

Chapter 1

Is There a VA Business in Your Future?

Well, is there? Only you can decide that, but I don't see why there wouldn't be.

So, is there a VA business in your future? You are probably thinking, "Well, I hope so."

Remember what Sir Francis Bacon, English writer and author of the first English language dictionary, once said, "Hope is a good breakfast, but it is a bad supper."

You can only exist so long on hope. While I am glad that you do have hope, I've written this e-book to give you so much more. I've given you the steps to take to make this VA business a reality.

Frequently I am asked, "Do you think I could become a virtual assistant?" This question basically translates to: "*Am I VA material?*" or "*Do I have what it takes to be a VA?*"

Then usually before I can reply, someone will blurt out, "*And if I don't have what it takes, is this something I can learn or train for?*"

Before we go any further, let me answer, "*What is a VA?*" A virtual assistant (VA) is a highly skilled entrepreneur who offers administrative skills and selective expertise to businesses on an "as-needed" basis. The service is offered *virtually* or remotely using the Internet, email, fax or phone.

Okay, back to the original question. Do you have what it takes to be a VA? My answer would be more in the form of another question, "*Do you have a burning desire to make it work?*" If the answer is "yes" then there is a good chance that you can make it work and become a highly successful, in-demand VA. Even more importantly than knowing what skills to offer or whether your skills are good enough, your desire will get you there.

Now before you become all dreamy-eyed about giving up a long commute, becoming your own boss, choosing your own clients, and being home for your kids—let's have a reality check. While all of these benefits can be the result of a successful VA practice, you do need to ask yourself six tough questions before investing your hard-earned money and time.

Most importantly, are you able to work virtually? Working virtually is more than knowing how to use email or owning an iPhone with multiple apps. Working virtually is also a mindset that can handle the workloads of several remote clients by using the best of technology combined with the best of time management to deliver high-quality work. While this may not sound difficult, clients can be in different time zones and not always accessible by email. Some clients won't even answer email, so will you know how to handle this?

Sometimes the best of technology does not always translate into the best of time management. Think about it. Have you found that a new virtual tool or application had you wasting more time than managing it? As you operate your virtual assistant practice, these are the types of issues that you will encounter.

Secondly, are you able to be work autonomously and be your own boss? While it may *seem* wonderful to be your own boss, sometimes we can be our harshest critic and/or our meanest boss. This is especially true for those of us who are perfectionists or Type A personalities. Being your own boss will also require excellent time management skills. No boss can operate a profitable business when the workers play *Bejeweled 3* all day!

Then thirdly, are you okay with working anonymously or do you enjoy seeing your name in the byline? Will you be able to work "behind the scenes" or do you crave the recognition of being out in front? After all, your clients—just like your former employer—will be getting most of the credit for your hard work.

Since you will be working anonymously, is this the freelance or work-at-home career that you want? There are other choices out there with more recognition, such as a freelance writer or a freelance web designer—so make sure that you do your homework.

Fourthly, are you self-confident enough to market yourself? Depending upon experience and expertise, most self-employed virtual assistants earn \$35 to \$80 an hour. Are you confident enough to ask for this amount? Do you have the administrative skills, technical skills, and/or soft skills that could demand this amount?

If the thought of marketing your services almost triggers a panic attack, consider working for one of the WAH (work-at-home) companies listed on *WAH Adventures* (www.wahadventures.com). Several of them do hire VAs as either ICs (Independent Contractors) or employees, but the job descriptions and pay will vary. With these companies, the pay will probably be more in the \$6 to \$20 an hour pay range.

The fifth question is the one that is probably most overlooked. Are you willing to invest in yourself and your business on an ongoing basis? Occasionally, you will need to refresh your technical or administrative skills and/or add new ones. You will also need to keep your computer and office equipment updated. Are you willing to do this even when your business is still operating in the red?

Lastly, the sixth question to ask yourself is do you have the ability to think like both an entrepreneur and a business owner? Not only will you need the administrative skills to become a successful virtual assistant, but you will also need the personality traits and characteristics of a successful entrepreneur and business owner. You cannot be just a "cyber-secretary!" You must be a self-starter and a creative problem solver.

Because you will most likely be a self-employed business owner, you will need to consider what all self-employed individuals have to consider and *do*. Self-employed individuals know that they have to put aside money for taxes, pay their own health insurance, and solicit family support.

So, is there a VA business in your near future? After reading this chapter, are you feeling both overwhelmed and doubtful? Or are you hungrier than ever to get started? If you answered "yes" to the later question, then there is a VA business in your future.

Now let us go forth and name your company, design your logo, list the services you'll offer, put up your web site, and buy your home office equipment! Are you overwhelmed yet? No?

Then I'll give you a resounding "yes" there is definitely a VA business in your future!

Homework for Chapter 1: Write an answer for these six questions:

1. Why do you think that you can work virtually?
2. Why do you think you can work autonomously and be your own boss?
3. Why do you think that you can work anonymously?
4. Why do you think that you can market yourself?
5. Why do you think that you will invest in yourself in an ongoing basis?
6. Why do you think that you can think like an entrepreneur or business owner?

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