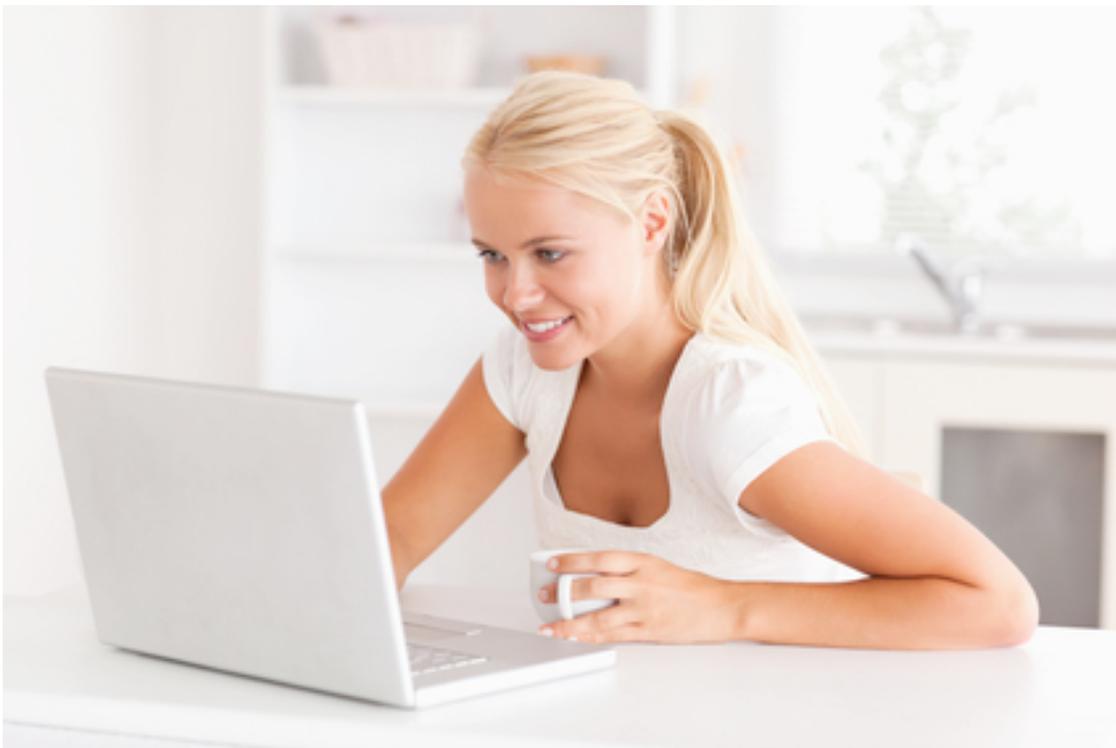




5 Week VA Startup Action Plan



Your *action* plan to get your VA business started right.

Goal: To start a Virtual Assistant business.

Summary: A five-week action plan to assist the new Virtual Assistant in getting started. We will cover how to take stock of your skills and determine the best rates to begin with as well as the importance of building a web presence and having a great marketing plan.

NOTE: Follow this action plan as it suits you and your business. There may be certain sections you've already completed so skip over what you don't need and move onto what you do.

First Step: Consult your local and state/provincial regulations for advice on starting and running a service-based business in your area.

Week 1: Take Inventory of Your Skills

Take out a sheet of blank paper or open a blank Word document and begin writing down every skill you can think of as it relates to your Virtual Assistant business.

Write the skills list in two sections:

1. Knowledge & Skills – such as internet marketing, slideshow presentations, accounting, etc
2. Programs & Applications – list any programs that you are familiar with such as WordPress, QuickBooks, 1ShoppingCart, etc

Once you have this list written up take a good look at it and think about the following question:

Do I have the skills required to start the business I want to be in?

If the answer is no, that's ok! Your next step will be to seek out the institutions that offer training in the skills you'd like to have.

If the answer is yes, that doesn't mean you're done! There's always more to learn and ways to grow that can make you a more valuable, sought-after VA.

Take a look at where you want to go from here and start looking for programs that offer training in that.

Take the previously mentioned Skills list and get it into a Word document. Add your business logo in to the start of the document, and your policies and procedures and now you've got a list you can hand out to potential and new clients as they decide what they need your help with.

Week 2: Determine Your Rates

It's time to determine what rates you will charge your new clients. Take your list of skills and open up your Internet browser. It's time to research what other Virtual Assistant's are charging for the same type of services.

You will, of course, find a wide range of rates for the same services. It happens in every market.

Along with determining your rates you will also need to define your market. Certain markets are not willing to pay above a certain rate. While looking around at VA sites have a look at the market they service and think about who you want to serve and why.

Take some time to really do your research on this. Starting out at a higher rate is always a better option than low because it's much more difficult to raise your rates then lower. If you do start off at a rate that is too high for your market, though, then you likely won't get many or any clients to begin with.

Beginning Rate: VAs often start out at \$25/hr and then go on from there.

Moderate Rate: The majority of VAs charge between \$25-\$45/hr, this is typical for someone who has a good range of skills and experience.

Specialized Rate: VAs who specialize in a certain area or are more technical often charge \$55/hr and upward.

Retainer Rates: Some Virtual Assistants will offer retainer rates. This means that if a client will commit to a certain number of hours of work required per month then the VA will offer the client a special, lower rate to reflect that commitment. You can offer retainer rates after 10, 20 or 30 hours per month or in whichever intervals you are comfortable with. Some VAs ask their clients to pay upfront for retainers while others take payment at the end of each month.

Along with Rates you will also need to think about how you will accept payment.

Here are some of your payment options:

Paypal: By far the most common payment option because it is so easy to implement. Most of your clients will be Internet based entrepreneurs and already used to using PayPal to pay online so it isn't any trouble to get them to use it to pay you for your services.

Merchant Account: To accept payment through a merchant account you will need to sign up for an account, which usually requires a monthly fee.

Check: Of course accepting a check means you will need to wait for the check to arrive, then to clear before you get paid. This is up to you but if you want to get paid quickly this is not the way to go.

Week 3: Build a Web Presence

As a 'Virtual' Assistant having a web presence is very important. Your website is your virtual 'home', and should be an important part of your marketing plan.

Your goal for this week is to get a website up, or at the very least to find someone to do it for you and have a plan for what you want it to be.

Your potential clients will want to know as much about you as they can find out before speaking to you in person. Your website will need a few key components that potential clients will be on the lookout for:

Contact Info:

Your contact info should be easy to find. Create a page for contact info as well as put it in the sidebar or footer of your website so it can be found easily without surfing.

Services:

Virtual Assistants provide a wide range of services so when people come to your website they will want to know what services you can provide. Have a clear, detailed list of what you are proficient at and explain the details if not obvious. Also be sure to include how those services will be beneficial to them.

Rates:

This is a personal preference. Many VAs post their rates while many others do not. Of course this may be a benefit for when someone is price shopping, but if you prefer to charge on a project-by-project basis this may not work for you.

Portfolio:

If you do any web design or graphics work a portfolio is a must. People want to see examples of your work before paying you to do something for them. If you do things like sales letters and ghostwriting, having a portfolio of completed work is also a very good idea.

About You:

Your clients are not only buying your services, they are buying into a relationship with YOU. Let them know whom you are and why you can be trusted to hold a portion of their business in your hands.

Policies and Privacy:

With all the privacy and Internet safety issue out there you want to assure your visitors that their information is safe with you and always will be. Spell out your policies on collecting email addresses, collecting payments, work confidentiality, etc.

Testimonials:

Ok, so you've got up a great website with everything mentioned previously. Does that mean your visitors will trust you? Probably not. You see, they have no way of knowing what quality your work is or even if you're a real professional running an actual business. Testimonials

help to prove your credibility by showing that you have satisfied clients who are happy to sing your praises.

Week 4: Decide on a Marketing Plan

You've determined what services you want to offer, defined your skillset, and determined your rates and payment options. Now it's time to create a marketing plan for your business.

Take out a sheet of paper and start writing down all the things you are comfortable with doing to build your business. Everyone has different comfort levels and as your business grows you can stretch them, but for now start with what you know.

There are many ways you can begin marketing your business. In your marketing plan you should have the following sections:

Activity: List your activity here.

Frequency: How often will you do this.

Cost: How much is this going to cost you.

Budget: Do you have a budget? HINT: You need a budget.

Results (or ROI – Return on Investment): You need to be tracking your results so you know what is paying off and what you can drop.

As you track your marketing efforts over time you will begin to see what you can drop and what is actually producing the best results.

Here are some ideas of ways to market your Virtual Assistant business:

- **Blogging & Guest Blogging:** Write articles and distribute them to directories on the internet.

- **Search Engine Marketing:** Targeting your website for certain keywords so that it can be found in the search engines.

- **Referrals:** If you want referrals you need to be asking. Make this part of your marketing campaign and have a plan.

- **Press Releases:** You can make writing and distributing press releases a part of your regular marketing plan.

- **Pay Per Click Marketing:** This can be tricky if you don't know what you're doing but profitable if you know how to use it properly.

- **Forums:** You can participate in both free and membership forums by contributing valuable information and you'll often get visitors to your website through this.

- **Newspapers & Yellow Pages:** Will you place ads in your local newspapers.

- **Networking:** Joining local business and networking groups.

Week 5: Market Your Business

Now that you have a marketing plan it's time to put it into action.

You'll need to decide how much time you can spend on marketing your business each week.

How much time you spend will of course be determined by how much time you have available and what you've chosen to do for marketing.

Determine how much time you have each week and then make up a checklist of what you need to accomplish.

Based on the knowledge you have of each task, or the advice of someone with experience in the tasks (this is where a good mentor comes in handy), decide what you need to be working on first and put that at the beginning of your list.

Divide that list up into daily action steps and then start working away at it.

If you've completed the last 5 weeks of work then you're well on your way to becoming a highly sought-after Virtual Assistant.

There is no magic pill to take to get all the clients you can handle.

The key is steady, consistent action. If you keep at it you'll get there.

Now if you've read through this checklist and think you'd like some help to get it all done and some advice from someone who's built a successful VA business then I'd LOVE to help you!

In the fall of 2014 I quit my corporate information technology job to become a full-time Virtual Assistant and I have been completely unemployable ever since!

I'd love to help guide you through getting your site setup, planning (and getting) awesome clients and much more through my membership community at StarVA.com.

Check it out here → <http://StarVA.com/virtual-assistant-community>