

Virtual Word Publishing
Simply the Best

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FROM: DIANA ENNEN

RE: VIRTUAL ASSISTING/WORD PROCESSING FROM HOME

Thank you for your request for information on virtual assisting at home. 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. Did you know that Entrepreneurs reached an all time high and in 2005 increased 30% according to an ongoing study of entrepreneurial activity by Florida International University and the University of Michigan. Want to be one of them?

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. Through the use of our books, our website, and individualized coaching we show you how you can succeed. Let us know how we can be of service to you.

Our books offer the best in what you need to get started. *Virtual Assistant - The Series: Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA (3rd. Rev. available at Borders, Amazon, etc.)* - is co-authored with Kelly Poelker, a true leader in the Virtual Industry. It's also utilized as a textbook at several colleges for their Virtual Assisting program both in the United States and Canada. (Go to www.va-theseries.com for additional information. **Special booklet offer – e-book only \$24.95. E-mail Diana@virtualwordpublishing.com and mention this special.**

Words From Home: Start, Run and Profit From a Home-Based Word Processing Business, 2nd Ed. has been helping those start their word processing business since 1996. This latest edition is sure to provide the latest information to help start your WP Business. **Special booklet offer – e-book only \$9.95 (e-mail diana@virtualwordpublishing.com and mention this special).**

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.



OBTAINING CLIENTS FOR A VIRTUAL ASSISTING/WORD PROCESSING BUSINESS

Excerpts from *Virtual Assistant - The Series: Become a Highly Successful Sought After VA*, & *Words From Home: How to Start and Operate a Home-Based Word Processing Business*

by

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What is a Virtual Assistant?

Virtual Assistants

A Virtual Assistant (VA), like many of their clients, is a highly skilled professional working as an independent contractor from their own home. VAs 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 VAs 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.

A VA's duties are also similar to a word processor, however, they offer a broader range of areas of expertise and a majority of their work is done via the Internet. Typically you can find a virtual assistant doing anything from digital transcription to scheduling a client's next business adventure. And benefits are loving what we are doing for them!! As Neil Talierco of www.MommysPlace.net states, "As a small business owner I never realized the importance of using a Virtual Assistant until a fellow mom in business suggested I use one. It's the best decision I've made. It freed up valuable time to work on the parts of my business I love and let my VA take care of the parts I don't enjoy. It freed up more time to let my creative side come out and to interact more with my readers. If you're a business owner, whether a small or large business, I would highly recommend using a VA."

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

- ❑ **Writing:** Business, technical, academic, resume, and ghost writing. Includes formatting papers and manuscripts, as well as business plans and reports.
- ❑ **Competitive Research:** Research clients' competitors and report findings.
- ❑ **Editing/Proofreading:** Editing and proofreading client documents.
- ❑ **Graphic Design:** Designing images for use on the web or in print.
- ❑ **Web Design, Development and Maintenance:** Design client websites. May include development of copy and ongoing maintenance.
- ❑ **Word Processing:**
- ❑ **Desktop Publishing:** Design and layout of business cards, newsletters, flyers, catalogs, brochures, menus.
- ❑ **Transcription:** Transcribing standard and micro-cassette tapes. 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 desktop publishing, bulk mailings, database management, letter writing, thank-you card writing, and making phone calls. See also, Transaction Coordinator.
- ❑ **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.
- ❑ **Transaction Coordinator:** Realtor listing management, marketing/mail-out program coordination and contract-to-close processing. Can involve use of online transaction management programs.
- ❑ **Publicity:** That's what I specialize in and the opportunities are endless!

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.

MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS

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

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. Make sure that you have an **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, goes the professional portfolio to convince them they need you. Too many

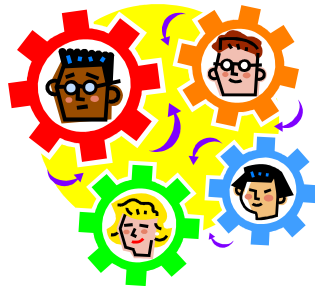
You want to include:

- ❑ 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)
- ❑ Brochure
- ❑ Press Releases/Articles/News About Your Business (Or About A VA Business)
- ❑ References
- ❑ Coupon (For Discount Off of Services for Referrals)
- ❑ Price Sheet
- ❑ Samples (Directly Pertaining to that Firm)
- ❑ VA Articles – How a VA Can Benefit Their Business

DETERMINING YOUR SPECIALTY

Before you begin any advertising, you need to decide which areas you want to specialize (i.e., legal, medical, academic, resume consulting, desktop publishing, web designing, etc.) and target only 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. (Our books do into detail on all these. So does our website at www.virtualwordpublishing.com.)

This is not to say if you're specializing in medical transcription you can't do resumes, letters, and other general correspondence. 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!!



Once you have discovered who your potential clients are, then decide which marketing approach to use. The following are various ways to market your business. 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 the Yellow Pages, newspapers, or school bulletin boards. When clients see your business advertised repeatedly, they become familiar with your company and when the need arises, they will call you.



Here's one specialty -- the Legal Transcription Field

Legal transcription is by far is 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 what you will be doing is typing legal documents up for clients. You can type anything from a few letters, to an 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, in addition to directly targeting them with letters, 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.

Also, check out places online such as Nolo.com and others to see if there are opportunities to advertise. And network. Go to business functions put on by the Chamber and other places that attorneys would frequent.

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.** 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. By having your cards handy, and perhaps maybe a **WEB DECAL** (www.webdecal.com) on your car, or **shirt with your business logo** on it, they can see what we do!

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.

One way to network is to contact other home-based virtual assistants in your area. 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 in the area. She will do the same for me when she gets too busy. So far it's been an ideal situation for the both of us. Plus, we are finding solutions for our clients. It's good to be able to send clients to someone who can get the job done for them.

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 SCORE officials for their schedule of meetings.

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 the IAVOA and the 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, RYZE, Work-the-Web, and others.

As for marketing, you want to get your site recognized. Have people link to your site. One trick is to have them sign your guest book and then e-mail them and ask if they would like to trade links. Trade banners and buttons. Learn everything you can on Search Engine Optimization. If you don’t have the time to understand it, pay someone who does. It’s worth it!

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.

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 leave your office and get more than what they expected and paid for, they will tell others.

CREATE A WEB SITE

As a Virtual Assistant—It’s critical that you have a website! It’s a must. And you need to keep it updated. Free of errors. Listed with the major engines—and linked where possible. Become familiar with Search Engine Optimization.

This definitely can be one of your most important marketing tools. As such, you **NEED** to make it good! In doing research for this book, I have found some outstanding websites. Incredible ones with the way they have done their sound, their features, and the entire look and feel of the site. I knew right away it was someone I wanted to do business with.

Do your own research by doing a Google or Yahoo search, and see what’s out there. Search for Word Processors and Virtual Assistants. Write down the points that you like and want for

your site from reviewing these. Many web designers will ask this of you in preparing your site—what sites do you like, so they can get a feel for your tastes!

I don't want you to write down what everyone else has. You need to find the points that are what you want for your business. No one out there will have that. DO NOT copy the rest exactly. Remember businesses are often doing the same thing you just did, researching websites. Yours needs to be unique and not a boilerplate VA site.

Many web hosting and design companies have templates that you can choose from in designing your site. These can be beneficial as you can see what they look like and get a feel for what your site will become in advance, and then choose the style you prefer.

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.

SIGNATURE LINES

Use your signature line as a marketing tool to draw people to your site and then let the site SELL YOU! Not only is this effective with e-mails, but also think of all the message boards and listserves that you are on. Become a recognized figure.

Use a P.S. to announce your services. Example!

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P.S. Take advantage of our special this month and get our e-book of Virtual Assistant the Series with Financial Template for only \$27.95. Call today!!

OFFER YOUR SERVICES AS A PRIZE

Offer blocks of time for your services to be given away in contests, at networking events, in gift baskets, (especially online) etc. Also, contact schools, businesses, political parties, online groups, etc. You'd be amazed how quickly your business recognition will spread when you give away some freebies. How about home-based business associations or welcoming centers in your area? How about your city council? See what I mean?

CREATE A MAILING LIST - SEND POSTCARDS

You should create a mailing list of all your clients and potential clients. 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.

WRITE ARTICLES

I highly recommend writing articles in your area of expertise and sending them to all your local papers, any local newsletters, online magazines, magazines for our particular specialty, etc. Be aware of the hundreds of e-magazines and newsletters available. You can easily become an expert and gain a great reputation online. Go to my Publicity-VA.com website and see the listing of article submission places we have. You establish yourself as an expert and reach your targeted market.

WEB DECALS

Go to Webdecals.com and get a web decal for your car. It's a great selling tool.

DIRECT 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 ...**" Let 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.



Samples of Advertising Letters that produced clients for us and other virtual assistants can be found in our book --*Words From Home: How To Start and Operate a Home-Based Word Processing Business*. These are also included on our disk already typed -- You merely customize them to your specialty.

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.

Send letters to Secretarial/Personnel Agencies. Emphasize in the letters that you specialize in **resumes and computer tutoring** (if you choose to). Personnel Agencies can prove to be a substantial source of income for your business as they continually refer new clients. You can also refer any of your clients looking for jobs to them. Your clients will like the fact that they have an "in" with someone in the agency.

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 listings through 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.

Dear <Type Recipient Name Here>:

Does the demands of your busy practice require the assistance of a qualified legal Virtual Assistant to help with the overflow of work on an “as needed” basis? <Company Name> specializes in this, with over eighteen years experience serving the legal community in <Name County>.

Our offices provide the latest in digital equipment to assist you with all your transcription needs. We have experience in labor law, medical malpractice, personal injury, and years working with general pleadings. We are dedicated to making sure that accuracy is our number one priority and meeting all the time lines that are so critical in the legal profession.

Our state-of-the-art office will enable quick retrieval of all documents and provide you with immediate support for times when the demands of the office put you behind schedule and an important pleading needs to be completed.

We would welcome the opportunity to set up an appointment and explain our services in more detail or answer any questions you might have. Please contact us at xxx-xxxx to set up a convenient time. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

<Your Name>
<Your Title>
<Company Name>

PERSONALLY MARKETING YOUR SERVICES

This type of advertising 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: This continues to be my gold mine! I have 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 word processing 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

Many virtual assistants claim that this is their most effective advertising tool and some acknowledge that it is their only required advertising. For example, Catherine Maclean, owner of Catherine Types in Miramar, Florida, states, "Advertising in the Yellow Pages brings forth most of my business. I would recommend this advertising approach to anyone wanting to start a business."

TIP: Before placing your ad, look in the Yellow Pages to get an idea how and where the other virtual assistants are placing their ads.

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 word processor 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.

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 attorneys 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.

MAGAZINES/E-ZINES

If you want to target your business for writers, then you should advertise in the *Writer's Digest* or other literary magazines. The *Writer's Digest* has a "We Type Manuscripts" section. Many virtual assistants who advertise in this magazine are sold on its advertising merits. E-zines are very popular. You can advertise in them inexpensively.

Check to see if you have any local magazines you can advertise in. In our area there are several magazines targeted for tourists. Go to your local newsstand or Chamber of Commerce and see what is available in your area.

NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters are an extremely effective marketing tool. Many virtual assistants stated that they prepare a monthly or bi-monthly newsletter for their clients and prospective new clients 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. Go to my site at www.virtualwordpublishing.com and look to the work-at-home resources page. There you will see some examples of tremendous newsletters that VAs have produced. I have seen them go from being fairly successful to extremely successful with this addition.

Your newsletters could include any or all of the following: a personal message, any new services you offer, computer updates, medical terminology or legal updates, a humorous quotation or joke, a list of news reports, a collection of valuable small business tips, any testimonials you have, and any other pertinent information you feel would be of interest.

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.

PRESS RELEASES

A press release is a direct and inexpensive route to newspapers, magazines, newsletters, trade journals, and other media connections and, unlike expensive advertising, it's free. This advertising often produces more results than a classified advertisement, as people don't consider a news

article 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.

Tips: Always write in the 3rd Person. Often times you can call the editor first to find out what he wants in the press release.

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 word processing business, they are going to dispose of it immediately. What newspapers want is news or information that will benefit their readers. I recommend going to www.prweb.com and downloading their informational package on writing a press release. It will provide you with very valuable information.

Here are some other tips:

1. If you're writing a press release, you have to determine what it is about your event (services) that makes it publishable. Use an angle that will catch the editor's interest.
2. The first paragraph should contain the most important information. It begins with the name of your **city, state: and then date**. It should answer the questions WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHERE, WHEN and HOW and also give a quick summary of what the story is about.
3. Use short, common words, short sentences and short paragraphs. Write in the present or future tense. Include the telephone numbers where you can be reached during the day and evening hours.
4. 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.
5. After the ending symbol, put the contact information.

Find out whose attention to direct your article or release to and personalize the letter. All you need to do is call the paper and ask who handles that particular topic. If they write regular articles for the paper, familiarize yourself with their work. (Place your release on letterhead and use a nice font such as Arial or Times New Roman.) Remember they need to write stories so they often will need you! Also, becoming familiar with them is a great help. Send releases often.

TIP: Another idea would be to send a press release about National Medical Transcription Week or Secretaries Week to be printed during those weeks. Highlight the advantages of operating an office at home.

In the release, don't write about yourself. The mere fact that you opened a business, isn't newsworthy, yet. However, the fact that you opened a business and are now *filling a need* is. Emphasize in your release how more businesses are choosing home-based professionals to help them with their work overload. Let them know, this is the future!!

Write copy in the third person as though someone else had written it. Avoid first-person voice and "me-centered" releases. Similar to any advertising efforts, you want to word your press release to generate an immediate response from clients. Therefore, include information on how clients can

receive a free brochure. Offer them a discount on their first typing assignment if they respond within two weeks. Just make sure it doesn't sound like an advertisement or it will never get past the editor's desk.

Elements Of A Release

Following are typical items in most releases:

The name and number of someone to contact are standard inclusions. It will aid the editor when and if he has questions. Many releases are thrown out because a contact person is not included.

The second item is the headline. While most editors will use their own headline, this will provide the editor with a quick summarization of your release.

Next is your copy. After your copy is the following symbol, centered on the page.

###

After this include contact information.

If there are additional pages, the bottom of the page would have the following:

More

(This is from the Virtual Assistant Solution Pack -- Word Perfect) Coming Soon

Contact: <Name>
<Phone>
<Fax>
<E-mail address>
<Website>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The Virtual Assistant – Revolutionizing The Way Businesses Work!

Pompano Beach, FL - July 5, 2004: Have you heard about the new “kid on the block?” The one that is empowering businesses to do better, and revolutionizing the way work is being done today! Well, fasten your seatbelt and meet -The Virtual Assistant! The business support and internet technology gurus that are quickly becoming the answer to many entrepreneurs and small business owners’ needs.

For years businesses have complained of needing more help in the office to meet the ever increasing demands of running a business. They needed more time to devote to marketing and product development without the expense of hiring another employee. Now with the help of qualified Virtual Assistants, they are able to do this and more!

Businesses are realizing the dynamics of what virtual assistants can do and are reaping the benefits. For example, attorneys and doctors are taking advantages of digital dictation, and the convenience that brings with no longer having to drop off tapes. Real Estate Agents are seeing their sales soar and their office running smoother through the expert help of Transaction Coordinators. And finally, small business owners now have the same Internet presence as the big boys with the use of dedicated Virtual Assistants who not only design their website, but get it recognized as well through search engine optimization.

Virtual Assistants can be best defined by Sharon Williams, founder of the Alliance for Virtual Businesses™, (www.AllianceForVirtualBiz.com). She states, “Virtual Assistants (VAs) are highly skilled professionals who provide administrative support and other specialized services to businesses, entrepreneurs, executives, and others who have more work to do than time to do it. Globally they provide services such as web design and maintenance, meeting and event planning, desktop publishing, word processing, and business start-up consultations. Representing countries from the United States to the UK, Canada to Australia, they use skills and education to help entrepreneurs work smarter, not harder.”

<http://www.virtualwordpublishing.com>/Diana Ennen’s Virtual Assistant practice in Pompano Beach, Florida has been specializing in word processing, legal transcription, resumes, and other specialties since 1985. With the growth of the Virtual Industry, she was able to take her business globally and add to her vast array of services. She states, “The future has arrived, and with it a growing partnership that’s sure to last – The Virtual Assistant and Businesses Partnership.”

If you want your business to run smoother, check out the many services that a Virtual Assistant can provide. Our website at Virtual Word Publishing, (www.virtualwordpublishing.com), has a complete directory of qualified Virtual Assistants that can meet your every business need. Stop by and start experiencing the difference a VA can make in your business today.

###

Diana Ennen has been a leader in the VA and Word Processing industry since starting her business in 1985. She has written two books on the topic including, *Virtual Assistant ~ The Series: Become a Highly Successful Sought After VA* and *Words From Home: How To Start and Operate a Home-Based Word Processing Business*. Contact her at Diana@virtualwordpublishing.com or <http://www.virtualwordpublishing.com/>.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Diana Ennen
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Diana@va-theseries.com

Virtual Assistants – A New Breed of Work at Home Entrepreneurs

O’Fallon, IL – According to a 2004 study, the Center for Women’s Business Research reports there are an estimated 10.6 million privately-held, 50% or more women-owned firms in the U.S., accounting for nearly half (47.7%) of all privately-held firms in the country. Astonishing, isn’t it?

It’s the dream of millions to start their own business and utilize their computer to make money at home. Now, with the help of Diana Ennen and Kelly Poelker’s latest book, *Virtual Assistant – The Series, 3rd Edition* (\$29.95, Another 8 Hours Publishing), it’s a reality! With the latest technologies, the rapid growth of the Internet, and the business community recognizing the benefits of partnering with a qualified virtual assistant, the virtual revolution has begun. And there is no end in sight!

What started out in the 80’s as home-based word processors has grown into what we are seeing today. The local limitations are gone. The boundaries are erased. Modern advancements and the sheer power of the Internet coupled with enterprising, cutting edge entrepreneurs such as these authors have skyrocketed this industry. They know the technology. They have the resources. And they’ve written the book on it! A book so powerful that it’s cited as the “bible” for the virtual assistant industry. *Virtual Assistant – The Series* is currently used as training material for VA courses including: Virtual Assistance U, an online training center for virtual professionals; Red Deer College’s VA Certification Program (in Canada); and other higher level learning organizations and colleges who are recognizing the potential for growth and continued education in the VA industry.

Priscilla Y. Huff, Author of *101 Best Home-Based Businesses for Women, 3rd. rev. ed.*, states, “It’s more than just a startup manual, it is written by professional virtual assistants (VAs) who combine their knowledge and experience with practical tips from other successful VAs to help ensure your own success in this exciting new venture. *Virtual Assistant – The Series* is an essential tool for launching one of the most exciting new entrepreneurial ventures—becoming a professional virtual assistant.”

This book leaves no stone unturned. *Virtual Assistant – The Series* is a complete guide to starting and running a successful and PROFITABLE practice. It covers the nuts and bolts that are the foundation of a successful practice including business and financial planning, bookkeeping, marketing, and setting up a business. Plus it offers information on domain registration, creating a web site, and most importantly, how and where to find clients.

Virtual Assistant – The Series: Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA 3rd Edition Revised ISBN # 0-9742790-5-6, 248 pages, August 2004, is available at www.VA-TheSeries.com for \$29.95 plus \$5.00 shipping and handling. (First and second editions published under the title *Up Close and Virtual*)

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, 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. Susan Markin of Markin & Associates, a word processing firm in California, advises, "If you have a positive attitude, you can win at anything you decide to do." I don't know about you, but I LIKE BEING A WINNER!! ☺

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 a secretary or word processor? 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 typing now is. 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.

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. Add your name to our directory of Virtual Assistants and also contact us if you'd like to link with our site.

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.

Thanks!



Diana Ennen

Author: *Virtual Assistant - The Series: Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA & Words From Home: How To Start and Operate a Home-Based Word Processing Business & Bizymoms Cookbook*
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EXPECT SUCCESS by Diana Ennen

That's right! Don't sit back and *hope* that clients will come your way and this business *might* work for you. **EXPECT IT!** Go in with a winning attitude. An attitude that no matter what obstacles come your way, no matter what challenges arise, you will meet them. Not only will you meet them, you will face them and grow in strength by overcoming them, and rising above them. **EXPECT SUCCESS!!**

Let's look at where you are in your business. Some of you are seasoned VAs with thriving practices, while others have just entered into the arena. You want what those pros have. Well -- don't just want it—**EXPECT IT!** Make this your motto. Start each new project, or each new marketing venture, with this new attitude, and with this new motto—**EXPECT SUCCESS!!** Before long, it becomes second nature to you. You start automatically assuming the outcome will be successful. **EXPECT SUCCESS!!!**

Now, in starting a business there are some steps you have to take. You'll find the first one is the **BIG** one. It's the *Attitude* Step. You need to make the transformation from "employee" or "stay-at-home" mom, etc., to successful entrepreneur. The mind-frame changes right from there. **EXPECT SUCCESS!!** Now we're on to some of the business basics. A successful entrepreneur professionally chooses the name that best suits their VA business. To do this, they visualize that name on their business cards, on their signature line, on the bottom of the letter, with the name President directly right above it. **EXPECT SUCCESS!!** Now more motivated than ever, our successful entrepreneur needs to choose that all important domain name and gets ideas for their website. They research the net for days, weeks, writing down all the fine qualities they see in other web sites. Never copying! Merely researching. Constantly thinking of what they can offer different and be unique. What they can combine with own strengths and skills to fit into their VA business that will then be listed on THEIR WEB SITE. They read. They write. They Dream! **EXPECT SUCCESS!!** At this point they start seeing that "Yes, it will happen." In their research they have found the organizations, associations, listserves that the other VAs are active on. They have seen the common denominators of those that are successful. They too get involved. They look for additional training courses they need and sign up for the ones they know will help them meet their goals. They develop their marketing, they design their promotional materials. They read everything they can on starting a business. They have their plan. **EXPECT SUCCESS!!** They see that the future of their business is now just within their reach. They share with others their excitement. And then they await the time they can finally say, I'm ready. **EXPECT SUCCESS!! It's your time. EXPECT SUCCESS, and You can Have it!**

Diana Ennen, Co-Author, *Virtual Assistant: the Series: Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA, and Words From Home: How To Start and Operate a Home-Based Word Processing Business* (www.virtualwordpublishing.com. DeeEnnen@aol.com.



Virtual Assistant: The Series: Become a Highly Successful Sought After VA is a complete reference guide to starting a successful and PROFITABLE virtual assistant business. It's used as the primary textbook at Red Deer College in Canada and will be soon utilized at several Universities here in United States. Many universities are starting virtual assisting programs and utilizing our book. It's a complete, thorough how-to book that will enable you to learn everything you need to get started.

We cover all the business nuts and bolts including business and financial planning, bookkeeping, billing, and setting up your business. Complete information on specialty services and working with clients, medical transcription, legal transcription, etc.

Along with our personal experiences, we've also included recommendations from virtual assistants across the land. These are the real pros who are now running successful businesses. You will find their suggestions in the "In Their Own Words" section at the end of each chapter and featured throughout the book. This will enable you to see how others are making their businesses successful and provide you with a blueprint on how to do the same with yours.

Recommended by:

More than just a startup manual, it is written by professional virtual assistants (VAs) who combine their knowledge and experience with practical tips from other successful VAs to help ensure your own success in this exciting new venture. VA-the Series is an essential startup guide to launching one of the most exciting new entrepreneurial ventures--becoming a professional virtual assistant. -Priscilla Y. Huff, Author101 Best Home-Based Businesses for Women, 3rd. rev.ed.

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Words From Home

How to Start and Operate a Successful Home-Based Word Processing Business- 2nd ed

by
DIANA ENNEN

(ISBN 0-9742790-0-5)
(E-book available)

This comprehensive book shows you just how *achievable* the good life of a successful home-based word processing business is!

Words From Home explains how to:

- ☐ All the business nuts and bolts (licensing, taxes, bookkeeping, etc)
- ☐ Determine your rates for your services.
- ☐ Obtain clients quickly and inexpensively.
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- ☐ Complete information on all areas medical, legal, academic, resume, etc. How to obtain clients. Working with these clients. Tips.

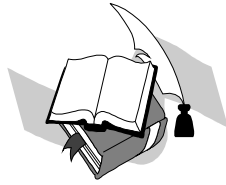
Plus, all the business nuts and bolts such as filing taxes, bookkeeping, etc., are explained in detail in an enjoyable and understandable format. It truly leaves no stone unturned.

Words From Home is more than a “how-to” book. From buying your computer to dealing with difficult clients, it brings together all the elements needed to operate a profitable business. Gain the knowledge of author Diana Ennen’s 18 years experience in operating a successful home business as well as the expertise of thirty other home-based word processing pros who were interviewed for this book.

Special -- Order today by e-mail, fax, phone or by sending \$18.95 plus \$5.00 S&H to:

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