

The ABC's for Work at Home Parents



Written for stay at home moms and dads to decide if they want to try real work from home opportunities and still enjoy their life at home with their children.

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Purpose: I need to give a little disclaimer to you right up front. I cannot promise you that you will be successful if you read this eBook. I just wanted to write something SIMPLIFIED so that anyone who is considering becoming a Virtual Assistant or venture into some other type of e-business gets real information. This information is current for this month of June the 22nd day of the year 2009. This has been written and distributed with the intent of educating stay at home moms and dads with the truth about the Virtual Assistant business Job Market. There are way too many scams and posers out there that want to sell you their "secrets" or "inside information" so you can start your own business. But here's the thing, the information in this document is written by stay at home, and work at home mom to other stay at home parents to give them the rundown of their best chances at making extra income online. This is just an eBook to be used to get you started. It is not to be copied in whole or in part by any person without the direct permission from the writer. It is not to be sold for profit or distributed for any other personal gain.

A is for Adventure.

Adventure is exactly what having your own business can be. The number of people who work from home that are self-employed outnumber the people who are employed by a company. So, if you are looking for work at home, one of the best ways to do this is to become a Consultant / Virtual Assistant

/ VA. You will probably have to “start your own business.” I put start your own business in quotes, because the idea of having to start your own business is scary right? Well, this guide will help you get started and see that it really is possible to get started and do it all for free until you have some money to spend. First think of a name for your business. You can write down some meaningful words or whatever even on paper if you are a visual person. Think of something unique and easy to remember probably 3 words max.

Ready? Ok, let’s get started with something foundational.

B is for Breakfast

Breakfast is Fuel / Lunch is Business / and Dinner is Romance.
I wish I could remember where I heard this, but I love this little saying. Here’s why: You have to plan your day. There is a time to worry about work then there is a time you need to be present with your family. If any of us could figure out how to do this all the time, we would live in a perfectly balanced world.

Now. . . on to some more technical stuff.

C is for Craig’s List

Thanks to Craig’s list, there is a wealth of businesses that can advertise jobs they need to be outsourced. And they can do this for free! So lots of businesses do it! Go to www.craigslist.com find your location, and then the city closest to you and start from there. Look under jobs, there are lots of great Virtual Assistant tasks under “Gigs”. If you don’t see anything you are qualified to do, then look in other cities in the state or surrounding states. After all, virtual assisting doesn’t look for work within commuting distance. But when you begin telecommuting work, you have to start somewhere right? When you get in your VA groove, you will be capable of having clients all over the world.

D is for Documentation

and setting up your virtual file system for all of your job listing interests, e-books and self written how to’s. Yes, you need to document how and where

you do some things. Especially if it is a task you only do quarterly or heck, even bi-weekly! Keep documents like e-mails that contain viable business information and file it in a folder for each specific client or business partner. That's all I am going to get into with this for now. . .

E is for Email.

This one is very important so pay attention. Email is the single most important tool that you will use in your new virtual office. You will use it for communication, record keeping and scheduling. The biggest and best free e-mail providers are yahoo, hotmail, and google's gmail. Even if you already have an e-mail address, you really should set up a separate e-mail address account for your work at home. You are less likely to miss important messages from clients when they are not mixed in the same inbox as your friend's forwards and your J Crew e-subscription right? You should look for e-mail that is free (at first of course, later if you have extra money you can spend whatever you want on e-mail. Heck, maybe you'll be able to pay someone else to deal with your e-mail for you!) Ok, back to reality. Look for a service that gives you lots of space, and a free calendar to keep track of appointments and remind you to send your clients updates etc.

F is for facebook & myspace

These are the biggest social networking sites on the internet. The thing about social sites is that inevitably we American's tend to mix business in all of our pleasure. Anyways, go sign up; see if you can find anybody you know.

P.S. Don't put anything on your profile you wouldn't want your boss or clients to see.

G is for Google

Google is a wonderful company, they offer so much for us work at home parents. Not only do they have a pretty great search engine, but you should sign up for an iGoogle account. iGoogle has a lot of great tools including: adsense, ad words and analytics. I am afraid in the first edition of this little e-book I am not going to get into exactly how to setup Adsense or Adwords. I will be blogging about it at <http://www.darkbluesun.com/WP>. But here it is in a nutshell: Adwords are advertisement for your business. (They do charge

you for this, so you may want to get yourself established before delving in to using Ad Words.) In the big way that only Google can advertise. AdSense is an account that you setup and get code to put into your website to display little ads of related content on your site, and then you get a little money for it each time someone clicks on your Google ads. But Beware: Do Not Click On Your Own Links. Google will know. Google Analytics measures how much traffic your website gets. And traffic monitoring conveniently leads me to my next tool.

H is for Histats.

Histats.com is the tool I have used for a few years to monitor the traffic on my website and to see that cute little button on my page that shows the world how much traffic I have had. You know, your visitors and page views. You definitely need to get one of these for your website! What's that? . . . Oh. . . you don't have a website yet? No worries ☺ we'll get to that. W is for website. Let's face it, our web presence is the virtual personification of our first impression. It's how we tell our stories, sell our stuff, share our info, and offer contact info to our new clients. So, if you haven't already, start thinking up a unique and memorable name. This could also be your business name that you were thinking up earlier. You can go online and buy a url at godaddy.com or domainmonger.com. And even some of these will have their own traffic monitoring applications.

I is for Instant Messengers.

These can come in handy when you are working for a client or business associate in real time. And almost all of them can log your conversations for referencing later if necessary. As you begin to network with other VA's and build teams, collaboration via chat can save time in a way that e-mail cannot match. Examples are AOL, Yahoo instant messenger, ICQ, Windows Live Messenger. There is a program called Trillion that has a free base version. The professional version costs something. But I have tried it and I had issues with logging my conversations. And I had a client that that really came in handy so I uninstalled it.

J is for Jobs that almost any starting out VA can do. There are a number of odd Virtual Assistance end up doing, some are fun and some are kind of tedious. But these are the kind of jobs you can do until you find your specialty:

- Appointment and meeting schedules
- Blog writing (you should attempt to learn how to set these up. See W for websites.)
- Bookkeeping Records
- Concierge services (ordering services and deliveries for clients online)
- Data Entry
- Editing someone's content
- Gift orders and/or wish lists
- Remote PC support
- Research target markets for advertisers
- Travel Arrangements
- Setup business facebook profiles,
- Writing articles / freelance writing

See? It all looks pretty simple right? Well, experience will have to teach you how to do these this in the most efficient ways possible. You'll make your clients happy because they won't have to do these jobs. Your goal should be to become efficient in a specific area to be able to market yourself and streamline your business.

K is for the kids.

Why do you want to stay at home with your children? It doesn't seem like a tough decision. I mean, I want to raise my own children. The trouble with this in America is that no matter how secure you are in your decision to be a stay at home mom or dad, the sacrifices are quite big. There is the societal sacrifice. Society will picture you sitting at home watching Oprah and eating bon-bons right? People can look negatively upon the decision. Measuring it a weak decision which on the contrary is one of the most important decisions you will make for your kids in their lifetime other than what college you are going to encourage them to go to. The typical working adult in America works from 8-5 Monday through Friday. The average commute time is 25 minutes to work then of course you have to have 25 minutes to get back

home. We try to get our 6 to 8 hours of sleep every night. This leaves very little time left over to spend with our families. No wonder the divorce rate is high. We barely have enough time to floss let alone have personal lives! Ok, that is another eBook, I'll write it some other day. Back to the point: your children. When you begin the process of fitting in a work schedule in your home work schedule, you must take small steps. There is no quick 100,000\$ a year. That's the reality. According to google's neat little insights page, the number of people searching for "Jobs at home" has risen 78% in the past 12 months. And many of those poor souls will be bombarded with garbage and get rich quick scams. And this is sad. But it will only get better if real information becomes available before the false information. That is the goal of my eBook, my blogs and even some of my tweets. We have the technology to do it right, we just need the "know how".

L is for Linked IN

[Http://www.linkedin.com/](http://www.linkedin.com/) This is supposed to be the facebook for business associates. This is another tool of the trade to get your name and purpose out there. Remember. It really is all about networking. Your profiles need traffic just as much as your website does.

M is for money money money

Ok, so what can you really expect to earn by becoming a virtual assistant? And how do you make sure that you get that money? Well, this can get tricky. Certain jobs require different amounts of money per hour. Let's start with nice even numbers. If you charge \$10 per hour for 2 hours per day (which as a stay at home mother is my recommendation to start.) 5 h5 days per week would only come out to being \$5200 a year or even \$20 per hour becomes a little over \$10,000 a year and let's face it. . . .That seems like chump change when those scam artists are saying they make that much in a month part time right? But when you consider not having to put your 2.5 children in day care for \$150 a week and that ½ kid will be 250 per week when it finally turns six weeks old and goes to daycare because that's when our society decided that was long enough for the baby to be with his mother. (Of course this is based on the American averages of wanting a house, a car and 2.5 children.) But when you look at it this way, it's not a bad place to start, I suppose. And the idea that more VA's will succeed and more companies will employ Virtual Assistants or Consultants. Here are the rules I work by:

1. I never charge my client for time I spend researching something. Like if some system is upgraded and I have to go and read the little how to page, I don't charge my client for that. That is my time that I spend learning my trade. And I will most likely do the same task for another client, so why would I charge my first client the time it took me to figure something out?
2. I downloaded an invoice template from Microsoft's free templates page to use to invoice my clients. You can go find your own. KEEP TRACK OF THESE. You will definitely need them when you are filling out your 1040 Schedule C documents for the IRS!
3. Sign up for account with PayPal.com so people can pay you up front, or require payment via check within the week the project or task is due. Or you could charge an upfront fee and then bill the rest at the end when your client is satisfied. Someday when you are more established you can setup and get payments via credit and debit cards.

Start small, be honest and learn to work smarter not harder.

N is for never stop learning.

In the virtual business world, once you get to the point to where you are set in your ways. I am sad to say you will be replaced by the newest "upgrade".

O is for Organize:

I wish I could give better advice than to just stay organized, but that's the thing about technology, some tools and processes work great for some and just add complexity for others. You have to keep your tasks, contacts, emails and your documentation in places that are easy to get to. You don't want to save information in multiple places because that will just bog down your computer. It's a good idea to use a web based e-mail program at first if you have a computer that is really old or unreliable.

P is for Public Relations.

In the internet business, everything is public. Don't burn bridges. And remember you can always ask your new found business associates or ask.com questions about how to handle specific situations. The more you learn about your public and comply with their requirements, the more influential you will be in your market.

Q is for Quality or is it for Quantity?

Well, different clients will want different things. The customer really is always right. Even if you think their website looks cluttered, or their blog has too much fluff, pay attention to their style. Because a Virtual Assistant is suppose to do the work for the client the way the client would do it themselves. FYI -it sounds easier than it is sometimes. If someone wants something done quickly, do it quick. If they want something done right, then do it right. But experience will teach you how to do things accurately and fast. Trust me; at first some things seem tedious and maybe sometimes impossible. Just put on your discernment cap. Give the best estimate you can, or pass the job on to someone in your network if you know of anyone.

R is for reading

Read other people's blogs and then leave them a little comment. You know how it feels when someone takes the time to comment about something you wrote or did online? Go out there and leave your remarks. Word to the wise, positive messages will most likely give you positive returns.

S is for scheduling.

Here are my tips for Time Management.

- First understand how much you can handle.
- Second be careful about what you promise.
- Three limit your time on the computer – I strongly recommend 2 hours a day max for the first few months. Especially because it's summer vacation time and no kid wants to be raised by the Yo Gabba Gabba and Scooby Doo.

T is for twitter.

Go sign up for twitter. And follow me:

<http://www.twitter.com/FindingAnswers> then read the trending tweets and tweet something relevant with the trending tweet topic and you'll get

followers and when you get a follower, you should follow them back. Nobody likes a goody goody Peep.

U is for Universities,

Trade Schools or certifications. If you already have a degree, great if you do not, you should seriously consider going back to school to finish. If you have never started, you might want to check into a local community college to see if they have a business degree that would help you continue working online and even if you decide to rejoin the tangible workforce. There really aren't many good Virtual Assistant Certifications yet. Microsoft has some interesting Desktop Support Tech Certifications, but that only helps if that's the specialty you are going for. Don't buy into *any* kind of technical school that is promising you to be ready for work in 6 months or whatever until carefully scrutinized and researched.

V is for Virtual Assistants Unite!

Let's face it; we are afraid of being scammed by those crazy work from home schemes that want you to pay just \$139 for this "software" that will allow you to work from home. And Corporate America is afraid of being scammed by paying someone to sit at home and do nothing. It's all so backward isn't it? That's why I am going to perfect this little free eBook and get the word out, the truth about everything. We cannot let a few bad apples spoil the bunch right?

W is for website.

The best way to start one of these is by signing up for a free blog somewhere: WordPress, WebNode, Blogger, LiveJournal, or Squidoo. Squidoo calls their sub sites "lenses". Use your business name for example mine is darkbluesun So I have a website with blogger:

<http://darkbluesun.blogspot.com> (I know it says blogspot instead of blogger, I don't know why they did that but it is, in fact, blogger.) And I have a Squidoo lens: <http://www.squidoo.com/darkbluesun/> see? I found a name that was unique that I could use on most of my online profiles. But if I'd recommend any of them to start out with, it'd have to be <http://www.blogger.com/start> it ties in to google, if you've signed up for

