

START YOUR OWN VIRTUAL ASSISTANT BUSINESS IN JUST 21 DAYS

Turn a Profit by Day 30!



by Leisa Bain Good

\$125 worth of gift certificates included!

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Testimonials

"Whether you start your business with a shoe string budget or a padded bank account, Leisa shows you how to start off financially and business savvy. Following her expert advice is one of the greatest gifts that you can give yourself. She is considered one of the top "Go To" people in the work-at-home arena. As a small business owner myself, Leisa is always one of the first people I turn to for advice."

Wendy Baldwin
www.alignwithjoy.com

"I really only wanted to work part in my handyman business, but Leisa is such a good virtual assistant and think-outside-the-boxer—I could do it full-time with her expert virtual assistance and marketing ideas."

Joe F. Corbett
JFC Handyman Services
www.jfchandymanagementservices.com

For additional testimonials about my business, please go to:
www.GBSVirtualOfficeSolutions.com/testimonials.htm

Forward

The *amazingly* surprising thing about Leisa Good is that she understands what it means to work from home and succeed. She is also determined to spread her knowledge of making money as a virtual assistant with the rest of the world. I've had the pleasure of knowing and working with Leisa and have appreciated her knowledge as a gifted writer and virtual assistant. *Start Your Own Virtual Assistant Business in Just 21 Days* is not only full of information but it also shows you how to reach your goal in 21 days.

You may be surprised to learn that the answer to your questions of "actually" making money at home are so simple. While working with Leisa to develop a social media platform, she taught me the value of having a good virtual assistant. If you implement even one-third of her methods in this e-book, I'm positive you will see growth.

Let's be real. If you picked up this book, it's because you are tired of working for others. You want to start your own business and make money doing it. I'd advise you to dive into this book with pen and paper to begin making changes in your future. Leisa has given you the tools to succeed within the pages of this book. Now, it's time for you to follow her lead and make it happen for yourself. No one ever learned by watching alone. Take the steps Leisa has outlined in this book to change your future.

You don't have to start your own business alone or without guidance. Put your worries aside and move forward with a helping hand from Leisa Good.

Tomica Bonner
Social Media Label
www.socialmedialabel.com

Introduction

Dear Aspiring VA,

If you've bought this e-book then you are probably pondering the idea that somewhere "out there" there is a virtual assistant (VA) practice with your name on it. You've even pondered the idea of starting a virtual assistant business, but the task seemed overwhelming. There was either not enough available information or there was conflicting information, which left you confused.

Then there were—actually still are—those programs, which want you to sign up and spend hundreds or thousands of dollars, which you do not have. All of this has left you discouraged and wondering what is the next step or will there even be a next step.

However, rest assured. I have given you a 21-day startup plan, which if you really apply will have you up and running and making a profit within one month.

How do I know that? Because I have done it. I was making money even before I had my web site up—that's how I know. I also know that you can do the same thing if you are willing to read this e-book in its entirety and begin applying the necessary steps for success. Yes, there will be homework to do.

The best way to use this e-book will be to read the first 15 chapters and take notes either on the downloaded, printed copy or in a notebook. The first 15 chapters will provide you with the research you will need to do to prepare for the practical application starting in chapters 16 through 21.

I have tried to make this e-book informative, light on humor, non-intimidating, and most importantly—practical. Why? Because I want to see you up and running and earning a profit as soon as possible. Why again? Because one of the biggest mistakes small businesses of any kind make is to take too long to get up and running and earning a profit. When too much time is spent figuring things out or perfecting things, the money runs out. Cash flow is a must for the small business. So, don't let this happen to you.

I have included links to various web sites, which don't always work in a PDF format, but you will be able to just cut and paste them into your browser.

Actually, I will even let you in on a little secret. If you are really ambitious, you can probably even finish this book and be up and running in as little as a week, but I have spread it out to 21 days. That way if life gets in the way and you start to fall behind, you won't give up. You can still catch up and be up and running in plenty of time.

Finally, at the end of this e-book, I have \$125 worth of gift certificates for you from both me and other small businesses.

Get ready for success.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leisa Bain Good". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leisa Good

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?

Chapter 2

What Services Will You Offer?

If you are going to be a virtual assistant, you will need to decide which services you will offer. You will want to decide before a potential client asks and throws you off-guard. So will it be typing, transcription, writing, web design or another skill or set of skills?

The simplest way to decide which services to offer is to make a list of the services you know you do very well. What did past employers say about your skills and abilities?

The bottom line is that most of us know what we do well and what we don't do well. The real test in virtual assistance is to admit what you do well and *not* let the desperation for clients persuade you to take work you cannot do.

No one needs the pressure of trying to "pull it off" when offering newly learned services to clients. No, you need to "put it off" until you feel confident enough to offer that skill. If a client requests a service you don't offer, inform the client that you do NOT offer that skill and/or service but will refer him/her to someone who does. Once you begin networking with other virtual assistants, you'll be able to do client referrals as well as set up joint ventures (contracts or subcontracts) with other VAs.

Occasionally, a client will request a skill or service in which you may be only vaguely familiar. However, if you feel this is something within your scope of services that you could learn in a reasonable amount of time—I'd say do it. For example, I once had a client request that I write a catchy voice message for her business' answering machine. While I had never written a voice message script before, I *had* written plenty of radio commercial scripts. I felt that I could do it when weighing the similarities between the two genres. I was able to do it!

I always advise future VAs to take a sheet of paper and make three columns: "Services to Offer", "Services Not to Offer", and "Services to Learn". "Services to Offer" are those skills that you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you can offer. "Services Not to Offer" are just that. The ones that

make you cringe just thinking about. "Services to Learn" are those skills that you would like to learn and eventually offer. Just thinking about learning those new skills has you excited!

Still not 100% sure about what you do well? Do a Google search and see what other virtual assistants are offering. Then go to Brainbench.com and take a few tests. There are personality assessments, aptitude tests, and skills tests. See what your score is and decide from there. No one needs to know your score but you. There are also places online to take a free typing test, such as <http://www.typingtest.com/games>—see how well you do!

Anything from typing to web design, you decide what to offer. No matter what skills you offer, you be proud of those skills.

Occasionally, someone will say to me, "Well, I am a fast typist but that's about it." Great! Now go find a few "one-finger wonders" for clients. These are the ones you see pecking on their keyboards with one finger on each hand! I am sure that they would gladly welcome your typing services.

Remember: No one can offer *your* skills quite like *you* can offer them. You are unique and special and so is your virtual assistant business.

Homework for Chapter 2: Write an answer for these four questions:

1. What are three skills that you do well?
2. What are three skills that you do NOT do well?
3. What are three skills that you would like to learn?
4. What is your best skill to offer a client?

Chapter 3

Do You Need to Become Certified?

This chapter will focus on becoming a certified virtual assistant or CPVA or CVA (depending upon the certifying institution).

First, will you *need* to become certified in order to become a recognized virtual assistant? The answer is "no" because the industry is currently not regulated. Now, that is not to say that you might still WANT to become certified for your own personal satisfaction and/or from a marketing perspective.

Depending upon the client, some clients will prefer a certified virtual assistant over a non-certified virtual assistant. Also, with certification comes the recognition that you have completed a certain level of training and testing as well as are being held to a higher level of standards and performance. It is definitely a confidence booster as you place the certification after your name on your business card or in your email signature.

Where can you go to receive this certification? There are many places online, offline or a combination of online and offline to go to receive certification based on how much time and money you want to invest. This chapter will focus on the most recognized and widely accepted certifying institutions.

Traditionally since the early 1990's, Red Deer College in Alberta, Canada has offered a certificate in virtual assistance. Even though students were required to complete most of their studies at the college, there was online training as well. Traditionally, the course took just under a year to complete and receive certification.

Then along came the exclusive online institutions offering VA certification via online teleclasses, telebridges, and what is now considered the virtual classroom. An example of this would be AssistU, which offers the CPVA (Certified Professional Virtual Assistant) and MPVA (Certified Master Virtual Assistant).

Owned and established in 1996 by Anastacia Brice, a former VA turned VA coach (www.virtualmoxie.com), the program now offers a Virtual Basics program. This self-study program is offered for \$515, but is not considered enough to actually qualify you for certification. It will help you learn the basics and it does have its own insignia or logo, which could be placed on your web site. However, again it will not carry the same weight as the other two certifications. The original training program for the CPVA certification was a 20-week intense online training program for over \$2,000. However, I understood it to be one of the best and most thorough.

VAClassroom.com offers online classes and certifications in "niche" or specialized virtual assistance such as Internet marketing (Internet Marketing Virtual Assistant or IMVA) and social media (Social Media Virtual Assistant or SMVA). The classes range from \$300 to \$500 dollars, and there is no prerequisite for taking the certifications. Yes, you would be able to place the IMVA or SMVA after your name.

Another option is VANetworking.com, which also offers both an apprenticeship-type program (periodically throughout the year) as well as a self-study program called the VBSS (Virtual Business Startup System) for about \$997. While it is considered self-pace, it does include coaching with Tawnya Sutherland, the founder of VA Networking and the VBSS. She will also mentor you towards a certification at VACertification.com. There is also a designated private section of the VANetworking.com web site for only the VBSS students.

Yet another way to receive VA certification is through Virtual Office Temps (<http://www.virtualassistantjobs.com/certified.php>) where you can study on your own and take the test for a non-refundable \$95. The three study manuals are listed on their web site and you have 24 hours to complete and pass the test. Retakes are \$50 and you must wait 30 days to retake the certification test for the VOT-CVA.

There is also a wide range of specialty VA certifications offered on this web site in proofreading/editing, real estate or other niches. These are an additional \$75 after taking the VOT-CVA for \$95 and passing.

What if you still really need to work and can't afford it or find the time? Well, there are two options.

You may go to VACertification.com (<http://vacertified.com/get-vacertified/apply-today>) and present your application to their board to see if you qualify to be "grandfathered" in after being a virtual assistant for one year. The cost to submit your application and other documentation is \$75.

On the other hand, you can do what I did and that is set up your own apprenticeship program with a potential client. At the time, all of the certification programs were much more expensive than they are now, so I set up my own apprenticeship program with a client. Now, with the costs being as low as they are, I may consider receiving my own certification.

If you do set up your own apprenticeship program be willing to work hard and to work for free, but learn the ropes. You will "graduate" with a great client reference, portfolio, and experience.

If you're truly an entrepreneur/business owner, you won't allow a little thing like time and money get in the way of your dreams! There will always be those clients willing to do this for the free work and/or the bartering of your services.

I also joined the VANetworking.com for free (still is!) and read every post I could and asked questions. I also learned the value of networking with others in the industry.

So, do you really need to become certified to be a recognized virtual assistant? Again, "no" but you might want to become certified. There will always be those clients who are willing to work with you (certified or not) based on a good client referral or your past employment.

Then again, there are those clients who will only work with a VA who is certified. Only you can decide whether certification is right for you and when to begin the process.

Homework for Chapter 3: Write an answer for these three questions:

1. Do you plan on becoming a certified VA?
2. Where will you go to become certified?
3. Have you done a Google search to see if there are other certifying institutions?

Chapter 4

What Equipment Do You Need to Get Started?

Now it is time to discuss what equipment you will need to open and maintain your virtual assistant practice.

Obviously, some of your equipment needs will be based on what services you plan to offer. One of the biggest mistakes that future virtual assistants make when deciding upon their equipment, is they buy too much. They overspend.

You don't need an elaborate list of equipment and software to impress clients. The client will probably be more impressed with your ability to curb your spending and look for creative options. They may even ask you to assist them with tips for cutting their own expenses and wasteful spending.

If the client insists on equipment or software that you don't have and can't afford, they can purchase it for your use. If they can't purchase it, then find clients who are willing to use what you have.

Below is a basic list of equipment you will need for your virtual assistant practice. The good news is that you probably already have most of it:

- Personal computer or laptop with at least a 1 GHz Pentium P4 processor and a minimum of 1 GB or RAM with sound card speakers
- Updated browser of your choice (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Opera, Safari are the most common)
- Printer compatible with PC (one with a scanner and copier is best)
- Wireless, DSL or Cable Modem connection to the Internet (Comcast, Cox, Verizon)
- Windows XP/Windows Vista/Windows 7 (Mac users will want OS X or what is recommended)

- Email account (recommend having one other than a gmail account)
- Eternal hard drive backup or an online backup (Carbonite.com)
- Anti-virus software (Avast, Norton)
- Anti-malware prevention software (Malwarebytes)
- Gmail account to use Google Docs and manage multiple projects and clients
- Dropbox.com (free account) to share larger documents
- Cell phone or free Skype.com account (landlines are also welcome)
- Paper, pens, and a few office supplies

Any of these programs or tools can easily be found via a Google search.

Please note that there are other service providers other than the ones listed above in parenthesis. I didn't want to overwhelm you with choices, but you can also check with other friends or online workers to see what they are using.

Fax machines and all other equipment are optional. Also, make sure that you have a comfortable chair and are in an area of the house where you can actually work without distractions. Accounting software, graphic software, and everything else can be added later. This is unless you plan on offering accounting and or graphics as your primary services.

In future chapters, we'll also discuss marketing materials. However, I will go ahead and inform you that you can survive and thrive with a simple web site, business cards, and three FREE social media accounts (Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook).

As you can see, it really doesn't take an excessive amount of equipment to get started in your virtual assistant practice. The good news is that most—if not all—of these items will become tax write-offs for your business.

In summary, my advice is to start small, make a profit, and continue to invest in your equipment, your training, your marketing, and yourself. A low overhead will cause a lot less stress for both you and your future virtual assistant practice. Nothing is worse than to try to concentrate on growing a business with several maxed-out credit cards constantly on your mind.

Now, go put together your equipment or your equipment list. Better yet, just do the homework assignment listed below.

Homework for Chapter 4: Write an answer for these five questions:

1. What equipment do you currently have?
2. What operating system, anti-virus system, and anti-malware system are you using?
3. What email addresses are you currently using?
4. Have you downloaded Dropbox.com and know how to use it?
5. Have you downloaded Skype and have set up your account?

Chapter 5

How Will You Structure Your VA Practice?

To date, we have discussed what a VA is and does, how to decide which services to offer, whether or not to become certified, and how much equipment is need.

Now the big question is, how will you structure your VA practice?

The good news is that there are really only two "structures" or practice models in which to choose. There is the solo-VA practice and the multi-VA practice. While the choices themselves aren't difficult to understand, there are pros and cons to both. Also, the practice model you choose will determine how you write your business plan, business standards, and contingency/disaster recovery plan.

Your business structure will also determine your tax structure as well as what you name your business. For example, multi-VA practices usually use words such as "staffing" or "hub" in the business name.

Obviously, the simplest structure would be the solo-VA practice. In the common vernacular of the day, you would be considered a freelancer. Now with the IRS, you would be considered a sole proprietor. Your taxes would be filed under your social security number—just as if you were working a regular job. Even operating under your own name as a freelancer, you would need to apply for a local business license. While you can use your own checking account, the IRS prefers you to open a separate checking account for business.

If you did choose to operate under a business name instead of your own name, you would still need to apply for a business license at your local county courthouse. However, since you are operating under a different name other than your own, this license would allow you to operate under a dba (doing business as) or fictitious name. Therefore, when you open your business checking account at your local bank, you would sign your checks using your full name, writing dba (not case sensitive) below your name, and then your business name (fictitious name) below the acronym: dba.

Now, to become a multi-VA practice you will need to apply for an EIN or Federal Employment Identification Number. You will also need to fill out tax forms for each of your "employees" or if they are operating as ICs (Independent Contractors) then you will need to remember to file a 1099 for each employee—regardless of whether they earned over \$600 or less than \$600. You will also need to have everyone in your multi-VA practice sign a legally binding contract either identifying himself/herself as either an employee or an independent contractor with terms and conditions spelled out. My advice on this one: Hire an accountant and an attorney.

While a multi-VA practice may seem like a hassle, the main "pro" is you will make more money. Not only will you be able to handle more work from more clients, but you will be able to "take a cut" from everyone who works under you. The main "con" is that you are responsible to the client if anyone makes a mistake.

In a solo-VA practice, you probably won't be able to handle more than five to ten clients at a time. Therefore, the "con" is you won't make as much money. However, you won't have all of the paperwork or responsibilities as the multi-VA practice.

That said, you probably will want to set up a network of other VAs or freelancers who offer services that you don't. This way you will have a good referral network setup either to refer clients or to work jointly on given projects.

Can't decide whether to make your VA practice a solo-VA practice or a multi-VA practice? Go solo first and learn the ropes. Even consider sub-contracting your services under other VAs while you learn the industry. Always remember, it has to feel right to *you*. After all, it is *your* practice.

In upcoming chapters, we will discuss how to choose a business name, how to finance your VA practice, and how to transfer from a full-time job into your VA practice.

If the idea of a multi-VA practice is more appealing to you than a solo-VA practice, Michelle Jamison has written an e-book on the subject at <http://www.mjva.ca/va/multivabusinessbooks.php>

Homework for Chapter 5: Write an answer for these two questions:

1. Would you prefer to be a solo-VA practice or a multi-VA practice?
2. What are your reasons for your decision in the previous question?

Chapter 6

What Will You Put in Your VA Marketing Package?

Again, you will want to start small and then build. So, what materials will you put in your VA marketing package?

First of all, what is a marketing package? A marketing package includes marketing materials for both online and offline marketing that you will want to use to introduce your business to potential clients.

A good marketing package may be mailed to a client via postal mail or emailed as a WinZip file or individual electric files. A typical offline marketing package may appear to be a glossy pocket folder with your company name and logo and contain a business card, letter of introduction, brochure, flyer, recent press release, and a copy of the last company newsletter. Large multi-VA practices might even want to include a white paper or recent case study as well as an annual report.

While these marketing packages can be impressive, they can also become expensive. The cost of designing, printing, and mailing all of these materials out does not come cheap.

Again, I am going to give you the same advice as I did with your equipment list. Don't over do it. Start small and build. I know that I said this at the beginning of the chapter, but I am going to say it again. Start small and build. Please don't price yourself out of business.

Here is my advice. All you really need is a web site for online marketing and a business card for offline marketing. Really. That is all you really need. Now, that might not be all you *want*, but that is all you *need*.

On your web site, you should have five pages: *Home*, *About Us*, *Contact Us*, *Services*, *Blog*. You can list your services under *Services* just like you would in an offline brochure. You may also introduce your company with similar language to a sales letter in *About Us* with contact information appearing under *Contact Us*. Put samples of your work under *Services* or you may want to create a separate *Portfolio* page.

Just starting out, you won't have an online newsletter. You may want to write a press release, and send it to your local newspaper or online to one of the many online press release sites such as PRWeb.com. You could even put a copy of your press release saved as a PDF somewhere on your web site. I would recommend the home page in the left side bar.

There are many examples of press releases online, and PRWeb will give you guidelines as to how to write one if you choose their site. GBS Virtual Office Solutions, my company, also writes press releases and there is a gift certificate in the back of this e-book.

Also, if you could barter your services or volunteer your services to collect one or two testimonials to place on your web site—perfect. This will also boost your credibility. Place the testimonials in text boxes on your web site or somewhere in the sidebars. I would recommend doing this on both the home page and in the *Portfolio* or *Services* page.

You may also create a signature file for your email. This way whenever you reply to an email, your name along with your title and company name will automatically appear in the email. You can even include your company logo with your email signature file and make it look more like an e-business card. For offline business cards, Vistaprint.com has the some of the best prices.

Again, all you really need is a business card and a web site. Why is this? The answer is simple, but please don't misunderstand what I am about to say. Until you develop an online presence and have accumulated at least six months' expertise, you won't really have much to write about, tweet about, blog about or video about. Therefore, people are less likely to want to hear what you have to say, because they have never heard of you.

However, do not let that discourage you. Instead, use this to become more determined than ever to get out there, get experience, and learn this industry! Look for opportunities to subcontract under other VAs, volunteer or barter your services. You can do this!

Homework for Chapter 6: Write an answer for these four questions:

1. What do you think you will put on your business card?
2. Have you been to Vistaprint.com to look at the samples?
3. What do you want your web site to look like?
4. Have you Googled other VA web sites for ideas for your web site?

Chapter 7

What Will You Name Your VA Practice?

While it may seem like an easy task, there is definitely homework to be done.

Why is this? For one thing, if you've ever typed in the words "virtual assistants" (without the quotes) into a Google search you'll probably yield close to 2,510,000 results in about 15 seconds. At least that is the number I received on January 23, 2012. This means that the name you choose for your own VA practice may already be in use.

How will you know if your business name is in use? You'll have to do your homework, and you'll probably have to do it in more than one place.

Obviously, the best place to start would be the Internet using a search engine such as Google, Yahoo, Bing or AltaVista. Now, just because a name does not come up in the search engine results, doesn't mean your search is finished. Many times a person will register a business name (fictitious name) with their local county courthouse and then never use the name. They still legally own the business name, but they have never used it or promoted it online.

With this in mind, you will need to contact your County Clerk's Office for a list of registered business names or fictitious names. These are usually maintained in a fictitious names database, and you will have to go in person to have a search done.

If your VA practice plans on becoming an LLC (Limited Liability Company) and putting the LLC at the end of the business name, you will also need to contact your state's business office. You want to make sure that you are not using part of another LLC's name or a part of another legal partnership's name.

You will want to search the old Thomas Registry for any unregistered trademarks if plan on using a trademark. Better yet, find a trademark attorney or visit www.legalzoom.com or the best solution (my highest recommendation) would be to go to www.uscopyright.gov and register it

there. The physical address is at the bottom if you choose to send your documents to their Washington, DC headquarters.

Therefore, if you want to trademark your title or tag line then you will need to do a search as well. A patent or trademark attorney could help you or again others have faired well using LegalZoom.com or writing to the United State Copyright Office in Washington, DC. The same two places mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Say for example, you want to have your title trademarked as "VA and The WordPress Wonder Wiz"TM as part of your title or tagline—do your homework. It may be the future registered trademark of a software company like WordPress or any company for that matter.

NetworkSolutions.com is also a helpful online tool that will pull up variations of the business names you type into the fields. It is something like Godaddy, but you don't have to pay before using to register a domain name. Sometimes if your business name is a "little too close" or too similar to another business name, you may be asked via letter (usually by the business' attorney) to change it. Their attorney would send you want is known as a "cease and desist letter" for you to stop using the fictitious name or trademark as your own.

Now, once you have done all of your homework, how will you know that you have a "good" name? A name that really does promote your business and describes what you do?

Well, I can tell you four ways to know you do NOT have a good business name:

1. Your target market cannot remember how to spell your business name.
2. Your target market constantly (not just once) struggles to pronounce your business name.
3. Your target market cannot remember what your business does.
4. Your target market continues to confuse your business name with a similar business name.

Another thing to consider is once you get your business name, how will the search engines react to the name? I'm going to use myself as an example here, so you won't make the same mistake that I made.

My former business name was Gemstone Business Solutions, because I love gemstones and enjoy designing my own jewelry. To me, a gemstone was symbolic of something "well polished and priceless". What I was hoping to be for my clients!

However, the search engines didn't "get" my symbolism. As a result, most of my search engine results were for people looking to buy or sell their gemstones, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls. I even received phone calls from people hoping I could offer stone cutting equipment. Understand why I later became GBS Virtual Office Solutions?

My advice would be to take your time and do your homework both online and offline when it comes to selecting a business name. The next time someone asks the age-old Shakespearean question, "What's in a name?" You can proudly reply, "Good search engine results!"

Homework for Chapter 7: Write an answer for these four questions:

1. Which three business names are you considering for your business?
2. What comes up when you type the names into a search engine?
3. Have you thought about a tag line (slogan) for your business?
4. Have you thought about a trademarked title or tag line?

Chapter 8

What are Some of the Myths of Working at Home?

"Working at Home" is being defined in this chapter as working in a home business, freelancing from home or working in a WAH (work-at-home) job.

While this topic may not be directly focused on VAs, it's still important to identify what you can expect by working at home. This article will help you identify what is mythical *or rumored* and what you can actually believe and plan for in the future. In upcoming chapters we will discuss financing your dream and transferring from a day job to your VA practice, so you'll be able to make a more informed decision.

Oh, the joys of working from home! Who hasn't dreamed of being able to work in your fluffy, pink bunny slippers and bathrobe on a snowy winter day? Add to that being your own boss and being in complete control over your own schedule. Sounds good, doesn't it?

You have thought about it too. In fact, you have thought about it so much that you've even started mentioning it to your close friends and family. They've also loaded you down with all kinds of advice—both good and bad. If you're like most of us, you have received a combination of advice, hearsay, legend, and myth given by people who have never been self-employed a day in their lives.

Here are just a few of the myths that you can expect to hear:

- **You'll have more time for family and friends.** While you may no longer have a commute, you may find that you spend just as much time working as you did before. Why? Because when you are self-employed, you have non-billable tasks you have to do, such as filing your taxes or writing your own advertisements. You'll also have to educate your family and friends that when you are working at home, you ARE working. This is not a hobby. Nor is this a 24/7 Waffle House.

- **You'll save a lot of money on "working expenses"**. This is the one that confuses most people. While you will save money on gas, dry cleaning, lunches, and daycare—you *may* find that the money saved is simply re-allocated. The money you aren't spending on driving to a job every day is now being spent on web hosting, a business phone, more computer software, business cards, business licensing, high-speed Internet, and advertising. You may save money, but don't be surprised if it isn't a large amount due to the re-allocation. Keep good records.
- **You'll be able to save money on daycare**. If you have two or more children in daycare, you may find that you **WILL** save money working from home. However, you must also realize that if you are now going to be watching the children yourself, you won't be able to work as much either. You will have to wait until your spouse can relieve you or the children are napping. You may also have to hire outside help. Again, keep records. It probably is a savings, but do the math. The savings may not be as much as you thought.
- **You'll be able to play with the kids while you work**. I have yet to meet anyone who can do this. If you know of anyone who can play patty-cakes with one hand and type with the other, I would love to see it! When you are working at home, you **ARE** working and need to concentrate. While you may be able to tune out some of the background noise, you will still need to focus on your work.
- **You'll get lonely**. While you will be working for the most part in isolation, you will also have the opportunity to develop close virtual friendships with others VAs and freelancers. Thanks to the Internet, forums, and social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter! The loneliness does not have to be intense. Occasionally, you can also get out of the house and have fun.
- **You'll get fat**. While the call of the wild (A.K.A. sound of the icemaker), may have you running to the refrigerator more often—don't. Weight gain does not have to happen. Keep track of what you are eating (food journal) and incorporate at least 20 minutes a day of exercise.

- **You'll let your appearance go and become a slob.** While you can definitely redefine "Casual Friday", you don't have to let your appearance become undesirable. You don't have to dress up to work at home, but you can still practice basic hygiene such as combing your hair, brushing your teeth, and showering often. Try to do these things before 4:00 p.m., and you'll feel like a celebrity getting ready to walk the Red Carpet.
- **You'll go broke.** While you may take a pay cut in the beginning, over a period of time (3 to 5 years), you may recover your former salary. If you do not recover your former salary then look for ways to save. In addition, with more companies hiring at-home workers, you could always go to work with one of those companies that hire remote workers or function in a telecommuting position. Good web sites for finding WAH job leads are WAHM.com, WorkPlaceLikeHome.com, and WAHAdventures.com.
- **You'll be able to sleep in every morning.** While you don't *have* to set an alarm, you will still need to make money working. Anyone who works at home will tell you there are "feast times and there are famine times" when it comes to working at home and getting clients. I have never met anyone, who works at home, that hasn't pulled the occasional "all-nighter". The most dedicated "all-nighters" usually are fellow virtual assistants.
- **You'll be able to set your own schedule.** Again, while you don't have to have a set schedule, many who work at home find it ends up happening. It actually will take more discipline to work at home than it does to work a regular job. Even though you are welcome to set your own schedule, you do have to be flexible with clients and any training you may need.
- **You'll be able to "cherry pick" your own clients.** While it is not impossible to select who your clients will be, it's not always easy in the beginning. Eventually you will be able to select them—just maybe not in the beginning. When you are first starting out, you may have to take a variety of clients to get the experience and initial cash flow started.

I'm sure that there are many more that I didn't list, but these are the WAH myths that you'll hear most often. You have probably heard variations to all of these as well.

Homework for Chapter 8: Write an answer for three questions:

1. Which of these myths or rumors will be a struggle for you?
2. Which of these myths or rumors will you NOT be a struggle for you?
3. What other myths or rumors could you add to this list?

Chapter 9

How Will You Finance Your VA Practice?

Now, for the chapter you've been holding your breath waiting to read. This is the chapter, we'll take a look at how to finance your VA practice. While most of us would like to fantasize about winning the lottery or having a rich uncle from Texas die and leave us a fortune, most of us won't fall into that type of luck.

As a rule, banks do not loan to freelance or home businesses. The good news is that there are other options available.

I personally have met several VAs who have financed their VA practices by taking full advantage of their savings accounts, tax returns, 401K plans from a former employer, retirement accounts, home equity lines of credit, small personal loans from relatives, second mortgages, and credit cards. Hopefully, you will stay away from the last one or at least not max out your credit cards.

I financed my VA practice with three months' salary saved from a 401K plan and two clients. I found the clients while "moonlighting" in the evenings and on weekends, while I held down my then current day job.

Most of the financial planners that I have spoken to suggest having two to five years' salary saved. However, for most of us that is almost as much of a fantasy as winning the lottery or the rich uncle from Texas story. It would still be wise to talk your banker or a member of your local Small Business Administration office for counsel if you do feel the only option is to borrow money.

The bottom line here is how much risk are you willing to take and how comfortable are you with a lot of debt? Does emptying your savings account cause you to panic? Are you and your spouse willing to borrow against your home with a home equity loan or take out a second mortgage? The home equity loan could be used to renovate a room of the house to use as your office. The interest would also be tax deductible.

The good news is that a VA business, like most freelance businesses, is a low overhead business. This brings us to the next point. A low overhead business can also be financed by your day job. If you still have a full-time day job, then work it and let it finance your VA practice. Keep the VA practice part-time in the evenings or on weekends. As your business grows, you can always switch to a part-time job while you build your VA practice to full-time.

If you've already left your regular employment, there are plenty of WAH companies and opportunities listed at [WAH Adventures](#), [WorkPlaceLikeHome](#), and [WAHM](#). Go ahead and apply to a few if you need the income.

Then there are additional things that you can do to find "hidden money". This is money that you are spending for things, which you could probably suspend or sacrifice, while you build your VA practice. Some of the big money savers are cutting back on cable channels, eating out less, and less elaborate vacations.

One of the big savers for me was car insurance. Because I was no longer commuting four hours a day roundtrip to work, my car insurance dropped substantially. So, look at all of your bills. Keep a record of three-month's expenses and then decide where to save or eliminate.

Also, because you are working at home, you will save on gas, more car maintenance, dry cleaning, lunches, and daycare. As we discussed in the last chapter, you WILL save money by working at home. However, SOME (not all) of that money will go towards your newly acquired business expenses such as business cards, software, and web hosting. So, be prepared.

There are also cases of "extreme couponing" and those who have cleaned out their garage and attic and made a hefty sum on eBay. So get creative too.

Then make sure you have your family's support on your decision to work at home as a VA. Sometimes spouses and children aren't always happy about eliminating certain expenses or scaling back to a simpler lifestyle.

Emphasize that you need their support. Educate them on the positive things, which will result from your working at home, such as more home cooked meals or family time.

To summarize, ask yourself the following questions when it comes to financing your VA practice:

- How much money do I need to make each month just to meet my basic expenses?
- Which extras expenses or luxuries am I willing to sacrifice?
- How much additional debt (if any) am I willing to carry?
- Which bills can I eliminate or save on by working from home?
- Am I willing to keep at least part-time employment to finance my VA practice?
- How will this new income structure impact my family?

This is the one chapter that you will probably need family support to do the homework questions.

Homework for Chapter 9: Write an answer for these three questions:

1. Which of the suggestions mentioned in this chapter will you use to finance your VA practice?
2. What will your new household budget look like as you finance your VA practice?
3. How can your family help you reach these goals?

Chapter 10

How Will You Transition into Your VA Practice?

Now we will discuss how to transition into your virtual assistant practice. Transitioning here refers to how you will go from working for an employer (employed) to working for yourself (self-employed) as a virtual assistant. The two questions here will be: *How* and *when* do I transition into my virtual assistant practice?

If you are currently a stay-at-home mom or dad, the transition will be more of a time management scenario. This is where you will decide how and when to work around your kids. You'll also have to make a decision on whether or not you will hire inside (inside the family) or outside (outside the family) help to watch your kids while you work.

Now, if you are still working a regular job outside the home, you will need to ask yourself several questions when deciding how and when to transition into your own virtual assistant practice. These questions may vary, but these questions will help you begin planning your transition:

- How long do I want my transitioning period to last?
- Will I be able to work with clients around my current day job?
- Will I be able to work only evenings and weekends while I build my VA practice?
- Could I reduce my regular job from full-time to part-time allowing more time for my VA practice?
- Could I just quit my regular job and transition into my VA practice?
- Should I quit my day job, find a WAH job, and then transition into my VA practice?
- Do I have too much debt to quit my regular job and start a VA practice?

Again, no one solution will work for each person. It will really depend upon how much money you will need to make as well as how good you are at taking risks. You might want to revisit the previous chapter, which dealt with financing.

One thing to keep in mind is that if you are planning to match each dollar you earn at your regular job with each dollar you earn in your VA practice, this will probably have you working close to 80 hours or more per week. That's not something most people can sustain indefinitely.

Personally, I worked my day job and did virtual assisting in the evenings and on the weekends. However, because I had a 4-hour-a-day (2-hours each way) commute, I could tell it was going to be a slow transition. That is why I decided to accept a WAH job at a call center to supplement my then two VA clients, and I resigned from my day job. I also had three months' salary saved in a 401K.

Now, this is what I did. Again, this might not be the best solution for someone else. Give serious thought to your transitioning plan.

Homework for Chapter 10: Write an answer for these four questions:

1. What five steps will I take to transition into my VA practice?
2. How long will my transitioning process take?
3. Will my regular employment be full-time or part-time for now?
4. Will my VA practice be full-time or part-time for now?

Chapter 11

Where Will You Find Your Clients?

To date we've discussed a lot of what it will take for you to get your VA practice up and running.

Now we will discuss where to find your clients. This will be one of the most important decisions you'll make, because this will be the one that brings income into your business.

Before you decide *where* you will find your clients decide *who* they will be. What industry is it that you want to serve as a VA? Just to name a few, there are authors, coaches, Internet marketers, and web designers.

To broaden your options, there are also many offline choices such as artists, caterers, chiropractors, and small restaurant owners. Pick up a phone book or a copy of the *Yellow Pages* and begin browsing the A through Z services section.

Get creative with the services that you could offer a particular market. Then ask:

- What particular services does this industry need?
- What services could I provide to this industry?
- Can I easily reach this industry?
- Will this industry produce enough volume to keep me busy?
- Does this industry have the income to merit my services?
- Would I actually enjoy working with this industry?

Now, within this industry there could also be a more specialized niche. For example, say that you selected authors. Within the writing profession, there could be non-fiction writers. Then within the non-fiction writers, there could be biographers. Even within biographers, there could be 19th Century biographers.

Are you beginning to see how you can take an industry and narrow it down to a niche or a specialized niche? Also, ask yourself which niche would you be the most passionate about in providing services?

While you do not have to have a niche to be a successful VA, it does help. Just like in the medical profession, specialists make more money than general practitioners do. Again, give this thought.

When I began my VA practice in 2006, anyone who had a pulse and a checkbook was a client. However, as time progressed, I noticed that I could not serve nor keep track of each industry. I was going to have to specialize or select a niche. The great thing was that even the niche that I selected didn't have to be my entire clientele.

Many times specializing in a niche can be counterintuitive. Other industries will ask if you would also consider serving them. So don't be afraid of selecting the wrong industry or niche. If an individual in that industry "clicks" with you, then feel free to offer services to him or her.

Once you find your industry or niche, start marketing to them. Do a Google search for online forums where your niche hangs out. Join Facebook and LinkedIn discussion groups. Also, join online networking forums such as Meetup.com and Biznik.com.

Also, don't just limit your marketing to online; there are organizations within your community such as your local Chamber of Commerce and BNI.

There are many ways to find clients. Viral (word-of-mouth) or through referrals are great ways to find clients. Sometimes even handing out your card in the line at the grocery store will attract a client.

The main thing to remember is not to be shy. Get out there!

Homework for Chapter 11: Write an answer for these three questions:

1. Which industry or profession would you like to offer your VA services?
2. Within that industry or profession is there a niche or specialty niche that appeals to you?
3. What services will you offer this industry or profession?

Chapter 12

How Will You Write Your Business Plan?

Don't let this scare you. It's not as difficult as it seems and there are plenty of online resources to help you with this task.

One of the first places that I would recommend going would be to the [SCORE.org](http://www.score.org) web site and downloading a few of the *Templates and Tools*. SCORE (Service Corps Of Retired Executives) is a non-profit organization, which works directly with the US Small Business Association to assist entrepreneurs and small businesses grow and succeed. Many of the volunteers at SCORE are former entrepreneurs, small business owners or CEOs of companies.

The one in particular that I want you to download is the PDF found Under *Templates and Tool* it is the *Business Plan for a Startup Business* or just go to <http://www.score.org/resources/business-plans-financial-statements-template-gallery> and you will see it as a PDF.

A business plan will help your VA practice define its goals and objectives and have a timeline for achieving them. Also at this time, you may also want to consider writing a mission statement (business philosophy) for your business. A good resource to begin writing your mission statement would be to go to Missionstatements.com. Click on a few examples, and you should get an idea of how to write the mission statement for your VA practice.

A well-written business plan will help you each month:

- Evaluate how well your business does in operations and finances
- Project monthly cash flow
- Access ROI (return on investment) on marketing campaigns
- Examine Profit and Loss (P&L) Statements to help with taxes

A business plan can be a six-month plan, a two-year plan or for any other timeframe. The important thing to remember is that you will be revisiting it *and revising* it as your VA practice grows and changes. A well-written business plan can take several weeks to write, so take your time writing it.

What do you need to include in your business plan? Here is a list with a brief description of each item:

- **Cover sheet** – include your company name, logo, and contact information. Also, include when the business plan was last updated.
- **Table of Contents** – this will tell you which page to find your information
- **Company Overview** – describe your business, its location, and services
- **Mission Statement** – include your mission statement as previously discussed
- **Goals** – include your company's goals for the timeframe
- **Objectives** – take your goals and decide how to reach each one with a deadline
- **Financial Objectives** – decide how much you need to make and spend each month
- **Marketing Plan** – include your target market (niche) and how you will reach them
- **Pricing and Pricing Plans** – outline what you will charge for your services
- **Skill Assessment** – include skills you currently offer and skills you may offer and/or outsource
- **Advertising Plan** – estimate what you will spend and where you will spend it
- **Sales Projections** – estimate what your sales will be for the end of the timeframe
- **Financial Plan** – list sources of revenue that will carry your business through this period

The items that I have listed above are probably one of the simpler business plans. As you can see, a business plan is not something that you can sit down and write in an afternoon. Yet, it doesn't have to be a long, complex document either. Again, I would recommend going to the SCORE web site to get started or having another VA help you get started. We can also help you write one at GBS Virtual Office Solutions.

Good luck with your business plan.

Homework for Chapter 12: Write an answer for these three questions:

1. What will you include in your business plan?
2. Will you write a 6-month, 1-year, 3-year or 5-year business plan?
3. What will your mission statement be?

Part 13

Networking and Organizations to Grow Your VA Practice

Now we will discuss networks and organizations, which you can join both online and offline to help grow your virtual assistant practice. As you can imagine, there are no shortages of networks or VA organizations.

Networking both online and offline has always been an important part of growing any business. It is how people find out about you and your services. It is also how you connect and have important conversations about what you and your VA practice can do for them.

When I first started as a VA the two biggest online resources were VA Networking at www.vanetworking.com and the "Virtual Assistant Forum" at WAHM.com. I still believe that these are two of the best. You can join both of these for free, but the VA Networking site does have two paid areas if you would like to upgrade your membership. You may also donate to WAHM.com or advertise.

If you don't mind spending the money for membership, the IVAA at (International Virtual Assistant Association) at www.ivaa.org is still one of the oldest and most respected VA associations. There is also the newly founded VA League at <http://www.valeague.com>, which also offers great resources. Candy Beauchamp is the founder and she is a wonderful and talented virtual assistant.

There are many more of them cropping up each day, but I tend to stick with the ones listed above. While WorkPlaceLikeHome.com doesn't officially have a VA Forum, I have met many virtual assistants there who love to network and post VA-related jobs in the "Job Leads" section.

There are also virtual assistant discussion groups both on LinkedIn and Facebook, so consider joining one of those, especially if you already have an account. You can meet other virtual assistants and potential clients as well.

Please be certain to understand the difference between networking and looking for work. Networking can lead to work, but its intention is always

to make a connection. Not necessarily to make a sale, but it could lead to that. Sometimes the two terms can and do get confused.

In previous chapters, we have talked about where to find clients. The question always comes up about [Odesk](#), [Elance](#), [Vworker](#), [Guru](#), and other bidding sites. While the pay is not the best, you can find clients and build your portfolio. You can also network within the guidelines provided by these sites, but be very careful to abide by their networking rules.

Another great place to network with other virtual assistants is the Virtual Assistant Forums at <http://www.virtualassistantforums.com>. You may list your name and company in the directory. There is also a place to view the RFPs (Request For Proposals) for clients looking for virtual assistants.

Again, as previously mentioned another great place to network online is Biznik. It is primarily an online network of business professionals from different industries, but you can join for free and upgrade your membership as your business grows. Meetup is similar to Biznik, but also meets offline in your area.

Speaking of offline networking, your local Chamber of Commerce and BNI are excellent ways to meet the business community in your surrounding areas. I have made valuable offline contacts, which have lead to online work.

Just remember, clients can be found online and offline.

Homework for Chapter 13: Write an answer for these two questions:

1. What would your idea client look like?
2. Where will you find this client?

Chapter 14

A Typical Day in the Life of a VA

As much as I would like to describe a typical day in the life of a virtual assistant, I can't do that. Why? Because there usually are no typical days. Every day is different. Every day will bring its own challenges, variety of clients and work, deadlines, and flexibility.

While it is exciting to have control over your own schedule and to work at home, most VAs strive for good time management. Good time management includes:

- Planning your day
- Prioritizing your workload
- Staying focused on work
- Keeping distractions to a minimum
- Taking breaks to avoid stress
- Learning to set boundaries with clients and family

When it comes to planning your day, be certain to include other activities that you enjoy. Activities such as exercise, meditation, and knitting can be enjoyed guilt-free when there is scheduled time for them.

You might also want to establish a morning routine or an evening routine. A morning routine could consist of exercise, meditation, a shower, and taking the kids to the bus stop. Then go to work and work hard. Focus and limit distractions.

Don't spend every waking hour in front of the computer. Get out and do things. You will come back refreshed and ready to tackle the next project.

When feeling stressed or overwhelmed, go back and review the six bulleted suggestions mentioned above. One of those six suggestions is probably not being followed. Also when prioritizing your work, don't allow "rush jobs" to become the normative.

Set boundaries with your clients and stick to them. Boundaries can also be set on how late you will work and whether or not you will work weekends.

Me? I start my day with exercise, meditation, a shower, breakfast, and putting together the latest crock-pot recipe for dinner. Then I move on to answering emails, reviewing my day planner, and revising my Google calendar. By now, I am ready to jump into my client work.

Then I take small breaks every three hours, and I try to be finished by 8:00 p.m. Some days will run longer. Some days will run shorter.

So, get out there and enjoy *your* version of a typical day. You may never have another one like it!

Homework for Chapter 14: Write an answer for these three questions:

1. What will your morning routine look like?
2. What will your evening routine look like?
3. What leisure or family activities will you add to your day?

Chapter 15

Self-Care for the VA and Why Is It So Important?

This will probably be one of the most important chapters in the entire e-book. Why? Because without YOU, there would be no VA practice. It will be YOU that your clients depend upon to help them run their businesses.

If you cannot manage your self-care, how are you going to manage your VA practice without getting stressed, overwhelmed or sick? Self-care will become your way of taking good care of yourself both physically, mentally, and spiritually. It will become your way of reviving and reinventing how you will go forth for that week.

I like what Cheryl Richardson, bestselling author and coach, says about self-care and why she has devoted her entire coaching career to teaching it.

Quoting from her web site, she says, "In the past, I've sacrificed my health and relationships for work, given to others at the expense of my own needs, and watched my dreams slip through the cracks of a busy life. As a result, I've learned a lot about what it takes to put an end to the madness."

Cheryl Richardson also offers a FREE newsletter at www.cherylrichardson.com about self-care on her web site for those who are struggling with self-care issues.

What are some of the ways to implement good self-care?

- Learn your limitations and don't take on more than work than you can handle.
- Learn to listen to your body and what it is telling you about fatigue and pain.
- Learn to plan your day and tasks for the next day.
- Learn to say "no" and stand by your decision.
- Learn to have fun and enjoy time with family and friends.
- Learn to eat healthy and exercise.
- Learn to relax and rejuvenate.

Again, referring back to Cheryl Richardson what does self-care allow us to do? Quoting from Cheryl Richardson's web site, "We tell the truth. We make choices from love instead of guilt and obligation."

I would also go a step further and suggest "spoiling" yourself at least once a week with something really nice, like a bubble bath or hot fudge sundae.

Self-care is not an option, but an obligation. Self-care will be your obligation to yourself.

Homework for Chapter 15: Write an answer for these two questions:

1. What will your self-care plan look like?
2. When are you going to implement your self-care plan?

Chapter 16

Practical Step 1

This is where we really get busy. This is where I am going to have you go back to the previous chapters and look at your notes. You'll be moving quickly through everything we've discussed, and you'll be referring the notes you've taken.

I will have you combining several different chapters. **Try not to spend more than a day on any one step.**

I want you up and making money and building your practices ASAP.

Practical Step One will combine Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8. Here is what we will do.

As for Chapters 1 and 8, I will assume you want to become a virtual assistant and are ready to do so. You also understand the myths of working at home and are still determined to do so.

Now for Chapters 2 and 4, I want you to review the services that you plan on offering in Chapter 2 and put them in order from best service offered to least (best) service offered. Make that Column 1 on a piece of paper. Now, on the right side of the piece of paper list the equipment (see chapter 4) that you will use to provide these services.

If you are missing anything from the equipment list that I provided for you, then go sign up for it. For example, if you don't have a Dropbox account or don't know how to use Google docs. Go sign up and spend the day figuring it out.

Spend as much time as you can watching any tutorials or anything you feel you need to understand better. Don't spend too much time, but spend enough time.

For now, we'll just make you a sole proprietor as defined in Chapter 5. You can always switch to a multi-VA practice in the future. This is your first step.

Chapter 17

Practical Step 2

This may look like a short assignment, but it will take you a while to do. Today is the day, you sign up and start making money online. Remember how in Chapter 11, we talked about the importance of clients? Good.

I want you to go to each one of these web sites and sign up for an account:

www.Odesk.com

www.fiverr.com

www.mturk.com

www.fancyhands.com

Each one of these will be a fast way to start making money. The money may not be much at first, but it is a learning experience, and you are making money. Just having a source of income coming in is going to help build your confidence, portfolio, experience, and level of expertise.

While none of these may be a huge source of income, they are income while you start looking for those private clients and niches also mentioned in Chapter 11.

When you get to Odesk, you might want to add a portfolio and resume. This site will take you the longest amount of time. As for tests, there are so many tests, I would just take the Odesk readiness test and English Basic test. You can always return in the future and take more. Just not today, because you have three other sites to set up accounts. This is a bidding site and you will need to write proposals for the jobs for which you apply.

All of this will be explained in detail on the site. There is also a very helpful forum (they call it the *Odesk Community*).

Fiverr, Mturk, and FancyHands are all task related sites. You can sign up for an account and just start doing tasks or "hits" as Mturk describes them. Mturk also has *Turk Nation*, which is a place to ask questions.

Fiverr and FancyHands are self-explanatory, but have workers on www.WorkPlaceLikeHome.com that frequently help one another learn how to use the two sites. If you haven't joined WorkPlaceLikeHome, you might add this to your list today too.

Don't worry about a company name. You can just operate under your own name for now. None of these sites require a company name.

Chapter 18

Practical Step 3

Now on this third step, we are going back to Chapter 11 and do what we did yesterday. Any site you didn't sign up with or finish, do so. Also keep looking for work. MTurk and Fiverr are easy to get up and running with and earning money.

We are also going to add the information learned in Chapter 13. Go back and look at your notes. If you have the money, you are welcome to join any or all virtual assistant societies. However, I would like for you to at least sign up with www.vanetworking.com and www.virtualassistantforums.com—take the free membership and set up a profile.

Start posting comments and read as much as you can. Get to know a few other VAs. Enough work for today.

Chapter 19

Practical Step 4

Now on this step, we are going to be combining Chapter 11 for getting clients with selecting a business name as described in Chapter 7. I hope that you have completed your research, but if not then you might want to ask on www.vanetworking.com or www.virtualassistantforum.com for help or to see what other VAs are naming their companies. If you really want to keep your name and become a dot com, then you can skip this part of Step 4.

I also want you to get your business cards ready at this point. If you can go to www.vistaprint.com and take advantage of when they have 250 business cards for only the cost of shipping that would be great. If you can't wait then just order. The prices are still good.

You can also go to Microsoft Publisher, choose one of the design templates, and just print it out. You can also go to Staples or Staples.com and order Avery business card stock for your printer.

Hopefully, you are getting work on Odesk, Fiverr, FancyHands, and MTurk. If not, then keep trying. Something will open up.

Chapter 20

Practical Step 5

Practical Step 5 is the step that combines Chapter 11 with all of the things that you are doing now to get clients and Chapter 6 with downloading and designing a website. For your web site, you will want to use WordPress at WordPress.org. Templates can be downloaded and there is help available right there on the forum. However, a gift certificate for \$25 from Miranda Grimm at www.DesignbyMiranda.com is included in the back of this e-book.

As for LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, if you don't do anything for now fine. Just get them ready, and put together a budget as in Chapter 9 and make sure that you include marketing as something to include in your budget. If you need any help with social media, there is a \$25 gift certificate for Tomica Bonner at www.SocialMediaLabel.com for you to use.

Chapter 21

Practical Step 6

This is the final step. Practical Step 6 is when we continue using the client formula for finding clients in Chapter 11 while taking time out to start your business plan as mentioned in Chapter 12.

Have you been to SCORE.org to download it? Again, you probably won't finish this by the end of the month, but that's fine. Just keep working on it.

I'll leave it up to you to decide if you want to download and begin the VA certification through Virtual Office Temps at <http://www.virtualassistantjobs.com/certified.php> as outlined in Chapter 3. I would more highly recommend the IVAA as mentioned in Chapter 13, but you can decide that.

Good luck just keep working on earning money with your clients as outlined in Chapter 11 and networking with other VAs as outlined in Chapter 13. You will also learn from these other VAs as well as studying what they are doing in their businesses and how they are getting those niche clients.

Finish anything you didn't do. Ideally, you should be finished with time to spare. Where you able to make any money using Odesk, Fiverr, MTurk or FancyHands? If not, keep going. Also, these clients will help you decide your niche. While it might not be huge money, you are learning and building a portfolio. You can also raise your prices and certainly move on to bigger and better clients.

Also, on Odesk the free skills tests will also give you an idea of what to services to offer and what your strengths are. You can also go to BrainBench if you want.

At least you are not making the same mistake that I made. I took too long to get up and running and earning a profit. I did get smarter and hopefully can save you from that mistake.

In Summary

You've been working very hard, since you've purchased this e-book. Feel free to take a day off sometime this week to practice good self-care as mentioned in Chapter 15. Keep going through this e-book and keep growing your business. Keep building your VA practice!

I'd love to hear from you sometime in the near future. My email is gbsvirtualoffice@gmail.com.

Don't forget to take advantage of the gift certificates in the back. There are \$125 for you to use. There's one for VA coaching/mentoring, social media consulting, web and logo design, resume writing (some clients do request this!), and solopreneur coaching.

Mention promo code GBS7656 for each one. For security reasons, I have placed it separate from actual gift certificates.



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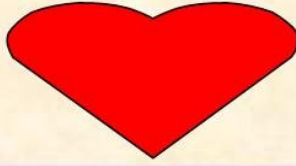
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