



## **The Top Ten Things to Know About Being a Professional Virtual Assistant**

By Stacy Brice

As an administrative professional, you may be wondering “what’s next” for you in your career. Having trained nearly 1000 people to be professional Virtual Assistants, I can say that if you’re drawn to the idea of continuing in the administrative field, but want more of... well, **everything** for yourself, becoming a VA might be the perfect path for you. Read on to learn more!

### **Virtual Assistance is a real, viable administrative profession**

With so many work-at-home scams on the Internet, it’s important to know that Virtual Assistance isn’t one of them!

While home-based business support services businesses have been around for decades, I formalized the Virtual Assistance profession more than seven years ago when I created AssistU ([www.assistu.com](http://www.assistu.com)), the premiere organization training, coaching, supporting, certifying, and referring Virtual Assistants (VAs). Since then, the industry has grown to the point where now, there are several organizations for VAs in the U.S. and Canada, as well as on other continents. As a profession, we’re young, we’re viable, and we’re growing!

Outsourcing is the wave of the future that’s here **now**. And Virtual Assistance is riding that wave for administrative professionals, but building into it a base of equality, respect, collaboration, and long-term involvement between client and VA that outsourcing has traditionally lacked.

**Bottom Line:** You can have your own business doing work you love and based on skills you already have!

### **Many professional Virtual Assistants are expatriate administrative and executive assistants from the corporate world who were tired of being abused, undervalued, disrespected, and unable to contribute fully**

You’ve heard the expression, “Sick and tired of being sick and tired?” That’s what we hear from administrative professionals every day as they contact us to find out whether becoming a VA is the next right career move for them to be considering. While some have found a “home” in being employees, the majority who talk with us work for companies where the culture strategically places them as being as integral as the copy machine, and offers about as much positive consideration. The “good” or “great” boss is uncommonly talked about. Instead, we hear mostly about the inconsiderate jerk of a boss most admins feel stuck with.

Often, after talking with us, they come to own their own VA businesses so that they can reclaim their lives, control their own destinies, and use all of their vast talents and skills to support clients they hand pick for themselves.

**Bottom Line:** Having a happy life can, and we believe should, include having a happy career! Having a happy career involves working with people who, in part, respect and admire you. VAs have that because they get to set standards for their businesses which preclude their involvement with other kinds of people.

## **Professional Virtual Assistants are not employees, they're business owners**

Clients don't "hire" VAs. Clients work "with" VAs. It's subtle, but a distinction nonetheless. There's equality in this working relationship taking place between two business owners, and the relationship has to serve the needs of both people.

**Bottom Line:** VAs are professionals, and clients treat them as such.

## **The single biggest challenge for an admin transitioning to being a professional Virtual Assistant is breaking free of the corporate box, embracing the reality of being a business owner, and being able to handle the personal and professional power inherent in that role**

For those who successfully move beyond this mental challenge, a new world awaits!

**Bottom Line:** Being a professional VA calls a person to stretch, grow, and play big in ways that being an administrative employee cannot.

## **Professional Virtual Assistants bill at rates of \$30+ per hour**

With advanced administrative and virtual skills, that's a very fair fee, even perhaps a bit low. Fortunately, a VA gets to set her own rates, based on the value she creates for clients. And when clients think about the value of their own time, and what they could do with more of it, it starts to look like one heck of a deal.

The more professional, industry-specific training a VA has, the more experience working with virtual clients, the more she can make happen for her clients, and the more vast her resources, the higher the fee she can command.

Further, VAs who have established niche markets will always earn considerably more than a VA working as a "generalist," because of the in-depth knowledge they have of the niche, and everything the professionals in that niche need.

**Bottom Line:** Whatever income you need or want to make, there's probably a way to do that as a professional Virtual Assistant.

## **There's a lot to be gained by being a professional Virtual Assistant that has great value, yet no monetary compensation**

Consider the value you might find in:

- Gaining independence and control over your own life
- Being successful on your own terms
- Changing the paradigm from working for someone and running on that corporate gerbil wheel to owning your own company and choosing with whom you will work
- Working at home lets you spend more time with your children
- Only doing work you love
- Doing diverse work
- Getting to contribute in a way you may never have been permitted to before
- Getting to use your creativity freely
- Doing dynamic work with interesting people
- Having no commute
- Working with people who genuinely appreciate your contribution
- Being a pioneer in a new profession

- Setting your own hours, taking as much time off as is desired
- Devising a schedule that works best for you and your family
- Receiving compensation that genuinely honors the contribution you make
- Not having to any longer be at the mercy of a corporate structure that doesn't see you or honor you as a true professional in your own right

You might consider becoming a VA because any one reason in the above list, or for a reason not shown. What we know is that the only job security in this country is the security you create on your own. The corporate world will continue to ask you for more, while giving you less. And downsizing continues... there is simply no way for you to know how long your job will be viable.

**Bottom Line:** If you want to, and are ready to create your own destiny, becoming a VA might be just the way to do that. Just be sure to understand that part of what you gain by doing may will never pay the bills, but it will nurture your soul.

### **The profession is still in its infancy; there's plenty of business available for everyone**

We haven't even begun to reach critical mass, yet, and probably won't for at least a decade. While right now the question still is, "What is a VA," we're moving toward a time when the question will be, "Who is your VA?"

**Bottom Line:** This is a very good time to become a VA.

### **You really can work from anywhere**

If your dream is to work from the beach, or an RV, or on your back deck, you can! The virtualness of a professional Virtual Assistant's work, plus the great technology available make it not only possible, but fairly easy, to work from anywhere (my assistant, Marie, loves to work from her boat in the summer!). You could probably travel the world, working in each new city or town, and unless you chose to tell them, your clients wouldn't even need to know. Of course, disclosure is a good thing, but you get the point. :)

Need to move to a new home? Turn off your system in your current home today, turn on in your new home tomorrow, and you're fundamentally ready to go.

**Bottom Line:** Because VAs work with clients worldwide, where you and your clients are, geographically, is never a barrier to effectively working together.

### **Professional Virtual Assistants only do work they love**

Ok, this is a bit simplistic, but fundamentally true.

Having listened to the Ask the Expert teleclass at ChangingCourse.com, you know what the basics of what VAs do. Central to that is providing a broad base of administrative and often personal support to clients. But... rather than having to do it all, VAs, instead, build fabulous resources to cover all the bases. So, when something needs to be done that a VA doesn't know how to do, or doesn't want to do, she can still get it handled. Hate doing database work? Don't know how to do HTML work and don't have an interest in learning? Never again want to coordinate a meeting? Don't feel graphically or visually attuned enough to create great Power Point presentations? No sweat. If you were a VA, you'd simply tap your resources and get it handled by someone else. It doesn't matter what the VA can do, as much as it matters what the VA knows how to get done. There's immense freedom in this!

**Bottom Line:** Your work and life-quality improve dramatically when you focus on what you do best.

### **You can do it alone, but why reinvent the wheel? Training and support matter**

Having terrific administrative skills that have served you well in your past and/or current employment is great. You'll certainly need those. But working virtually; providing administrative support virtually, is completely different, and there are many skills and technologies, as well as ways of communicating and working with people that a transitioning admin needs to learn. Additionally, as a VA, you'll own your own business, and a virtual one at that. That's hugely different than being an employee, and working in an office.

So you can become a VA and open a business on your own, but it's far smarter to get industry-specific training to keep you from running into potholes, and to help you eliminate blind spots. Further, the constant support of a community of seasoned and successful VAs is more important to a VA's success than I could possibly express.

**Bottom Line:** More than 50% of all new businesses won't see a fifth anniversary. If being a VA is for you, get the support you believe you need so that you can get a strong start in your business, and have a foundation that will allow you to sustain it, long term.

**Stacy Brice changes work and changes lives. She is a nationally recognized expert on 'virtual officing' and virtual work, and President and Chief Visionary Officer of AssisU, the premier organization training, supporting, coaching, certifying and referring Virtual Assistants. She can be reached via e-mail at [stacy@assistu.com](mailto:stacy@assistu.com), by phone 866/829-6757 or on the web: [www.assistu.com](http://www.assistu.com).**