

## What Does It Take To Be A Virtual Assistant?

by Tracey D'Aviero

So, you think you want to be a virtual assistant? Good for you!

It's a wonderful profession that, if you work at it, can be very profitable and rewarding. Yes, that's what I said ... *if you work at it*. You should know that working from home is not the same as being at home on the weekends.

When you decide to become a virtual assistant (VA), you become a business owner ... an entrepreneur. It is so important to realize this when you are starting out, and it is frightening how many people do not realize it at all.

When I tell people that I work from home, I am often greeted with the squeal of, "Oh, I'd love to work from home!" and I can see that 'bonbons and television' look in their eyes. It's not like that. At least, it's not like that for me.

Now don't misunderstand me ... I'm not some cut-throat career lady who wants to run a conglomerate from my home office, and you don't have to be one either.

### Why am I a VA?

*I want to do work that I enjoy, I want to schedule my own time, and I want to make a comfortable living. That's why I am a VA.*

For me to do this, it takes four things: organization, skills, compromise and support.

**Organization** is a big requirement when you are going to be a VA. You need to be able to multi-task, to manage your time and to schedule as much as you can. For your business to be successful, you will be working with more than one client, and you need to be able to manage their tasks appropriately. I keep a task list of projects I am working on, and I schedule a time slot for each of those tasks during my day. You should know how long each project will take you, and you need to always leave time open for mistakes, problems, and even last-minute requests from clients.

**Skills** are also very important, obviously. You can be a generalist VA, or you can offer specialized services. It really doesn't matter. As long as you stick to projects and tasks that you are skilled at, everyone will be happy. Market yourself with tasks that you do well. Don't take on projects that are outside your abilities. You will spend more time learning the ropes, and it will cut into time that you could be billing for work that you know how to do well. Schedule time to learn new skills outside of client projects and master them, and then offer those services to your clients. With the speed of technology evolving all the time, it's important to keep on top of your skill set.

**Compromise** is a huge requirement for a VA. You can organize and schedule every last item, and you can have a very impressive skill set, but you will still need to be able to compromise from time to time. What if your client isn't happy with your finished product? What if it 'wasn't what they expected'? Or what if they can't pay you right away? What if two clients have urgent projects – which do you handle first? There are so many reasons that things may not go 'quite right', and you need to be able to handle it when it happens. Handling compromise well comes with experience, but be sure that you are aware that these things could happen from time to time.

**Support** is one of the most important things that you will need when you are starting out as a VA. This can come in many forms: a mentor, a forum, a community, an organization. I have been in business for myself for almost twelve years, and have learned much through trial and error. If I had a 'do over', I would have really liked someone to turn to for advice and support in the early stages. Having said that, I still turn to colleagues and mentors for support as an established VA – places like Ottawa Virtual Alliance. Be sure to incorporate a support network into your business, and use it when you need it!

Still want to be a VA? That's great!

Be sure to do your homework, as you would do if you were opening any type of business, and you will set yourself up to go a long way with your VA business.

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*For more information on how Tracey can help you with your business, visit [www.traceydaviero.com](http://www.traceydaviero.com)*