

The 7 Things You Must Know *Before* Starting Your Successful Virtual Assistant Business!

by Lisa Taliga, Virtual PA

virtualPA

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About the Author:



Lisa Taliga has been a successful Virtual Assistant for several years. Originally from London, she now works from the comfort of her own home in Melbourne, Australia.

She has a Business Degree and many years of corporate experience as a Senior Executive Assistant. Seeking the freedom of working for herself, she set up her own VA business and within a year she achieved her goal of working from home full-time with a thriving practice.

Lisa also manages a team of Virtual Assistants and is continually getting enquiries on how to actually start a VA business from scratch.

To fulfill this need, she has authored 'Freelance from Home! The Five Key Steps to Your Successful Virtual Assistant Business' – an invaluable step-by-step guide for all aspiring VAs.

In her spare time, she likes to go running on the beach with her mp3 player, doing step aerobics in the garage, walking her dog around the nearby lake, and lounging in her hammock! Oh, and cooking and eating are other favorite activities.

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Visit Lisa Taliga's website:

Freelance from the comfort of your own home

Learn the secrets of successfully working from home!

<http://www.virtualpabusiness.com>

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to download this eBook. You're on the right track, wanting to find out as much information as you can about becoming a Virtual Assistant. As they say, knowledge is power. Learning from other people's successes and experience is definitely the best way to go.

Setting up my own Virtual Assistant (VA) business has got to be one of the best things I've ever done.

I've been a successful VA for several years now. If you're thinking of going down the same path, I can assure you that nothing will beat the sensation of running your own show, not having to commute into work and setting your own hours. The variety, the freedom and the flexibility is second to none!

Not that it's all been smooth sailing. I would have loved to discover helpful tips *before* I set up my Virtual Assistant business. But when I was starting out, there wasn't that much information available. Being a relatively new industry, I had to find my own way.

I believe there is more than enough room for others to become Virtual Assistants. There is so much work out there, if you go about things the right way.

So I've put together what I believe are the 7 Things You Must Know BEFORE starting a successful Virtual Assistant business. If I can help other people become successful and earn a full-time income from home, then I'll have achieved one of my goals!

No. #1: What is a Virtual Assistant?

Virtual Assistance is one of the fastest growing industries on the internet. According to the George Washington University, it's expected to be a \$130 billion industry by 2008.

Thanks to the technologies available today, it has never been easier to work from home. People all over the world are setting up home based businesses out of a desire for independence, flexibility and control over their destiny.

All of these new businesses could potentially use the services of a Virtual Assistant.

However, the concept is still relatively new and many people still don't quite understand what a Virtual Assistant is.

The best way to describe the Virtual Assistant role is to briefly explain what I did this week.

Working from my home office with several different clients, I:

- typed some reports for a consultant and emailed them back

- designed a Powerpoint presentation for a speaker. He was presenting at a conference overseas the following day. I emailed it back to him and uploaded it to his website
- designed and organized the printing of a flyer for a singer who has a performance coming up
- set up and sent out a newsletter for a finance broker

I did all this without seeing or meeting any of the clients: we spoke on the phone and/or emailed each other. Some of my clients are local, some are long distance.

Think of the Virtual Assistant as a freelance administrator, designer, organizer, desktop publisher, researcher, editor, typist, secretary, coordinator, all rolled into one!

Rather than being an employee, a Virtual Assistant is an independent contractor and business owner in their own right.

Clients enjoy the flexibility of using a Virtual Assistant as and when they require, without having to pay a regular wage or employee benefits. This means huge cost savings for clients, as they are only paying by the hour for actual work done.

There is an increasing demand for Virtual Assistants, as more and more people realize their true benefits. The future of Virtual Assistance is certainly looking bright.

No. #2: Know what you can offer

You're full of enthusiasm about starting up your VA business. There's nothing you want more than to be working from home, earning money in your own right.

You know you've got skills and so much to offer. You want to dive in, get business cards done, do some advertising and networking – get clients as soon as possible.

Surely it can't be that complicated? Well, yes and no. Before jumping in, take a look in the mirror.

There are certain attributes that you need in order to be a success. Some of these are:

- Being patient and persistent
- Being disciplined
- Being a self starter
- Being optimistic
- Being able to work independently
- Having an interest in technology

Regarding skills, go through your resume with a fine toothcomb, analyzing all your previous and current jobs.

What about skills that don't always appear on resumes, such as being able to multitask? Don't underestimate the value you can offer your clients.

You need to be fully aware of all your skills before you can market yourself effectively.

What about your interests? Just because you're good at typing doesn't mean to say you should do it, if you don't enjoy it.

Without a thorough look at your skills and interests, you won't know what services you should be offering now, and what services you could be offering later, with some training. For example, do you need to brush up on your computer skills?

To work as a Virtual Assistant, you need to know how to use Microsoft Office.

You can get a full training package, with a trial version of Microsoft Office and unlimited email support from a Microsoft Certified Trainer at:

<http://www.virtualpabusiness.com/training.html>

You don't even need any previous computer experience. I highly recommend this very reasonably priced training package.

In summary, take a good look in the mirror at your skills and attributes – you may be pleasantly surprised at what you see!

No. #3: Do a business plan

Have you heard of the saying: 'If you fail to plan, you plan to fail?' This especially applies in business.

If you want your VA business to be successful, put time and effort into a business plan.

At the moment, all you have is an *idea*. What you need now is to develop a written roadmap of how you are going to realize that idea.

Think of it as the place where you brainstorm:

- Your vision and goals
- Legal and financial aspects
- What services you're going to offer
- How much you're going to charge
- What equipment you need

Traditional approaches to business planning make the whole process seem a little tedious. It doesn't have to be that way!

I believe that it should be a fun, creative process. It shouldn't be about slaving over a boring old document from

a sense of duty, and then shoving it into the back of your drawer.

I look upon the business plan as an evolving, exciting, integral part of a business, where you are free to brainstorm ideas on an ongoing basis.

I certainly don't think it is something that you try and get perfect first time round.

In fact, your business plan will never have a final draft and rightly so! It is an ongoing project which can be adjusted as your business grows and you learn what works best for you.

You should review it at least every few months, because it will change and evolve all the time.

If you're wondering where to start, visit <http://www.virtualpabusiness.com> - with my step-by-step eBook 'Freelance From Home! Five Key Steps to Your Successful Virtual Assistant Business', you get a free VA business plan eWorkbook and a fresh approach to planning.

Don't worry, you won't be staring at a blank document wondering how to fill it in. The eBook guides you every step

of the way and provides inspiration and solid information for creating your plan.

You will be ahead of the competition if you follow this tip and prepare your plan!

No. #4: Develop a marketing plan

As part of your business plan you need a marketing plan!

Firstly, how much money do you have available for marketing?

There are many ways you can promote your business for free such as:

- telling everyone what you are doing
- writing and submitting articles
- registering with business directories and VA networks
- participating in online discussion forums
- volunteering in your local community
- using an email signature

However, you'll still need funds for business cards, attending networking functions, setting up a website, advertising and so on.

Who will you be marketing to? Do you have a specific target market in mind?

Or will you be marketing to all and sundry, hoping someone will notice? In my experience, this approach doesn't usually work, because you are trying to reach too many people. Your message will be too general.

A very effective marketing strategy is to target a niche i.e. a narrow section of the market such as real estate agents, financial planners, or authors. That way you can tailor your message to them, use their language and stand out from the crowd.

How are you going to reach this target market? Do you know what their needs are?

Who is your competition? And how are you different from them? What is unique about you?

How are you going to get your message across and convince prospects that they need you?

When talking to potential clients, don't just reel off a list of your services. You need to communicate the actual benefits and tangible results of your services to your target market.

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis is an extremely useful tool for developing an effective marketing plan.

Here's an example of a SWOT analysis:

Internal	Strengths (What do you do well? What is unique about you? What do others see as your strengths?) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I have a fast typing speed• I have software skills in Microsoft Word• I have a professional telephone manner• I am creative• I am good at organizing• I am able to respond very quickly to needs	Weaknesses (What could you improve on? What resources are you lacking in? What do others see as your weaknesses?) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of business experience• Lack of marketing experience• Lack of cash flow• I would like to offer Powerpoint as a skill but don't know the package very well
External	Opportunities (How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can offer typing services• I can develop my creative skills and offer desktop publishing• I can offer event organization	Threats (What could adversely affect you?) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of cash flow may restrict my marketing budget at first (solution: focus on low cost marketing strategies)

Notice how strengths are turned into opportunities, and how weaknesses can lead to threats?

Identify your strengths and how you can capitalize on them.

Be honest with yourself – what are your weak points and how can you work on them?

Opportunities come from your strengths. The key to making the most of opportunities is to be aware of them in the first place.

Threats come from your weaknesses. Everyone has some!

Once you've recognized your weaknesses you can look for ways to improve, for example by taking some training.

Visit <http://www.virtualpabusiness.com> for further information on my eBook which will help you with your SWOT analysis and marketing plan. You'll also get a free marketing plan template.

I also go into a lot of detail about how you can effectively market your VA business. I don't just suggest **what** to do, I actually describe **how** to do it, based on my years of experience as a VA.

No. #5: Don't undercharge for your services

I know what it's like when you're starting out. You just want clients and you want them now.

So what if you have to discount your services to get business? So what if you undercut your competitors to stand a better chance?

Did you go into business to sell yourself short and *lose* money? If you remember only one thing from this eBook, then remember this:

You must charge a reasonable hourly rate so that you can cover your overheads and earn a reasonable amount of money.

Even though you're working from home and not paying office rental costs, you'll have a myriad of ongoing and one-off costs for marketing, equipment, stationery and so on.

You'll also need to fund your own retirement, and put money aside for holidays and sick leave.

Therefore, as a rule of thumb, you must charge roughly two and a half to three times the hourly rate you would earn as an employee.

Some VAs post their hourly rates on their websites, so do some research and get a feel for current market rates.

The other downside of charging too little is that clients may even be put off if your rates are too low. I know I certainly wouldn't trust the cheapest VA or any other service provider for that matter. People really do believe that you get what you pay for.

Also, clients at the lower end of the market will tend to be penny pinchers, haggling over every penny.

However, by all means stay flexible. What if you sense that a client could turn into a long-term retainer, but you just need to get your foot in the door?

Use your intuition and judgment. But don't get into the mindset of discounting your services to get clients.

With my EBook 'Freelance From Home! The Five Key Steps to Your Successful Virtual Assistant Business', you get a

detailed eWorkbook which calculates your average hourly rate, plus invaluable tips on persuading clients to pay you what you are worth!

No. #6: Make your website a priority

The Virtual Assistant works virtually, and therefore is expected to have an online presence.

I would say that setting up a website is something you should do in the early stages of your business.

It can be the first impression people get of your services, therefore a professional looking site is important.

You could learn the skills and design it yourself. However, only do this if you are confident that the result will look professional.

Alternatively, pay a web designer – it is quite cost effective nowadays to get one designed.

Give consideration to the look of the site. Keep it clear and clean.

It must be professional, easy to navigate, and fast to load.

Avoid heavy use of graphics and photos, because this slows down the load time. In today's fast moving internet world, prospective clients will not wait long before they click on to another site.

Draw up a plan of the site. Here are some suggestions for pages:

- Home
- About Us
- What is a VA?
- Services
- Rates
- Testimonials
- Contact Us

Regarding what to put on your site, always write with your target market in mind. Web copy must be easy to read. Use short sentences and get to the point quickly.

Setting up a website is only the first step. You have to promote it otherwise it will just languish there in cyberspace!

There are a multitude of ways to promote your website such as getting listed in search engines, participating in forums,

using an email signature, getting listed in directories and writing articles.

With my eBook at <http://www.virtualpabusiness.com> you get a free bonus eBook worth USD57.00, called **'The 7 Fatal Mistakes That Almost Every Business Owner Makes On Their Website...And How To Avoid Them'**. If you apply what you learn in this eBook, you'll be ahead of 99% of the pack.

No. #7: Get support from your family

Depending on your situation, you may have a spouse or partner, and/or children.

Running your own business is one of the most rewarding and challenging things you'll ever do. Make sure your family is behind you every step of the way.

Is your spouse/partner the supportive type? How about your children? Will they understand when you need to 'lock yourself away' and get that project done?

It's easy to underestimate the impact that running a business from home can have on your relationships.

That's why it's crucial to get support and understanding from family members right from the start.

Summary

I wish you all the best with your VA business.

Here is a summary of 'The 7 Things You Must Know *Before* Starting Your Successful Virtual Assistant Business':

No. #1: What is a Virtual Assistant?

No. #2: Know what you can offer

No. #3: Do a business plan

No. #4: Develop a marketing plan

No. #5: Don't undercharge

No. #6: Make your website a priority

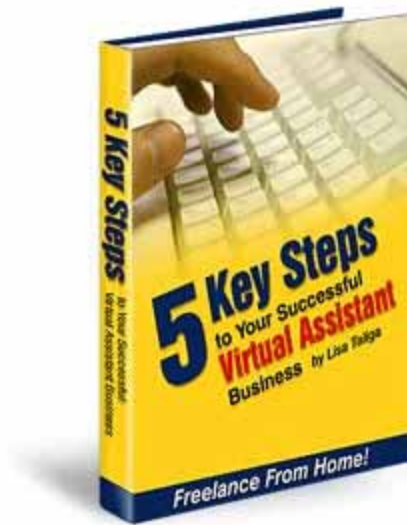
No. #7: Get support from your family

Take the necessary action and follow these powerful tips. If you do, then you're already way ahead of the competition!

Before you know it, you'll be making a full-time income freelancing from home!

Do You Want To **Stay At Home With Your Family** And **Still Earn An Income?**

Discover The Secrets Of Working From Home as
a **Virtual Assistant** -
Find Out Not Just What To Do But
HOW To Do It!



'Freelance From Home! The 5 Key Steps to Your Successful Virtual Assistant Business' By Lisa Taliga, Virtual PA

Within the pages of this eBook, you'll find **tons of insider strategies** that are **not readily available** on the internet or local bookstore. Get access to my **step-by-step guide** to starting, running and building a Virtual Assistant business. **Save yourself precious hours** trying to learn how to do it yourself. Don't let those **valuable opportunities** pass you by. Immediate download available from:

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