thriving business online!**

I am very excited to introduce to you our newly designed [Virtual Assistant University](#) that will support and equip you to build and grow the ultimate Virtual Assistant business for yourself.

VAClassroom University is specially designed for Virtual Assistants like yourself to:

- DISCOVER the most ideal Virtual Assistant niche or specialization that will fuel your passion and create the best income opportunities for you and your family moving forward.

- LEARN and develop the right skills to attract better clients and elevate your income potential through our University featuring over 30 certifications, courses and workshops.
- CONNECT with experienced instructors, supportive mentors and your own VA peers to gain support, overcome challenges and create new opportunities for your business. At VAClassroom University, you are NOT alone! We believe it “takes a village to raise up an entrepreneur”.
- GROW your business to new levels every year as you fine-tune your skills, expand your services and create the kind of flexible and profitable VA business you’ve always dreamed of.

If you have any questions on the Virtual Assistant Industry or about the many courses and programs offered at our University, please don’t hesitate to drop us a note at:

[support@vaclassroom.com](mailto:support@vaclassroom.com)

To you success,

Craig & Kelly Cannings

Co-Founders, VAClassroom.com

