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FROM: Diana Ennen

RE: Start your own Virtual Assistant or Word Processing Business at Home

Thank you for your request for information on starting or growing your virtual assistant or word processing business. We hope you find this information beneficial and it helps in providing you with suggestions for starting your own business or increasing your existing business.

We have been in business since 1985. Since that time we have seen the home-based business industry and the VA Industry skyrocket as more and more businesses realize how much they need a Virtual Assistant. Also, today with so many layoffs and the economy, we are finding those that need to earn extra income at home. Starting a Virtual Assistant Business is the perfect solution. This can be beneficial whether you want to start a full-time business or work part-time and add to your existing income.

If you are interested in starting a VA business, one of the most important things to know is how to promote yourself and your business to achieve maximum success. I think you'll find some very valuable tips here and I hope you find them beneficial. This informational package is full of articles as well as chapters from our books, and other information we felt would help those who wanted to start a business.

One question we often hear is should pay a fee to start a business? The answer is normally no. There are many companies out there today that claim that you can pay so much and they will give you a listing of clients looking to work with you. That is rarely the case. In starting your own business you need to know that you will need to be securing your own clients or working with an established virtual assistant business subcontracting. The great news is that businesses absolutely need our services and it has never been easier to get started

We encourage you to email me, sign up for our newsletter, check out our sites, and let us help you get started. Valuable information is available at our sites at www.virtualwordpublishing.com, www.vatheseries.com or www.virtualassistantstartups.com. My newsletter is packed full of new tips. We have a forum on www.virtualassistantstartups.com where you can post questions, etc.

We wish you the best of luck! If we at Virtual Word Publishing, Inc. can be of any additional assistance, please contact us at diana@virtualwordpublishing.com or (954) 971-4025. And by the way, we do hope you stay in touch and let us know how your business is going!

Virtual Assistants

Virtual Assistants (VAs) are highly skilled professionals who provide administrative support and specialized services to businesses, entrepreneurs, executives, and others who have more work to do than time to do it. Examples of services a VA can do include publicity and marketing, word processing, meeting and event planning, desktop publishing, internet research, e-mail coordination, business start-up consultations and so much more. This can be the perfect work-at-home opportunity for many with good computer and Internet skills.

This is a list of the services you can offer Virtual Assisting

- ❑ **Word Processing/Administrative Support – Become a Virtual Secretary.**
- ❑ **Editing/Proofreading:** Editing and proofreading client documents, books, websites, etc.
- ❑ **Writing:** Resumes, press releases, business letters, ghost writing, etc. Includes formatting papers and manuscripts, as well as business plans and reports
- ❑ **Publicity:** That's what I specialize in and the opportunities are endless!
- ❑ **Article and Press Release Submissions** – Submit press releases and articles for clients, including researching where to best submit them.
- ❑ **Desktop Publishing:** Design and layout of business cards, newsletters, flyers, catalogs, brochures, menus.
- ❑ **Transcription:** Transcribing medical, legal and general transcription.
- ❑ **General bookkeeping:** Process and mail invoices and statements. Bill paying, checkbook balancing, collection calls, bookkeeping, etc.
- ❑ **Meeting Planning:** Organizing all or various aspects of a meeting. This might include arranging meeting space, A/V requirements, speakers, food and beverage, sleeping rooms, contract negotiations, and transportation.
- ❑ **Event Planning:** Organizing all or various aspects of an event. This might include arranging for a venue, food and beverage or catering, contract negotiations, special transportation, security, and entertainment.
- ❑ **Realtor Support:** Includes marketing, bulk mailings, database management, letter writing, thank-you card writing, etc.
- ❑ **Internet Research:** Research and report findings on specific topics. You can do academic research, business and marketing research, locator services (alumni, family, military, etc.)
- ❑ **Concierge Services:** Dinner recommendations and reservations, tickets, travel research and arrangements, transportation arrangements, directions, gift buying, car rentals, general errand running.
- ❑ **Contact Management:** Maintain client database of contacts using a variety of applications like ACT, Goldmine, Lotus Organizer, Outlook and Maximizer.
- ❑ **Web Design, Development and Maintenance:** Design client websites. May include development of copy and ongoing maintenance
- ❑ **Real Estate Transaction Coordinator:** Realtor listing management, marketing/mail-out program coordination and contract-to-close processing. Can involve use of online transaction management programs.
- ❑ **Competitive Research:** Research clients' competitors and report findings

This is a list of the services you can offer doing *Word Processing Services*:

- Medical/Legal/General Transcription
- Business Correspondence
- Realtor Marketing/Database Management
- Resume Writing
- Database Maintenance
- Bookkeeping
- Desktop Publishing
- Academic Typing
- Editing/Proofreading
- Bookkeeping
- Etc.

Now what do you want to offer with your skills and expertise?

How To Start A Virtual Assistant Business

Setting up a virtual assistant business is relatively easy, but it's important to have a complete plan of action set out in advance. I'm a firm believer that the initial planning phase of a business is crucial to its success. This ensures that you don't leave any vital steps unaddressed and also prevents any unexpected surprises down the road. Therefore, I recommend first writing a complete business plan for your business. This plan doesn't need to be anything technical, just how you plan to operate your business including advertising methods, pricing, business hours, equipment and supplies needed, etc.

The next step is to select the appropriate name. Take your time here as you want your business name to be an asset by appealing to your potential clients. Your name needs to clearly express what services you provide and not limit you if you choose to expand your business into other areas. Decide on a name that people would want to call if they have virtual assisting needs.

To operate a business you are required by law to have the appropriate licenses. This is your permit to do business locally. It's a simple procedure that doesn't require a considerable amount of time. Contact your city and county officials under occupational licenses for complete details or go online. Most VAs start out initially as a sole proprietorship and then might change later.

Now it's time to set up your bookkeeping. I find that the most important ingredient to keeping good books is keeping it simple. If it's easy to do, and doesn't require a lot of effort, I tend to do it more regularly. You will want to keep track of all your income and expenses. Save all receipts and pay all your expenses out of your business checking account. A software program such as Quickbooks is ideal for our type of business. Not only does it allow you to keep accurate records, but it also enables you to track exactly where the most money is coming from. This enables you to target your marketing efforts more in that area.

Now you must decide how much to charge. Don't undercharge your services. Many make this mistake. They feel if they price their services substantially below everyone else, they'll get more business. That's true--you might get more business, but you'll also be working outrageous hours and not making the kind of income you should. The average prices being charged today are between \$25.00 and \$100.00, depending on the specialty. I personally recommend starting no lower than \$35.00/hr.

Now you need to get those clients. The key to successful marketing is to tell clients what benefits they will receive by answering their main question, "What's in it for me?" Keep in mind, you're not selling your services, you're selling the benefits of your services. What can you offer them that would make their business run more successfully? An example of this would be accurate dependable service done on an "as needed" basis.

It is also important to have an impressive marketing piece. Your brochures, letterhead, flyers, business cards, etc., should look sensational. Think back on what has caught your eye in the past. Now design your material with that in mind. The most important requirement is that it must be professional and convey that you are more than someone typing documents. Businesses want to deal with other professionals. They don't want to risk their work, and possibly their clients, on someone who is not. Let them know this is exactly what they will receive when they seek your services. Places such as Vistaprints offer affordable printing.

Once established, word of mouth is your best advertisement. When people get professional, accurate, and friendly service they tell others. If you offer such exceptional service, you can be assured that you will need to advertise only at the onset to get your business started. From then on, your repeat clients, and referrals from them, will keep your business thriving.

Recognition is also a key to success, whether it's through the press releases, articles, message boards, newspapers, chats, your website, radio or TV, when clients see your business repeatedly, they become familiar with your company and when the need arises, they will call you. Therefore consider where you can advertise that can keep your name out there.

Now that you've got the clients, you need to keep them. The best way to do this is to always provide them with more than they ask for. Go the extra mile on all assignments. Let them know that you value their business and are eager to help them succeed.

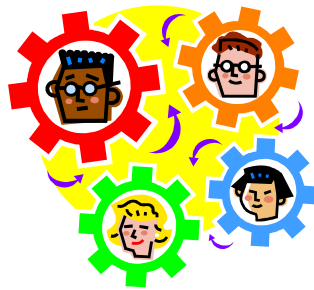
And finally, enjoy your business. Many start their own business to spend more time with their family. It's the perfect way to stay at home and still make an excellent income. Firmly set your hours and learn to say no. Remember it's your business and often your dream come true. By learning your limitations, you can keep it a wonderful experience that both you and your family will enjoy.

P.S. I recently did a teleseminar with Joan Stewart on Hiring a Virtual Assistant. I will have this CD available to anyone who would like a copy if you e-mail me at diana@virtualwordpublishing.com. I encourage you to go to her site and look at all the amazing things she offers. <http://www.marketerschoice.com/app/?af=262265>

Determining Your Specialty

Before you begin any marketing, you need to decide which areas you want to specialize (i.e., legal, medical, academic, publicity, resume consulting, desktop publishing, web designing, bookkeeping, article/press release distributions, etc.) and target those areas. It's a tendency at first to get as much work as possible and accept whatever work comes your way. Spreading yourself too thin diminishes your quality. You want to become an expert in your field. Find that niche.

This is not to say if you're specializing in medical transcription you can't do publicity and other things. I am merely suggesting that your main focus should be on medical transcription--not medical transcription, legal transcription, desktop publishing, and editing. By focusing your main efforts in one direction, you then can gain the reputation of "being the best in that field" and success is practically guaranteed. You want to find your niche!! (oh wait, I already said that ... but it's important enough to repeat!)



Once you have discovered who your potential clients are, then decide which marketing approach to use. Decide which method you are most comfortable with, and plan your advertising efforts with that in mind.

Remember that recognition is your key to success, whether it's through your press release, website, online forums, etc. When clients see your business repeatedly, they become familiar with your company and when the need arises, they will call you. Even if you send a release out and no one calls then, when you follow-up with another you gain that name recognition and by george, soon you'll get that call.

There are just a few specialties.



Legal Transcription

Legal transcription can be a virtual assisting/word processors dream field. If you have legal experience, you can easily get into this type of specialty and quickly make your business profitable. And the best news is that you only need just a couple of clients to establish a good client base. With legal transcription you will be doing is typing legal documents up for clients. You can type anything from a few letters, to entire legal brief or extensive court hearing. Often the secretaries at the attorneys' offices get so overwhelmed at the office, they can't keep up with the workload and don't have the time to train a temp. You can be a vital part of their legal practice.

To specifically market to attorneys, have your website emphasize with keywords and content that you specialize in legal transcription. Have a page dedicated to how to write pleadings, court hearings, etc. On that page, tell how a virtual assistant can meet those needs. You not only get clients to your site by keyword searches, but you also tell those who find your site by other means that you know what you are talking about.

Press releases, articles, write them often and include your city and state. Not only will they find you when you submit those out, but when they look up your name and business in internet searches, they see you are a pro.

Directly targeting them with letters and advertise in the legal publications in your area. Most cities have a newspaper that attorneys subscribe to that relates directly to legal issues. A section of this paper is usually devoted to freelance secretaries. Also advertise in the college newspapers that have law-related classes and be sure to place your flyer on their bulletin boards.

In addition, visit local attorneys' offices in your area. You can drop off a portfolio or your business card. If sending personalized letters, emphasize how beneficial your services could be to help with the overflow of work often encountered in a busy attorney's office. Let them know if you offer fax or pick up/drop off services. You might also want to contact other legal transcription services in the Yellow Pages and offer to help with their overload work.

And network. Go to business functions put on by the Chamber and other places that attorneys would frequent.

Targeting Authors – My specialty

I love working with authors. There is such an enormous need there. So many authors publish a book (whether self-published or published) and think they are done. Unfortunately that is just the beginning and you can be so instrumental in their success. Not to mention the great feeling of satisfaction when you do help your clients get their book recognized, whether via a great book review, mention in a major magazine or newspaper, etc.

Plus, you can be instrumental in typing their manuscripts, writing their screenplays, etc. In fact, I know a local virtual assistant who recently found huge success with this.

Let the author know all of the things you can do for them. You can do so much more than just submitting out their releases. For example, you can do some of the following:

- 1) Manuscript typing
- 2) Writing their Query Letters & Submitting
- 3) Submitting their book to publishers
- 4) Assist with creating a media kit
- 5) Sending out the media kit
- 6) Write and distribute press releases and articles
- 7) Secure book reviews
- 8) Find wholesalers/distributors
- 9) Set up book signings
- 10) Get radio and TV interviews
- 11) Review their website and offer recommendations
- 12) Help with keyword analysis
- 13) Set up Google Adword campaigns
- 14) Research blogs, websites, etc., that might be interested in client's book

How to find niche markets to sell books

After you have a clear understanding of the book and the target market –

- 1) Research the author's topic.
- 2) Spend time on the sites of interest. Find out ways to get your clients' book featured there. Look to see what additional things they might offer. For example, Reader's View offers to authors of the books they review the option to be interviewed and they write and submit a press release for them at a very reasonable rate.
- 1) Submit articles to sites that your author's target audience would frequent, or that are on topics similar to the book you are promoting. Determine their guidelines and follow those guidelines.
- 2) If they review books, follow their guidelines for submitting books for review. It's always best to e-mail and ask permission to send books, if that's what they request.
- 3) Set up Google Alert for your author's topic. Respond to blogs, websites, etc.

The Insurance Industry

Insurance agents and insurance adjusters are excellent target markets. They often need help with just about everything; and that's good news to us. We can help them with their daily correspondence, regular mailers, late notices, large insurance claims, accident claim reports, etc. Many insurance agents don't have a private secretary so they can utilize us on an "as needed" basis.

Insurance adjusters often have long client statements to be transcribed. They will have taken a client's statement for their client, and need to have it transcribed so they can forward it on. They can sometimes be long and tedious, but very profitable. Pay close attention to detail. This statement alone can sometimes make a difference in the outcome of a claim. Sometimes it can be quite exciting to see it unfold. I've discovered that there definitely are some people out there who are trying to scam the insurance companies. It's pretty neat when an adjuster can catch them. Often as you're typing along you can see it coming. And we thought being a virtual assistant was boring!

What's even better is that insurance agents are great to target in the Internet world. They've almost all gone computerized, and the majority now have websites. For the small agents who aren't with big companies, they are thrilled to have our expertise not only in web design and search engine placement, but in setting up their computer system and entering data, promotional and marketing help, and with the day-to-day e-mail and follow-up correspondence. You'd think in today's world that everyone would already know this, but they don't! Agents were taught to sell insurance. I've developed a great network of agents now and I can tell you that they appreciate the support that the VA community is providing them.

Many agents are actively engaged in other organizations in their spare time and can use assistance there as well. For example, Jack Goldstein Jr., an insurance agent with one of the leading insurance firms in Columbus, Ohio, uses VAs on a regular basis. He is also very active in the local JayCee's and requires help with their correspondence typing, as well all of their promotional materials, flyers, newsletters, event scheduling, etc. He states that he doesn't have the time required to do the typing and composing of these, but he gladly pays a VA to help him out. He states that his office runs more efficiently with the use of his VA (ME!).

Mr. Goldstein went on to state, "They can be instrumental when you are planning a big event, like the 4th of July celebration. I needed help with almost all aspects of it. My VA was able to schedule the event, keep track of all the income and expenses, contact contributors and follow-up with written authorizations and letters, etc. I couldn't have done it without her." I was able to continue doing my insurance work and she was able to keep the event rolling. By the way, the event went off as a huge success.

To obtain insurance clients, there are several means that you can utilize.

- Direct mail sending your business cards and/or brochures.
- Composing a website.
- Dropping your cards off at local office supply companies and printers.
- Networking at local organizations, Chamber of Commerce Business Fairs, etc.
- Advertising in community newsletters.
- Yellow Page Advertising
- Word of Mouth
- Volunteer Work

- Articles and press releases on topics
- And of course of FAVORITE – Social Networking .. Be where they ARE

The Real Estate Industry

The Real Estate Industry needs our help right now. And by George (I say that a lot don't I), we are here to help. WE CAN and will turn the housing crisis around. I truly believe it. We can help agents sell more houses with our marketing efforts. We can help them with their databases, communications with clients, you name it, we can help them.

I always talk about filling a need. Can you imagine there being a bigger need than helping a realtor turn around their business. See what I mean in how vital we can be.

Realtors use virtual assistants to answer their e-mail, schedule their appointments, coordinate their closings, marketing, etc. I know of a local realtor who has 11 agents working for him. One agent works here in south Florida, but uses a VA in Orlando. She has a cell phone listing in Orlando. He says it's as if she's right here. He has utilized her services for years for every aspect of his business. According to him, and I quote, "There's no way I could run my business without her today. She keeps on top of everything. She schedules my day. Tells me where I need to be. Does all of the paperwork. That allows me to go out and sell. I rely on her for everything". You know she will get a nice Christmas bonus this year.

There are other ways to target realtors. I was able to get many real estate clients through my direct mailings, Yellow Page ads, web page, networking, online boards, etc. For local clients, I even drove around local areas and contacted them. Looking for signs in my neighborhood, I wrote to them and introduced myself asking if I could help with their marketing. I did land a regular client that way who turned into a very profitable income to my business. He was looking for something different to catch the neighbor's attention. I had lived in the area for years. I knew what had been done before and I came up with a new idea. It worked. It was a little costly, but he made a great deal of money on it and better yet for him, he became known in the community and the realtor of choice.

Many realtors will want you to do their entire marketing for them. I work with another agent who states he felt that his time would be better spent out there selling houses, so he just said basically, "Go for it." Even in our initial interview he was in between appointments and in a hurry, but I made sure that I had all the information I needed to be effective. Also, knowing that he was extremely busy, I asked what was the best way to contact him when I did have a question. This is very beneficial.

Marketing Your Business – Let’s Talk Turkey

One fear of starting a home-based business is not being able to obtain clients. Marketing a home-based business doesn’t need to be expensive or difficult, but it’s a necessary requirement. Even though you offer exceptional services, you **MUST** market your services effectively in order to get the word out.

When outlining your marketing strategy, consider the following:

- Meeting clients’ needs.
- Offering clients a convenience.
- Solving clients’ problems.
- Providing clients with something better than what they currently have.

When marketing your business, tell clients of the *benefits* they will receive by answering their main question, “What’s in it for me?” **KEEP IN MIND, YOU’RE NOT SELLING YOUR SERVICES, YOU’RE SELLING THE BENEFITS OF YOUR SERVICES.**

By carefully planning your advertising efforts, you get the best return on your dollars. You can also take advantage of the many ways of obtaining free advertising. But first you’ll need to have the basics. When clients call you want to be able to supply them with something that shows them that choosing your services is the best thing they can do.

Create a Portfolio / Proposal

A portfolio is a folder that contains pertinent information about your services. You can create your own portfolio by choosing a nice folder and putting a customized label on it.

It’s also just as important as a VA to have a **online portfolio prepared** too. This is one that you can send to potential clients upon their initial e-mail request. Once a client shows even the slightest interest, send your professional portfolio to convince them they need you.

It can also serve as a proposal. In fact, today that’s what I do. Once I talk to a client, I tell them I will send my proposal to them. I have these prepared in advance for the different types of services I do, so I can easily personalize it.

My online proposal includes

- ❑ Cover letter
- ❑ Proposal
- ❑ Bio
- ❑ Price Sheet
- ❑ Testimonials

A portfolio that I would send out includes:

- ❑ Business cards either stapled to the inside right-hand cover or the pre-cut slot folders (put extras cards inside the folder as well for the client to keep)
- ❑ Introductory Letter—customized to them
- ❑ Bio
- ❑ Mission Statement (optional)
- ❑ Proposal
- ❑ Brochure (if you have one)
- ❑ Press Releases/Articles/News About Your Business (Or About A VA Business)
- ❑ Testimonials
- ❑ Coupons
- ❑ Price Sheet
- ❑ Samples (Directly Pertaining to that Firm)

This is what sets you apart from the REST ... BE THE BEST ... Prepare one now.

Benefits / Benefits / Benefits

That's What We're Talking About

Tell Potential Clients How You Can Meet Their Needs

And Why YOU are the Right VA For Them

Word of Mouth Advertising

Word of mouth is **ABSOLUTELY YOUR BEST ADVERTISEMENT!!** When people get professional, accurate, and friendly service, they tell others. If you offer such exceptional service, you can be assured that you will need to advertise only at the onset to get your business started. From then on, your repeat clients, and referrals from them, will keep your business thriving.

Word of mouth advertising occurs when one person tells another what you do. If this person was satisfied with your services, then he will provide a reference. If he was **REALLY** satisfied with your services, then he will provide an **EXCELLENT** reference. Always try to go the extra mile for your clients. When clients get more than what they expected and paid for, they will tell others.

It doesn't hurt though to ask for recommendations. Post them on your website and in your portfolio.

Your Web Site – Make it Shine!

As a Virtual Assistant—It's critical that you have a website! It's a must. And not just any website, but a professional website that clearly tells potential clients why they should hire you.

It should be unique and tell the clients about your services. But don't just list your services. Tell them why your services will benefit them.

This definitely can be one of your most important marketing tools. As such, you **NEED** to make it good.

Here are some key points to consider when designing your site. They should be:

Easy to Navigate: Needs to be clear and easy to navigate without a lot of extras. Even those who know little about the Internet should be able to cruise your site, page by page, with ease.

Easy to Read: Many think more is better and that is not always the case. Avoid lengthy paragraphs. Be mindful of the background and graphics used. In many cases the color contrasts make it difficult to read the text.

Easy to See What You Provide: Clients should be able to find your services easily, without digging for information. Your services, your specialty, and the benefits you offer your client should be clear-cut.

Easy to Contact You: It's extremely important for those who stop by your site to be able to contact you. Posting a contact number and a city and state, if you don't wish to include your full address, gives legitimacy to your business.

Add Testimonials: Publishing your client's testimonials on your website increases your credibility to new clients. When you receive a good reference from a client, ask permission to publish it on your site. Offering them a link in return is a great incentive.

Put contact information on every page—make it easy for your customer to contact you.
Color: Always think of your client when deciding color and design.

If you aren't familiar with how to design a website, then hire a professional to do it for you. You will be so glad you did. Also, stop by my website and see what you think.
<http://www.virtualwordpublishing.com>.

Write & Submit Press Releases

A press release is a direct and inexpensive route to not only editors, but more importantly your potential clients. This marketing often produces more results than a classified advertisement, as people don't consider an article they read in the newspaper advertising. Not only does your company gain credibility, but you're considered an expert in your field. Although it requires more effort on your part, the results are well worth it. Many virtual assistants acknowledge that they effectively use press releases to drum up business. It is absolutely one of my best marketing tools. Plus, with Google Alerts today, it gets you right in line with your target audience. Plus, it's also a service that you can offer clients, writing their press releases. It's a win/win for all.

The main prerequisite to an effective press release is to make it "newsworthy." To become newsworthy, you need something unique or different to say. If you send your newspaper a press release simply advising that you run a business, they are going to dispose of it immediately. What newspapers want is news or information that will benefit their readers.

Also, keep in mind the press releases of today are geared toward your audience. In year's past you wrote them for newspaper editors. With the Internet today, the potential client sees them. See why I'm such a fan of doing this?

Here are some other tips:

1. If you're writing a press release, you have to determine what it is that makes it publishable. Use an angle that will catch the editor's interest.
2. That all important title – include your keywords in there, but also have it impressive enough for someone want to read the release, and also to post the release.
3. The first paragraph should contain the most important information. It begins with the name of your **city, state: and then date**. It should explain the title. And also it needs to compel the reader to read more.
4. Use short, common words, short sentences and short paragraphs. Write in the 3rd person. Provide tips and information, not just info about your company.
5. Make it enjoyable. Something you would want to read.
6. The ending paragraph needs to have the "Call to Action." Make sure to summarize your press release and tell them how to get in touch with you or whomever the release is about. This is important.
7. Proof, proof and reproof it. Okay, now go back and proof it again. YES, it is that important.

Elements Of A Release

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Always send your press releases out to online press release places. I've included some below. Also, don't forget to post your pr on your newsletter, blog, website, etc.

Sample Press Release Submission Places (some free, some paid)

1888pressrelease.com	http://www.1888pressrelease.com/
Virtual Word Publishing	http://www.virtualwordpublishing.com/
Best Syndication (article, but excellent)	http://www.bestsyndication.com
Web Wire (paid)	http://www.webwire.com
MediaSyndicate.com	http://www.mediasyndicate.com/
PRInside	http://www.pr-inside.com/
Big News Biz	http://www.bignews.biz/
Express Press Release	http://express-press-release.net/
PR Canada NET	http://www.pr-canada.net/
PRCompass	http://prcompass.com/
PressAbout	http://www.pressabout.com/index.php/submit-press-release/
Online Press Releases	http://www.onlinepressreleases.com/
ClickPress	http://www.clickpress.com/cgi-bin/releases/add.cgi
PressBox Co.	http://www.pressbox.co.uk/cgi-bin/links/add.cgi
PR	http://www.pr.com/
PR Leap (paid)	http://www.prleap.com/
Malebits	http://www.malebits.com/
PR Free	http://www.prfree.com
SanePr	http://www.sanepr.com
PR Nuke	http://www.prnuke.com/
PR Zoom	http://www.przoom.com/news/4652/
PR Urgent	http://www.prurgent.com/
Express Press Release	http://express-press-release.net/submit-press-release.php
Free Press release	Free-Press-Release.com
1-Newswire	http://i-newswire.com/submit_free.php
PR9.net	http://www.pr9.net/
Open Pr	http://www.openpr.com
Virtual Assistant Startups	http://www.virtualassistantstartups.com (Virtual assistant related)
Press Release Network	http://www.pressreleasenetwork.com
Ideamarketers.com	http://www.ideamarketers.com

Pressmethod.com	http://www.pressmethod.com/
The Open Press	http://www.theopenpress.com
PR-USA net	http://www.pr-usa.net
Prnewswire (paid)	http://www.prnewswire.com/
Prweb (paid)	https://secure.dataovation.com/prweb/login.php
PRZoom.com	http://www.przoom.com/
PRarticle	http://www.prarticle.com
SBWire.com (paid)	http://www.sbwire.com/
Newswire today	http://www.newswiretoday.com
Press Release Spider	http://www.pressreleasespider.com
Free-Press-Release-Center.info	http://www.free-press-release-center.info/press-release-articles.html
Usanews (paid)	http://www.usanews.net/submit/archives_post.htm

Contact me at diana@virtualwordpublishing.com for our Article Database. It rocks!

Write Articles – Become an Expert

I highly recommend writing articles in your area of expertise. Be aware of the hundreds of e-magazines and newsletters available. You can easily become an expert and gain a great reputation online. You establish yourself as an expert and reach your targeted market.

I've included numerous articles at the end of this booklet. Feel free to use these articles. That's one of my big tips here Add on the bio that the articles are free to use as long as the author's bio remains intact. Then, it's like that ole' Every Ready Bunny ... it just keeps going and going and going. (You get the picture!)

Plus, writing and distributing articles is another service you can offer clients today! Isn't that fabulous.

Networking

Networking allows you to let your potential clients know who you are and that you have a business that's just ready to help them. It can be an integral part of your business and a wonderful tool to use to get clients. There are so many opportunities in your community, business get-togethers, business happy hours, Chamber meetings, Woman's Meetings, etc. Get active. Get Involved. It's fun. It's a night out and a way to promote your business. Have your business cards handy. **A good 30 second speech prepared is a must.** A happy, confident relaxed you.

Plus, as parents we frequent PTA meetings, baseball games, college classes, soccer games, church groups, etc. Often we run into others who can utilize our services. Have your business card handy and also consider a magnet or something that they can take with them.

Making your name familiar to prospective customers is the basis for successful networking. People are more willing to work with a new service if they have heard about you or have had the opportunity to meet you. They gain confidence that you can help their business.

To locate seminars in your area, look in your local newspaper. Most newspapers provide a "Bulletin Board" of the social events of the week, usually in the section on local news. You can also contact the Chamber of Commerce or other networking groups. Start your own!

One way to network is to contact other virtual assistants. You might be able to work out an arrangement where you send each other work. For example, often times I get too busy to take on a new client. I will then send them over to another virtual assisting business. She will do the same for me when she gets too busy. It's good to be able to send clients to someone who can get the job done for them. As many of you know this is called subcontracting, and it's a fabulous way to grow a business.

Online networking is an extremely effective way to network. Many VAs recommended this approach as an effective way to spread the word about your services and to get advice on operating your business successfully. Not only can it provide you with a wealth of information, but also access to other professionals and home-based businesses. You will discover there are hundreds of other VAs that can help you get your business started and keep it running successfully and who are

eager to do so. You can network through associations such as IVAA and all the others that we have mentioned throughout the book. And don't forget the associations such as HBWM.com, Mompreneurs Online, VANetworking, and others.

Frequent boards and utilize your signature with your website and business name. Use the same boards and be consistent so people get to know you. It's a great way to meet potential clients.

Prepare Newsletters – Connect with Clients & Potential Clients

Newsletters are an extremely effective marketing tool. Many virtual assistants stated that they prepare a monthly or bi-monthly newsletter and it substantially increases their business. It's not hard to do and only needs to be a page or two of relevant information to the group you're targeting. I highly recommend this. I also consider when someone signs up for my newsletter that even though they might not use my services at this time, if I keep sending them information showing what I can do, I have a better chance of landing them down the road. Plus, you always hear the importance of capturing those email addresses when someone comes to your website. This is what you are doing with your newsletter. They are signing up and saying, I want to hear more from you.

Your newsletters could include any or all of the following: a personal message, any new services you offer, a humorous quotation or joke, your articles, a collection of valuable small business tips, any testimonials you have, and any other pertinent information you feel would be of interest. I will often include a recipe or contest too to make it more enjoyable. Also, on my site I mention that I will send out newsletters and press releases and articles. That way, they know that in addition to the newsletter, they will receive the press releases I submit.

You should also check to see what newsletters in your area are available to advertise in. For example, if you offer medical dictation, there are several newsletters targeted specifically for doctors that offer advertising for freelance virtual assistants. For additional information, contact medical professionals in your area and seek their assistance.

In my area, there is also a newsletter put together by real estate agents. This quarterly publication reaches every household in our community, the rates are inexpensive, and it gets good results.

Don't forget to check online as well. There are fabulous newsletters out there that allow advertising.

Clients who use VAs for publicity will often want the VA to create a newsletter for them and keep it updated. This is a GREAT Service for you to provide to potential clients.

Oh by the way, why don't you stop now and go sign up for my newsletter on my site at www.virtualwordpublishing.com. Thanks!

Create A Mailing List -- Send Postcards/ Newsletters/ etc. (online and offline)

You should create a mailing list (email list, etc.) of all your clients and potential clients. (Note, when they sign up for your newsletter, you are effectively doing this.) As your repeat clients are

going to be your main bread and butter, you will want to keep your name in front of them. Therefore, occasionally send them updates on your business, any new services you perform, a newsletter, a holiday greeting, a postcard, etc. Let them see that you really value them as a client.

Direct Mail

I have had great success with direct mail. Keep in mind that I also help word processors start their business in addition to virtual assistants. The tips here might not allow to all. But also, with all the online marketing today, I feel it's great to remember the importance of having something arrive by mail.

Take the time to compose a letter that effectively conveys what your business can do for them. The first sentence has to be POWERFUL AND INVITING. Think how many letters you have thrown away after reading that one sentence. Don't just say -- let me introduce our services, say something like -- "**We are proud to ...**" them see that confidence immediately. Avoid the term unique and avoid bolding your own company name. Instead bold areas of importance. Use bullets wherever possible. Keep your letter short and to the point, leaving them eager to know more about your services.

What does your business offer that the others don't? Tell them. Emphasize your dependability and the quality of services you provide. Your business should be a cut above the others. Let clients know that in this letter.



Who To Target With Advertising Letters (In Specialty Areas)

Attorneys' offices respond well to professionally prepared sales letters. For **medical transcription** work, target individual medical practices and local hospitals. Hospital Radiology Departments and various other departments frequently require assistance in typing reports. Call first and find out who is the head of the department and direct your correspondence to that person. Don't forget to target local chiropractors, therapists, and testing facilities.

New businesses are also great markets to target. These companies generally cannot afford a full-time secretary yet. Obtain their address by looking in the classified section of your local newspaper under Legal Notices--Fictitious Names. This section lists each new company complete with name and address. Also, your local legal publication lists all companies who registered for county licenses. This is found under their "Occupational License" section. You can also obtain these new business mailing list companies.

The following are businesses that respond well to sales letters:

Attorneys	New Businesses
Temporary Agencies/Secretarial Agencies	Mortgage Companies
Chiropractors/Doctors/Specialists	Real Estate Agents
Insurance Agents	Florists
Hospitals	Hotels/Motels
Schools (Colleges, High Schools)	Condominiums
Court Reporting	

The list goes on. Think of the areas you would enjoy typing and specifically target those areas. I sat down with the Yellow Pages one night and skimmed through the entire book getting ideas of companies that could benefit from my services.

Personally Marketing Your Services

This type of marketing involves personally visiting local businesses in your area. Plan your day and map out your specific route in advance. Try to speak with the office manager whenever possible. Inform him/her that you operate a home-based word processing business and are available to help with the overflow of work on an *as needed basis*. Know precisely what you are going to say and quickly highlight your services. Sell yourself well.

Look the part. **You are a professional entrepreneur who is operating a successful word processing or virtual assisting business.** Dress like it. I wish I could tell you that image doesn't make that much difference, but it does. Potential clients have not had a chance to know you or your work; their only impression is what they see right then.

COMMENT: Be courteous of the offices that don't allow solicitors. Find out the address and send a letter. For example, most buildings close to the courthouse have dozens of attorneys.

The following are businesses you can personally visit:

Printing Companies: When I started my business, I obtained several of my best full-time clients from referrals from local printers. Go to all the local printers in your area armed with business cards and a business card holder. Inform them that you operate a business in the area and, since their customers often require typing done, you would appreciate it if they would pass along your card.

Once a printer starts referring clients to you, stop in occasionally. On holidays, I usually take candy or a popcorn tin for the staff. This lets them know I appreciate their referrals. They now look forward to seeing me (and my goodies) around the holidays.

Attorneys/Doctors/Real Estate Offices/Travel Agencies: These offices respond well to personal marketing. You can either drop off your business cards or leave a **portfolio**. Although it's a little more expensive, I recommend the portfolio. Rarely will you get to meet with the potential client then. However, by leaving something tangible to look at, frequently you will receive calls later asking to set up an appointment.

If you are planning to leave business cards, consider **purchasing business cards that insert directly into the Rolodex**. These professionals might not have an immediate need, but could require your assistance later. They simply put your card into their Rolodex and then when a need arises, they contact you.

With real estate offices, insurance agencies, and travel agencies, let them know that in addition to business correspondence typing, you can be instrumental in their marketing efforts. Emphasize that in addition to maintaining their database, you can also create an impressive marketing package that will get results!! Recently I have had great success in marketing to real estate agents by emphasizing that I can help make their business grow. I include samples of recent mailings (flyers, brochures, 3-fold mailers, etc.) I've created and also samples of a database list (done in Excel) and labels. They can then see that I'm able to "take over their marketing" and thus, free them to do what they do best -- SELLING!!

Yellow Page Advertising

To obtain a free listing in the Yellow Pages, install a separate business telephone line. This separate business line costs slightly more than a regular residential line; however, you get a free listing in the Yellow Pages under the section of your choice. This ad includes your company name, address, and telephone number.

TIP: If you plan to advertise in the Yellow Pages, call and find out their deadline. You would hate to miss the deadline by a few weeks and have to wait an entire year.

Many communities have their own community telephone directories. This can be an inexpensive means of obtaining additional advertising. Also check to see if colleges in your area have advertising available in their phone directories.

Advertising In Newspapers

Do your homework before you place a single ad. Find out how much the ad costs, how they charge (by the line, word, column inch, etc.), how long the ad runs, and how much competition you have. My experience in advertising has proven that some weeks there can be five or six individuals advertising for the same type of business and then a week later, none. Many people run their ad only once. Therefore, if I see that it is a popular week, I'll wait.



Newspapers: The good thing about advertising in the newspapers is that generally you get an immediate reply. One virtual assistant I spoke with stated the first day her ad appeared, she got three new full-time clients. From that point on, she actually had to turn work away. That is rare, but it can happen, especially if no one has advertised in that paper for quite some time.

Go to your local newsstand, bookstore, or street corner that carries newspapers and buy all of them. Now compare their rates, ad size, amount of competition, and how long their ad runs. Decide which newspaper would most effectively serve your needs. One key that I've found to determining whether I want to place an ad in a paper is consistency. If I notice a company repeatedly places an ad in a paper, obviously they are getting good results from it.

Local Weekly Paper: Most cities have a local paper distributed throughout the community once a week, which is generally free. One advantage to these papers is that you can run your ad for longer periods of time because they offer lower rates. Thus, you gain recognition. Also, check to see if they offer business card postings. These usually catch more attention than a regular line ad.

College Newspapers: You can also advertise in the local college newspapers. Mention your years of experience, dependability, editing experience, etc. Often there is a great deal of competition in these papers. Therefore, word your ad to be the one that students call first by emphasizing your strengths.

(Also, don't forget to send press releases and articles to colleges. You can find these at www.newslink.org.)

Legal/Medical Publications: If you offer specialty typing, such as legal dictation, advertise in your local legal or medical publication. The price is slightly higher than advertising in the daily newspapers, but you specifically target the appropriate clients. (If you're unsure if you have a paper in your area such as this, contact a local attorney's office and ask for information.)

Check to see if you have any newspapers that target a specific group. For example, in my area we have a newspaper called Employment Digest, which lists employment opportunities. I get a great deal of resume clients and tutoring clients from my ad.

Daily Newspapers: Finally, you can advertise in your daily newspaper. These are generally more expensive than the other choices. However, keep in mind that even if you get a new client or two every week, the ad is paying for itself. Once you establish your business, you rarely will have to advertise again. Advertise in their Business Service Directory section if they have one. It's cheaper and the ad runs for a longer period of time.

TIP: Most of the newspapers list their ads in alphabetical order by the first letter of the heading. Compose your ad accordingly.

You need to know which ads are working and which are not. Ask your clients where they saw your ad. You can also place something in your ads that would designate a particular paper. For example, you can put your name in some ads and leave it out in others. If people call and ask for you by

name, you know where they saw your ad. By tracking your ads, you know where to best invest your money.

A little research can go a long way in saving you money in advertising. Find the most reasonable rates, compose the most effective ads, and then test the ads to see which ones produce the best results.

MY BEST ADVICE – BELIEVE IN YOU!!!

The most important ingredient for success is the **belief in yourself that you can do it**. There is no room for self-doubt when you start your own business. It requires a tremendous amount of courage and faith to walk up to your present employer, quit your job, and then start out on your own. You need to be confident in your decision that you **WILL** make it. Keep telling yourself--**YOU CAN DO IT!!**

Master These Qualities

Professionalism: This is your key to clinching those new clients. You need to convey that you're not a small-time operator working primarily from your kitchen table. You are an ambitious entrepreneur with state-of-the-art equipment and exceptional skills and knowledge. Convince them that they *need your expertise* to make their business run smoother and more successfully.

Businesses want to deal with other professionals. They don't want to risk their work, and perhaps their clients, on someone who is not. People hire people whom they trust and can relate to. It's absolutely imperative from day one to maintain this professional image.

Confidence: When you meet clients either in person, on the phone, or via e-mail, you need to feel assured of yourself and your business; it has to show. You need to convince them that you know you can make their business better, as you have done for others in the past. Having self-confidence is a matter of learning to trust in yourself and your abilities. *Do you believe that you're the best? Do you believe that you can make a difference in this client's business?* You should.

The Right Attitude: Possess a positive "I CAN DO IT" attitude. If you doubt yourself, it will show. I love what I do and it shows. I hope you love your business as much and it will show as well.

Aggressiveness: To achieve almost anything in life, you need to be aggressive. You have to get out there and go for it. This isn't the time to sit back passively and hope for the best. Take charge. Let them see that you believe in your business. Your clients will be telling you of their needs and you will be convincing them that you can fill those needs. Let them know they are making the right decision in seeking your company's assistance. Keep control of the conversation, but don't appear pushy or offensive.

Knowledge of Their Particular Field: If you've done your homework, you can impress your potential clients with your knowledge of their business. People love to talk about their business. If you show them you already have an understanding of their needs, they will gain the confidence that throughout your relationship you will always be one step ahead.

Experience: Relaying your prior experience gives clients confidence in your ability. One way to present your expertise is to personalize your resume for individual clients. For example, if you're meeting with a personal injury attorney, emphasize your legal strengths. If you're meeting with a professor, emphasize your academic strengths.

Don't feel because you're new and starting out that you don't possess any experience. You do. How long have you been working at your present jobs? How confident are you in your abilities? Even if this is your first day in business, you're taking with you years of prior secretarial experience and skills. There is no need for any client to know that you're just starting out.

First Impressions: These are vital to your success!! That client is going to make a decision on whether he or she feels confident with your services within seconds after meeting you, whether it's personally or on the phone (or email as well). These first impressions can be strong and difficult to change. It's much easier to make a good first impression than change a bad one.

You can also do this for all your online clients as well. Even though you won't personally be stopping by, you are getting your name in front of them by sending them reminders of you. I've even ordered pizzas for one of my online client's staff. I found out from the office manager that every payday Friday they order out. I sent the money in advance to the office manager and she placed the order. Boy, were they surprised. They loved it. (Next time I might need a favor, I bet they remember this too!)

It's normal to be a little nervous at first. However, it won't be long until talking to clients will become as second nature to you as writing an email is now. The most important thing is not to show it. You need to portray your confidence and stability in your initial interview. The more prepared you are, the smoother things will go.

Spend the time before you respond back to check out their website, get to know their business. They will feel much more confident working with you when you do.

Remember one important thing--your business is offering a valuable service that they need. It practically sells itself. Your company should always strive for **perfection** and in doing so, you can offer these clients "**the best of the best.**" That confidence should be evident in everything you say and do.



Final Notes

We hope you enjoy our booklet and your business is a great success. Let us know if we can be of any additional assistance. If you like our booklet, let us know. If you have additional tips, we'd love to hear them. Also, stop by our site often as we update it frequently.

If you'd like information on any of our books, stop by our site or contact me directly. I'd love to talk with you. I have lots of freebies I'd be happy to send you.

To your success!

Diana Ennen



My Articles and Press Releases

Please feel free to use the “Articles” on your site, blog, newsletter, etc., as long as the bio remains intact.

By the Way ... say hello to the reason I do this.

My kids ... Jeremy, Amanda and Amber

As many of you know I started my business when Jeremy was born and now he’s graduating college this year. I truly believe that my kids have benefited with seeing me work at home and achieve so many of my dreams.



My Family

Virtual Assistants Globally Taking Clients To New Frontiers - The International Connection

You would have to live under a rock to not hear about the latest craze that is spanning the globe - Virtual Assistants. With the economic outlook diminishing, and more and more companies working with fewer employees, businesses are flocking to find the right virtual assistant for their team. The need is simple: Someone that can do the work virtually, professionally, and with the upmost of confidentiality. Fortunately, Virtual Assistants meet all those needs and more.

Virtual Assistants, like their clientele, are highly skilled professionals working as independent contractors from their home offices. Virtual Assistants use leading edge technology to communicate work assignments via the Internet, e-mail or disk transfer. Traditional methods such as regular mail and overnight shipping are also used. While most Virtual Assistants will never meet their clients, it is not unusual to find a VA providing pickup and delivery service in their local area. Many have found success in a combination of the two, local and virtual clients. And what is even more impressive, is that most Virtual Assistants now realize the amazing power of the Internet and their client base spans globally.

The ultimate goal of Virtual Assistants is to partner with their clients. By partnering the VA learns all they can about their clients' business to become a trusted and valued member of the team—an extension of their organization. At the same time, the VA only charges for time on tasks so it ultimately saves the client in overhead expenses while affording them the necessary time to take care of more business.

A perfect example of a Client/VA partnership is the sole proprietor; let's say a consultant, who charges \$300 an hour for his consulting services. The consultant is spending time each week preparing presentations and teleseminars, rummaging through paperwork, marketing his business, keeping up with the social networks, generating mailings and sorting through the tons of email he gets on a weekly basis. Since the consultant is doing this work himself he is paying \$300 an hour for these services when, in reality, it would benefit him to partner with a VA at a rate of \$40 to \$95/hr (depending on specialty) and save tons of money a year. Plus, he could be generating more revenue because he would have more time available for doing what he does best—consulting. See how it works? As evidenced in this example, clients can't afford NOT to have a virtual assistant on their team.

In addition to the financial rewards for the client, the following list reinforces other areas clients benefit when working with a virtual assistant.

Personalized attention – The virtual assistant works one-on-one with clients and often knows their clients' business better than they do. That personalized attention allows clients to keep things under control and more organized and often relieves the pressure of having to do it all and remember it all. How great would it feel to just say to your VA, please handle this for me and know that it was done.

Exceptional service – Virtual Assistants are a proud bunch and take great pride in the Virtual Assistant Industry. One of the ways that VAs protect the integrity of this Industry, is to always offer exceptional services. Virtual Assistants want their clients to tell others about them and how having a VA on their team is one of the best business investments they have ever made. Therefore, most Virtual Assistants go above and beyond what is expected of them to make sure the work is done accurately, professionally, and successfully.

Experience in the latest technology – A virtual assistant knows that there's always an easier and better way to do things and are constantly looking for those ways. Most continue to update their skills and network extensively with others to learn the latest and greatest tools out there.

A colleague to brainstorm ideas with - Have you ever had this great idea, but just couldn't bring it to fruition because you couldn't get it all together? Not anymore. Virtual Assistants are there to brainstorm and work with you to help you bring those visions to reality.

No benefits/no equipment/no office space - That's a given. It's obvious that clients won't be paying for their Virtual Assistants' office space or equipment. But in today's economy, think how truly important that is. By not having to pay for someone's electric and office use, that saves money. Money clients can spend in growing their businesses.

Specific knowledge of your niche – This is perhaps one of the greatest benefits that a virtual assistant can offer - specific knowledge of a clients' particular niche. Virtual Assistants specialize in different areas, fine tuning their skills always striving to be the best in that niche. Therefore, when you partner with a

virtual assistant that specializes in the area of your business, you have someone who knows the lingo and knows the ins and outs and what works and what doesn't. It's a win/win for all.

What types of services can a virtual assistant perform? Sit back and be amazed. Virtual Assistants can assist with tasks as simple as transcribing every day correspondence to as detailed as implementing an entire marketing campaign. Virtual assistant services include the following: publicity and marketing, article and press release writing and distribution, social networking updates, legal, medical and general transcription, bookkeeping, web design, administrative tasks, and so much more.

As Virtual Assistants become as commonplace in the workforce as the computer in everyone's office is now, there's never been a better time to analyze what your business needs are and how the right virtual assistant will meet those needs. Stop by our site at Virtual Word Publishing, www.virtualwordpublishing.com for complete information on what a virtual assistant is and how you can find that virtual assistant to add to your team. Also, if you feel a career in the Virtual Assistant Industry is right for you, email me at diana@virtualwordpublishing.com for our free business informational package. Today's the day to start running your business better. The start begins with one simple step – Hire a Virtual Assistant.

Diana Ennen and Kelly Poelker are the co-authors of numerous books including *Virtual Assistant: the Series, Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA* and accompanying *Virtual Assistant the Series Workbook*, and *Virtual Assistant - The Series: Working Virtually, A Guide to Working Remotely as an Employee*. Stop by their site for complete information on starting your own VA business <http://www.vatheseries.com>. Article is free to be reprinted as long as the author's bio remains intact.

Is It Possible To Work From Home?

Have you ever wished that you could work from home? According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 19 million people worked from home (either part-time or full-time) in 2001. It's a growing trend in our society with the number steadily rising as many people are leaving the workplace in favor of a work-at-home career.

There are four main ways to make working from home possible:

1. Telecommute for your current employer - Many employers are beginning to see the benefits of allowing their employees to work from home. If you have a job that would be possible to do from home ask your employer to consider it. More and more employers are allowing employees to telecommute. This is an easy way to work from home while maintaining the security of a stable career. You must realize, though, that working from home may limit you in terms of advancing in your company. It's important to think through the sacrifices that you may need to make in your situation to work from home.

2. Telecommute as an independent contractor - There are many companies that hire independent contractors to do work such as data entry, transcription and customer service from home. This can be an incredible opportunity as long as you're willing to keep track of your own taxes and aren't relying on the employer for insurance and other perks

There are many benefits to the company also, such as lower wages, not needing to provide insurance, or being able to offer a commission based position. The company may also choose to hire home workers so that they do not need to pay for space to house an office full of employees.

3. Own a direct sales/MLM home-based business - Many times these types of home-based businesses are overlooked, but they truly can bring an income and allow you to work from home. However, doing your research before joining a company is very important. Look for representatives of the company to speak with and, if possible, try to find someone who has been a representative for the company, but is no longer. They may be able to share some of the negative aspects of the business with you.

Also check with the Better Business Bureau and make sure that the company that you are considering has a good reputation. You can also go to websites such as CWAHM.com and sign up to speak with current work at home moms (CWAHD.com for dads) who can answer your questions about owning a home-based direct sales/MLM business.

4. Begin your own home-based business - It can seem overwhelming to start your own business, but if you start small and have a good business plan it can be a very rewarding decision. You are able to be your own boss, have a very flexible schedule and work only when it is convenient for you.

When considering beginning your own business, make sure that you have found a niche that will allow you to serve customers that no one else is serving. When I began searching for a way to work from home, I spent time researching the different work at home websites available and realized that there was not a place for Christians to network and help one another work from home. I filled this niche with my website, CWAHM.com, and the response has been amazing. If you take your time and find a niche or unique product, you will have a much higher chance at success.

If you decide to begin your own business, you must also check your state and city about zoning laws, licensure requirements, etc. Contact an accountant to find out what percentage of sales you need to set aside for taxes as well as whether or not you'll need to make quarterly tax payments.

Working from home is a big commitment and it can take some time to get started. It's important to take the time to research what type of at-home position will work best for you. If you would like to telecommute, speak with your employer to see if it is a possibility. If you are looking into a home-based business, speak with others from the company or find a niche that you can fill with your own business. Working from home can be a rewarding choice and it IS possible.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Jill Hart is the founder of Christian Work at Home Moms, CWAHM.com. Jill is a contributing author in *The Business Mom Guide Book* and *I'll Be Home For Christmas* and co-author of the upcoming book, *Home Based Blessings* with Diana Ennen. Jill has articles published across the web on sites like DrLaura.com and ClubMom.com. Jill and her husband, Allen of CWAHD.com reside in Nebraska with their two children.

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Rising Gas Prices Have You Down? Work From Home and Save Money at the Pump

Margate, FL (August, 2008) With soaring gas prices fueling the strong need to work from home, now is the perfect time to become the business owner you always dreamed about. Think how great that short commute to your home-based office would be for those of you who can no longer afford to travel. You not only save money, but you get to experience the thrill of being your own boss and earning the kind of money you know you are worth.

One of the top businesses to start at home today is virtual assisting. Virtual Assistants are highly skilled professionals who provide service from a home office to anywhere in the world. Through the use of high-speed Internet access, e-mails, fax machines, mail services, as well as many web-based applications Virtual Assistants handle such things as publicity, Internet research, word processing, event planning, real estate transactions, legal briefs, medical transcriptions, proofing, editing, publishing and so much more.

And just who is using a VA? Just about everyone from corporate professionals to doctors, accountants to writers, and even attorneys rely on these professional assistants to keep their businesses running smoothly. Not to mention the authors and online shops that use VAs for their marketing and publicity. Putting their many years of knowledge and advanced training to work for them, these Virtual Assistants can take over administrative duties while executives concentrate on increasing profits—it's a perfect fit!

How do you get started? Easy. Diana Ennen and Kelly Poelker's book, *Virtual Assistant - The Series: Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA* (Another 8 Hours Publishing) and the accompanying *VA The Series Workbook Edition* provides you with everything you need to get well on your way to a successful new career. This book has already helped thousands of administrative professionals start their business and with the help of the Workbook Edition, others are soon to follow.

Ennen states, 'We've seen a tremendous growth in our Industry as word continues to spread how beneficial a virtual assistant can be to businesses. Also, one of the true benefits of being virtual, is that you can work globally. Therefore, even though the economical outlook in your area is bleak, you can still find clients and work by looking outside of your immediate area.' Email for a free business informational package on how you can achieve this to diana@virtualwordpublishing.com.

Start today and experience the financial freedom you've always wanted. Visit www.vatheseries.com or www.virtualwordpublishing.com for additional tips on starting your own virtual assistant business, or visit Academy of Virtual Professionals at www.AcademyVP.com to learn about a 16-week training program.

Do's and Don'ts for Starting a Virtual Assisting Business

Virtual Assistants (VAs) are highly skilled professionals who provide administrative support and specialized services to businesses, entrepreneurs, executives, and others who have more work to do than time to do it. Examples of services a VA can do include web design and maintenance, word processing, meeting and event planning, desktop publishing, internet research, e-mail coordination, business start-up consultations and so much more. This can be the perfect work-at-home opportunity for many with good computer and Internet skills. Following are several Do's and Don't's to keep in mind for starting and operating your Virtual Assisting business.

DO -- Decide on a targeted market and initially focus your marketing efforts in that area. By developing a "niche" in your field, your reputation spreads quickly and soon you become a recognized expert. Several specialties include: medical, legal or business transcription, resume consulting, transaction coordination -- real estate industry, desktop publishing, manuscript preparing, academic typing, e-mail support, internet research, etc.

DO -- Be creative about where you can find business. The Internet offers a large variety of potential for clients just waiting for you to contact them. Actively network and don't limit your marketing to simply placing a few ads in newspapers or the Yellow Pages. You want to find where there might be a need- and go fill it.

DO -- Write a complete business plan and marketing plan. Too many leave out this vital step and waste valuable time unorganized and without a clear-cut goal and direction for their business. When starting a business you will have tons of ideas floating around. You need to materialize all these and put them into a workable plan of action.

DO -- Develop a website that looks sensational! Your website is often the first connection a potential client has with your services. It must immediately let them know that they are dealing with a professional. Your site must then have the POWER to draw them to you and contact you. Let them see that you value quality by the look and feel of it. Additional tips include letting them know what services you offer and why you are qualified to offer those services by mentioning your experience and education. Be sure to include points on why you stand out among the rest and are the BEST! For example, if you have been featured in articles, radio shows, etc., have them listed with the dates.

DO -- Learn everything you can about starting a business. Knowledge is power and the more you know, the greater your chances for success. Look to online services and message boards and chats to talk with other Virtual Assistants operating a business. Remember these are often run by pros who have been in business for years and are willing to share their experience. For example, I mentor and manage virtual assisting boards on HBWM.com, Momspreneursonline.com and VANetworking.com. With 23 year's experience, I often know what works and what doesn't in starting a business and staying successful, so my experience can prove beneficial.

DO -- Join associations that are targeted for our Industry. A few of the more popular ones are IAVOA.com and IVAA.com, but there are many others. (And of course don't forget Vanetworking.com) By connecting with these associations and being active, you learn from them what works and what doesn't and you are able to post your questions to associate members via list serves often getting answers to your questions within minutes.

DO -- Read, read, read. By frequently continuing to increase your skills and your knowledge of your profession, the end result is a more confident satisfied you. Every tip you get from a book can be a new tool in your business. I recommend highlighting areas from several books and adding them to your library. Keep in mind that you might not use that idea today, but it might apply to specialties you might add down the road.

DO – Enjoy. There’s no greater feeling than landing that first client or finishing your first big project. Plus, wait until you get the opportunity to tell someone you own and operate your own virtual assisting business. It sure beats I’m a secretary at Plus, when you enjoy your business it shows. Your clients will sense your positive attitude and want to be a part of your team.

DON'T -- Underprice your services. The average virtual assistant today makes \$25 to \$70 an hour, depending on their skills, services offered, location, and years of experience. Don’t make the mistake of assuming if you charge the lowest prices, you’ll get the most work. You won’t. Instead, you’ll end up working outrageous hours for peanuts! Clients will pay more for professional services. When a potential client discovers you’re charging a lower rate than standard, they often feel they will receive a quality of services that is also lower.

DON'T -- Overextend yourself. One of the common mistakes many virtual assistants make is to accept too much work and then not be able to accurately complete it. Learn to say no or have a back-up helper who can assist you with any overflow work. Remember one of the most important ingredients for success is keeping your clients satisfied. If you overextend yourself and make a lot of errors, it will jeopardize your business.

DON'T -- Get discouraged. It takes time to get a business going. Plan ahead and have money saved in reserve. Don’t buy items until you have found the best possible price and there is an absolute need. This advance planning takes the pressure off of having to make money NOW. If things are slow and the phone just isn’t ringing ... MAKE IT RING!! There’s plenty of work out there, you just need to aggressively pursue it.

Finally, the most important ingredient for success is your belief in yourself. If you believe that with your skills and experience, you can own your own business, then there’s nothing stopping you. DREAMS DO COME TRUE. SOMETIMES YOU JUST NEED TO MAKE THEM HAPPEN.

Diana Ennen, Author, *Virtual Assistant: The Series, Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA, & Words From Home* / <http://www.virtualwordpublishing.com>, diana@virtualwordpublishing.com. Article is free to be reprinted as long as author’s bio remains intact.

Publicity and Marketing – The Perfect Niche for Successful Virtual Assistants

We all realize how Virtual Assistants have revolutionized the way we work today. Most businesses now count on their Virtual Assistant the same as they used to count on their secretaries, only so much more. VAs are a prized and respected part of their client's team, and unlike secretaries, who often were taken for granted, Virtual Assistants are praised for their professionalism and skills. Most businesses today can't imagine where they would be without their VA. And as the potential for success in a virtual assistant business continues to explode, so does the need for good Virtual Assistants.

Today's Virtual Assistants need to take pride in their business and also to learn as much as they can about their niche, which is the specialty they have chosen to specialize in. One niche that I highly recommend is to offer publicity and marketing services to clients. This is an area that is growing in leaps and bounds as more and more authors, businesses, and other professionals realize the need to market their business to get good publicity. A business can expand tremendously when hiring a Virtual Assistant to help them spread the word about their products or services. Also, authors today aren't aware that once they write a book, that's when the real work begins. They need to get the word out about their book in order for it to be successful. That's where a good Publicity VA comes in.

Publicity and marketing is thrilling to say the least. There's such a great rush when your client gets recognized in national magazines, or a TV station wants to do a segment on them and you helped them achieve this success. Or better yet, when your efforts start resulting in substantial increased sales for them. Clients will not only keep using your services, but also tell others about this new positive addition they have to their business. And best yet, you too get to feel that satisfaction as you are helping them achieve their goals.

One of my most successful tips is learning how to effectively use any publicity that a client receives. When clients get national attention in a magazine, newspaper, or TV Segment, or even on a popular website, it's important to make sure that everyone is aware of this. A press release should immediately go out to announce their accomplishment. This release should be added to their website and also should go to all their local papers, radio stations, and TV networks. Media loves to highlight a success story of their locals, so make sure you get this out there as soon as you can. And you don't have to wait for the publicity to happen. If your client lands a major TV segment, you can start sending this press out beforehand in order to get more media for when the event happens. You just want to make sure that the client is fairly confident the segment will air. Also, don't worry if the segment gets bumped back, that often happens as breaking news takes priority. This can almost be a blessing, as then you get to do more publicity before the airdate.

It's also important to follow-up with the reporters and let them know how much you appreciate the acceptance of your quotes for an article. When you go the extra step to show them your appreciation, they remember you when the next article comes up and they need help with more expert advice. Many reporters work for multiple magazines so one good ally can lead to lots of media exposure. Always keep your PR hat on. Learn to take any situation and turn it into good press for your clients and your business as well. Stay on top of current events and see if you have anything to offer. Whenever a story hits the press that any of my clients would have a connection to, I'll send it right away. Having press releases already prepared for clients on their business is always a great help. How do you know about these events? Sign up for Google Alerts under the

topics of interest and then whenever a story is written, you can follow-up with your press release or article to the reporter. It works! I also use ProfNet from PRNewswire, which allows me to get daily leads from major news outlets. You can also consider PRLeads.

It's also important to learn how to write a good press release and article and also where to send those. Make sure that your press releases and articles are newsworthy and also something that interests the readers. When I write a release, I always think would I read this release? Would it interest me? If not, I doubt your target audience would be reading it either. Plus, be careful to sound too promotional. You can easily get your message across without sounding like an ad.

Publicity is a great niche for VAs.. Start today by stopping by our site at www.wordpublishing.com.

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Diana Ennen and Kelly Poelker are the co-authors of numerous books including Virtual Assistant: the Series, Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA and accompanying Virtual Assistant the Series Workbook, and Virtual Assistant - The Series: Working Virtually, A Guide to Working Remotely as an Employee. Stop by their site for complete information on starting your own VA business <http://www.vatheseries.com>. Article is free to be reprinted as long as the author's bio remains intact.

Home-Based Success Tip -- Surviving The Storm Until The Phone Rings

“Ring – Come On Ring. I sent my press release out over a week ago. My web site is up and running and I’ve marketed everywhere. Why Aren’t You Ringing! I know, I’ll go away from you and then you’ll ring. Okay, I’m doing something else, I’m not even thinking of you, now *RING.*”

We’ve all been there. Anxiously waiting on top of the phone, breaded breath, for that client to call. We’ve done our homework. We’ve got the speech fully prepared on what to say once they call. Now if they would only call. *“Ring – Come On Ring.”*

Staying motivated can be a difficult task. With each passing hour, your self-confidence plummets and soon you doubt why you decided to start a business in the first place. The thought of begging for your old job back becomes even more appealing. You’re already thinking of how you can explain to family and friends why the business couldn’t succeed in today’s economy. But now is not the time to give up. Remember–**FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION!!**

Here’s are some steps to keep your power:

First, don’t sit idly by waiting for the phone to ring. Keep busy creating new marketing ideas. Plan B should already in full force and effect.

Be creative. Energize yourself with the creation of a dynamite brochure. Design a new mailing piece that conveys exactly the benefits you can offer your clients. Re-read that marketing letter you just sent and fine-tune it. Look over your website. How can you approve upon it to better convey the benefits of your business? New press releases, articles, etc.

Search for new places that you can promote your business. Spending time online doing research is important for establishing your VA business. Make new connections with other VAs and organizations. Find places to exchange links. Don’t be shy. You should be very confident in your abilities and eager to share that with others.

Read, read, read. Learn anything and everything you can on starting a business and a VA business in general. Let others show you how they’ve done it. Take full advantage of the Internet as well. Find chats and message boards and talk with others. Find out how they survived the storm.

Start fresh daily with a renewed determination that you are going to make this work. Visualize yourself addressing that new client with your new leather briefcase in hand, portfolio neatly prepared, and the confidence that you can make a difference in their business. They need you and you’re going to show them exactly just how much.

Finally, you need to believe in yourself under all circumstances. Write down why you know this business is going to work. Write down again how you plan to make it happen.

With the right attitude, appropriate skills, extensive research, and sheer determination, you can and will succeed. That phone will ring -- and ring -- and ring. And with each ring, you’ll be grateful that you believed in yourself enough to make it happen.

Diana Ennen is the author of numerous books including Virtual Assistant: the Series, Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA, Words From Home, Start, Run and Profit from a Home-Based Word Processing Business & the Home Office Recovery Plan. She specializes in publicity and book marketing and is president of Virtual Word Publishing <http://www.virtualwordpublishing.com> and <http://www.Publicity-VA.com>. Articles are free to be reprinted as long as the author's bio remains intact.

Virtual Assistants Keep in Mind First Impressions Count

Whether just starting a virtual assisting business or having been in business for years, it's important to always remember that the initial impression you leave with potential clients is critical. Often it can be the determining factor in whether you get the client or not.

The key is portraying confidence, whether it's corresponding back to an e-mail, on the phone, or in person. You need to reassure these clients that if they trust you with their work, you won't let them down. In fact, they'll be amazed just how good of a job you do!

With your VA business you will either be responding to a client via e-mail, phone, or in person. Here are a few tips for each:

E-mail -- Keep your reply short and to the point. No client wants to read through paragraphs of text to get to the bottom line. Be friendly, yet professional. Provide all the needed information they requested and any other information you believe would be relevant. Use a signature line that provides all your contact information. Toot your horn a little. Include a paragraph that sings praises of your business and how you can help their business.

Phone - Always answer the phone in a professional, cheerful manner. I use Caller ID so that I know who's calling before I pick up the phone. This enables me advance notice of what demeanor I need. Don't talk excessively. Keep in mind that most clients are busy and appreciate short, to-the-point conversations. Always have the information you need to relay to a client at hand. Be firm on your rates and business practices. Don't sound hurried. If you are working on a deadline, let your answering machine get it and call them back when you are more relaxed.

In Person - Dress the part. Not only does this make you feel more confident, but it conveys to them that they are dealing with a fellow professional. Be enthusiastic about your business and let them know that you want their business. Show interest and knowledge of their business. Have the right tools with you and close at hand. You don't want to have to look for a pen or your business cards. Have something for them to keep describing your business such as a portfolio. This enables them to remember you after the appointment and also gives them an additional opportunity to check out the services you offer.

The ability to create a good first impression is a valuable asset for a virtual assistant and one that enables a business to grow. However, another valuable asset is being able to learn from your mistakes. After the interview if it didn't go well analyze what you could do better the next time and then do it. Mastering these first impressions can take some time, but the reward is a thriving business that you can be proud of.

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Diana Ennen is the author of numerous books including *Virtual Assistant: The Series*, *Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA*. She specializes in publicity and book marketing and offers a complete online bookstore on her site at Virtual Word Publishing <http://www.virtualwordpublishing.com/> Articles are free to be reprinted as long as bio is included.

Entrepreneur Marketing Advice

Marketing your business is essential to its success. You can have the greatest service or the best product, but if you don't market it and let others know about it, then it's doubtful that you'll be very successful. When considering your marketing, you first want to take into account who your clients are, and what your clients might be looking to you to do. To do this, you need to do the following:

1. **Know Your Client's Business:** The first step is to know your clients. Do some research so you can have a clear understanding of what your clients' business is and what they do. What does this business hope to achieve? What are its needs and how can you meet those needs? What can you do that will allow that client to perform better in business? By knowing your client and finding answers to these questions, you can become an immediate asset to their firm.
2. **Offering Clients a Convenience:** One of the main conveniences you can offer is that of time. Clients realize that their time is valuable. Anything that will allow your potential clients more freedom with their time is an immediate plus. But you need to be able to show them this in your marketing. Take for example a virtual assisting business, when you market to potential clients letting them know that you will do their correspondence typing, answer their e-mail, handle all their publicity needs and even keep their office running while they travel, they realize they will have the time they need to do the work that often so desperately needs done. They will have the time to draft that pleading or finalize the proposal. For the realtor, when you do their marketing they can see how they would be allowed the freedom to be out there selling
3. **Solving clients' problems:** If you can find a way to solve a client's problems, then you are able to make your business a valuable asset to them. For example, let's say they are having problems with their website and getting visitors to it. You can send them a letter addressing specifically how you can bring more visitors and also mention what other advantages you can offer. You become a very valuable asset when you do this. They have a problem they need fixed. You have a solution you can solve that problem. They are eager to talk to you immediately to get their site up and running and not miss out on any more missed revenue from their site being down.
4. **Proving Clients with Something Better Than What They Have:** In your marketing efforts, make sure to mention anything that might be of interest to your clients to run their business better. For example, you might have Voxwire capabilities. This allows you to do web conferencing. You can offer your clients the convenience of having meetings, classes online, etc. Or perhaps you are an expert at Outlook and e-mail management. You can emphasize how much time you can save them daily when you handle this for them. Also, how much more they can connect to their clients when you organize their contacts with Outlook so they can keep in better touch with them.

These are essential key points to remember in marketing to obtain clients or even to keep those existing ones. Now, it's also important once you get those clients to keep those clients. To do this, you just provide the best possible service *always*.

For additional marketing tips, you can look to our articles at <http://www.virtualwordpublishing.com> for articles on all topics of marketing, as well as other business needs.



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Computer Profits From Home

On your mark - Get Set -Go!!! You're ready. You've finally got it, the top of the line, latest and greatest computer that moves at the speed of sound and has everything you need, plus some. But will it make you money. Absolutely - We're going to show you how.

There are numerous ways to utilize your computer for a home-based business. The key is finding the right one for you. First, consider your skills and expertise and most importantly what you enjoy doing. Remember, it's a combination of the three that make for a winning business. Those with good secretarial and Internet skills might want to consider virtual assisting, whereas those with a flair for figures might prefer accounting or bookkeeping. For those who live on the web and have the creative touch, how about starting a web designing business or desktop publishing? Then, there's computer tutoring, resume consulting, real estate transaction coordinators, etc. The possibilities are limitless and with the growth of the Internet, and the advancement in technology today, it just keeps getting better.

As an example, virtual assisting businesses are constantly in the media today and businesses are taking note and looking for VA's to assist them. For example, it was recently noted in Time Magazine, other top books and magazines that VA businesses are considered among the top 10 home-based businesses to start. Entrepreneur Magazine rates it as one of the top 5 home-based businesses.

What's a Virtual Assistant? A virtual assistant provides service from a home office to anywhere in the world using their high-speed access, e-mails, fax machines as well as many web-based applications. They can handle your publicity, typing, scheduling, e-mails, real estate transactions, legal briefs, medical transcription, your website, and more. The virtual revolution has truly begun and businesses are taking full advantage of the expertise of these professionals.

Once you decide on a business, then you're ready to make it happen. The first thing you'll want to do is to write everything down. All your thoughts and dreams and how you plan to achieve them. Decide on the hours you want to work, the price you want to charge, the marketing you plan to implement, the equipment and supplies required, and your goals and visions for the business. This is your plan for success. This is essential. Too many leave this vital step out and then don't have a clear focus for their business.

Next, research and read everything you can on starting your business. Find out how the pros have done it and gain from their experience. Don't just limit yourself to reading books - that's only one avenue, although a good one. For those wanting to start a virtual assisting business, my book, [Virtual Assistant the Series, Become a Highly Successful Sought After VA](#), is considered one of the best in the Industry. This book is written with Industry Leader Kelly Poelker, and has helped thousands start their business already.

Look to the Internet. Find message boards and chats that relate to the area that you want to go into. Often times these are managed by people who have been in business for years and are willing to share their experience. Not only will you gain their expertise, but also that of those who frequent the boards. These will be others who are starting a business, or who are succeeding in business, and willing to share their knowledge with you.

Also, do a search on the Internet for the type of business you want to go into. Look to their sites. Find the common denominators. What associations do most belong to? What services do most offer? This is just research, but it will help in providing you ideas for what you want to do with your business. Look to their links page and check out their links. This is especially true for the organizational websites. Again, write down all your findings.

Sign up for newsletters. The knowledge is tremendous and the motivation well worth it. Get additional training if necessary. Once you decide what you want to do, then find out exactly what other skills you will need to make it possible.

With the knowledge that you have now, and with it all written down in your plan, you're ready to take the next steps in starting a business - your business. Your dream. Enjoy and remember nothing is impossible as long as you give it your all. Success happens when you make it happen.

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Diana Ennen, Author; Virtual Assistant the Series, Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA, and Words From Home, Start, Run and Operate a Successful Word Processing Business available at <http://www.virtualwordpublishing.com>. She also does publicity and book marketing and has published the science fiction thriller, Sledgehammer by Paulo J. Reyes, M.D. Free to reprint article as long as author's bio remains intact.

DIANA ENNEN'S BIO

**Celebrating 23 Years in Business*



Diana Ennen has been a leader in the work-at-home industry since opening her business in 1985. She's the president of Virtual Word Publishing at <http://www.virtualwordpublishing.com>, where she specializes in book publicity and marketing. She's the author of numerous books on business start-ups including Virtual Assistant – The Series: Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA written with Kelly Poelker; Corel WordPerfect Office Ready Virtual Assistant Solution Pack, (www.corel.com), Words From Home, Start, Run and Profit from a Home-Based Word Processing Business, Home Office Recovery Plan and the Bizymoms Cookbook. Diana has also contributed to a number of books, articles and interviews including those written by Mompreneurs®, Lisa Roberts, Jan Melnik, Liz Folger, Maria Bailey, Priscilla Y. Huff, and has been featured in magazines and newspapers such as Woman's World, Home Office Computing, USA Today, Entrepreneur Magazine and Radio Show, Home Business Journal, and many others.

She's the mother of three great kids and a very supportive husband. Her passion is helping others succeed in their business and loves being an active part of the Virtual Assistant Industry.

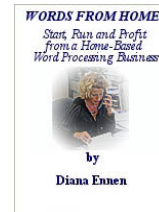


This Booklet Contains Excerpts from:

Virtual Assistant – The Series: Become a Highly Successful Sought After VA

Corel/WordPerfect Office Ready, Virtual Assistant Solution Pack

Words From Home: Start, Run and Profit From a Home-Based Word Processing Business



by

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