

So You Want To Be A Virtual Assistant? by Karen L. Reddick, MVA

With the virtual assistance industry being one of the fastest growing administrative services on the internet, many people are ready to jump on this well-reputed band wagon. But can you just wake up one day and say, “Today, I’m going to become a virtual assistant.” Sure you can, but will you be successful? Probably not. One thing is certain; you should have at least three to five years of administrative experience, preferably working with top-level executives, before even considering a career as a Virtual Assistant (VA). Here are 15 other crucial steps to think about before, during and after starting your virtual assistant business.

- 1) **Research, research, research!** What do other VAs offer? Pricing? Certifications? Memberships? Take the time to research other virtual assistant web sites. Make notes of what you like and dislike. Mimic (but not copy) what appeals to you.
- 2) **Get a web site** - I hope it goes without saying, that you will need a website. It doesn’t have to be flashy. Simple, professional-looking, with benefit-oriented copy wins out over bells & whistles every time.
- 3) **Network** - Join, at the very least, three virtual or face-to-face networking groups. No one will know you are “open for business” if you don’t tell them. Google networking groups in your immediate area as well as worldwide.
- 4) **Be excellent at what you do** - Not mediocre, not halfway, but excellent. The VA industry continues to grow and there is a lot of competition out there; you have to do or be something above the rest.
- 5) **Get certified** - There are several virtual assistant training and certification programs available. Take whatever steps you need to get some type of VA certification under your belt and stand one step above the crowd.
- 6) **Define your services** - Do you provide a niche or special services, or do you prefer to be open and a generalist? (Examples of niche services would be: bookkeeping, graphics, web design, transcription, writing/editing.) Choose what you do best, then market to clients in that group.
- 7) **Before you take the leap** - Purchase all the needed equipment and software upgrades you’ll need to run a professional office, which would include a high-quality all-in-one fax/printer/scanner/copier, extra phone lines, high-speed internet access, domain name and website.
- 8) **Think virtually** - Everything you do now will be technology based. The computer will become your best friend. All of your correspondence will be done via phone and email. Make sure your computer skills are top-notch. Learn as

- much as you can about the latest technology and continue to stay abreast of what's hot in your target market.
- 9) **Market like a prospective client** - When building your business, think like a client. What would you want in a VA? Then offer these skills and benefits.
 - 10) **Read, read, read!** - This is right up there with research, research, research. There are an abundance of "How-to" books on starting your virtual assistant business. If you can find free advice, all the better, but invest in a few quality books and learn all you can before you land that first client.
 - 11) **Get some training** - If you want to do it right, and have a few extra dollars to spend, you can't go wrong with hiring a coach or taking classes at an online virtual assistant university.
 - 12) **Be patient** - It will take, at the very least, four to six months of networking and marketing before you will land your first client.
 - 13) **One word: Referrals** - Word of mouth and referrals are what make your company grow. Doing quality work with a strong business ethic will get you referrals over and over again.
 - 14) **How do we contact you?** - Your contact information should be listed on everything. Business cards, website, email signature. Every time you send out any type of communication, always be sure to have all of your contact information easy to find and read.
 - 15) **Once you do land a client - Communicate.** Remember, your clients cannot see you sitting at your desk. A two-second email reply to clients' inquiries can make all the difference in creating trust in their minds, which will put them at ease and instill the necessary competence it takes for success.

© 2006 Karen L. Reddick, MVA, author of the A-Z Guide: The Best Ways To Work With A VA, has more than 30 years of administrative experience, the last five as a successful virtual assistant, and runs V-And-E-Services providing virtual assistance and editorial services to authors, writers and small businesses. Contact Karen@VAndEServices.com.
www.VAndEServices.com