



7 Simple Steps to Help Conquer Your Administrative Nightmare

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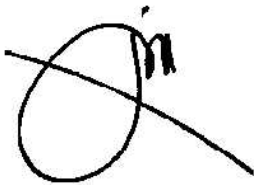
Introduction

The first thing all clients ask me is “How can you help me?”. I specialize in giving my clients the tools needed to figure out what administrative tasks need to be done and who is best suited for performing those tasks. Many of my clients own rapidly growing businesses and they find that the administrative tasks involved in running their business takes precious time away from their primary revenue generating activities. That’s where I step in.

Since 1986 I have been teaching people how to prioritize and handle their administration. I’ve developed what I call the **Administrategy**™ program – 7 essential activities that encourage you to identify your Administressors™ and examine (1) whether they need doing and, if so, (2) who should be doing those tasks.

I use a lot of humour in working with my clients – it makes life easier and encourages them to open up about administration issues. It’s difficult for many entrepreneurs to admit that they cannot handle everything – they feel the pressure to be a Jill (or Jack) of all trades. To paraphrase an old saying, “Jill of all trades, master of none.” It is not a sign of weakness to admit you need help – it’s a sign of a savvy business mind to know that having a fabulous support system will allow you to grow and expand.

Here’s to your success!



Disclaimer:

The material in this book was created as a tool to help you and your clients get to the heart of the clients administrative issues. There is no guarantee, implied or otherwise, that you will get clients by using these materials. The materials in this workbook are strictly a guideline for client needs assessments. No warranty is given nor implied.

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What's YOUR AdministrategyTM?

Client Name:

URL:

Assessment Date:

~~~~I create my own experience and manage myself with grace~~~~

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Part 1

Sticking My Nose in Your Business

Activity 1 - What do you do?

In order to understand how I can best support you, please outline for me your **primary business** activity, any **secondary revenue** generators that spring from that business and your **typical day** [if you have such a thing ;)]

[illegible]

Activity 2 - What are your Administressors™?

During the course of your work day, there are probably a half million things that frustrate the heck out of you.

Rank the items below for stress level on a scale of 1-5;

1 = “no problem” to 5 = “drives me insane and I need a drink.”

Rank	Task
	Accounts receivable collection
	Autoresponder creation
	Bookkeeping
	Business plan preparation/updating
	Client contact management
	Copywriting
	Data entry
	Desktop publishing
	Document creation
	Document editing
	Internet research
	Invoicing
	Market research
	Payroll
	Scheduling
	Shopping cart maintenance
	Spreadsheet creation
	Spreadsheet editing
	Travel arrangements
	Web site updating/maintenance

~~~~I am guided by my Higher Power toward a rich and fulfilling destiny~~~~

Activity 5 – Identify Your Logistics

Answer honestly!

My **desk** is:

1. A space devoted only to my work
2. An area shared with other employees
3. The kitchen table, or something close to it!

My **filing system** is:

1. A desktop filing box
2. A filing cabinet within 10 feet of my desk
3. A filing cabinet in another room or space
4. Missing!

My **information** is:

1. Easily accessible
2. Difficult to find at the best of times
3. Missing!

For my **to-do list** I use:

1. A PDA
2. A task manager program (such as Outlook)
3. A paper-based system or notebook
4. My incredible, infallible memory

For **scheduling** I use:

1. A PDA
2. A computer based system (such as Outlook)
3. A paper-based system
4. My incredible, infallible memory

Activity 6 – Where Are You Going?

In the **next year**, I plan to:

- ◇ Maintain my current level of activity
- ◇ Increase/expand my clientele
- ◇ Scale back my business to a manageable level
- ◇ Next year? I don't even know what I'm doing tomorrow!

A **business plan** is a roadmap for the success and health of your business. It not only requires you to research your business and your potential market(s), but it acts as a potential decision making tool if you require financing or assistance to expand your business.

- ◇ I have a comprehensive business plan that I refer to quarterly
- ◇ I have a general idea of where I want to steer the business
- ◇ I have no idea what you are talking about!

Notes:

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Part 2

Now What?

Now what?

You have guided your client (or yourself) through all seven steps and boom! You're done!

So what? Now what do you do?

This is where the rubber meets the road, so to speak. Now you have the chance to evaluate all of the information you have gleaned from this client and decide on a plan of action to help them get out from under their administrative burden.

Let's go back through each Activity and review what you have learned.

Pay special attention to the last two sections of Activity 3. You can learn a lot about a client and their work style by how they answer questions about their current assistant or previous Virtual Assistant.

Make sure you **read between the lines** about what they say – and what they don't say.

For example, if they had a VA before, why did the relationship end? Are they vague about the details? Or do they level all the blame at the VA?

Take a deep breath here and consider what you are, and are not, hearing from this client.

Notes:

Activity 4 - Define Your Working Style

Clients will always leave clues for you that, if you notice, will help you develop win-win strategies for working together. Administration of the assessment on **page 11** will help both you and your client understand the way that they learn and process information.

I have one client who likes to have a **note after each task is done** – even if it is just the word “Done”. Another prefers to have a **daily summary** of outstanding tasks with estimated completion dates and yet another prefers **weekly telephone conferences**. All learn in different ways and all have different needs accordingly.

Again, you need to **examine your own style** here in light of what this client is telling you. Do you work well with micromanagers? Will you mind having a client who phones you 9 times a day to ask questions or get status reports? How will you handle these situations?

Notes:

Follow-Up Activity 1

How has what you do **evolved** over the past 3 - 6 months?

[illegible]

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Covering the Basics – Filing System Categories

There are several files that should be present in a business filing system. Below are the basics from a home office or small business perspective. Depending on the nature of your business, these may be too general or too specific for you, but you can customize the following information to suit your business. Remember to use the **KISS principle – Keep It Simple Sweetheart**. You need not invest in a complicated and costly system to house only a few files. Any information contained in your files should only take 30 seconds to find. Customize your system to work for both your business and your work style. Keep the files you use most often closest to your desk. Put archives or files you don't use often in another location.

You will notice that some file titles seem to be repeated, like Web site(s) under Marketing and Domain Names under Expenses. The distinction here is that you would put items related to Web site content and design under the Marketing file, and invoices for hosting and domain name registration under Expenses.

Clients/Patients/Customers

- Last Name, First Name
 - Contact information
 - Personal information (if required)
 - Projects – On going (if required)
 - Projects – Completed (if required)

Directories

- Business Guides from local Chambers of Commerce
- Supplier Directories
- Trade Directories

Expenses

- Accounting
- Advertising
- Business licences, fees (government fees, local and provincial/state fees)
- Computer
- Computer equipment – miscellaneous (PDA, mouse, router, microphone, speakers, etc)

- Computer equipment – printer
- Computer equipment – scanner
- Consultant Services (business coach, organizing coach)
- Contracted Services (virtual assistant, sub-contractors, cleaners, etc.)
- Domain names
- Employee Benefits (medical/dental, insurance, RRSP, 401K, etc)
- Insurance – business/office property
- Insurance – professional liability
- Interest and Bank Charges
- Legal
- Library - business
- Maintenance and Repairs (or Leasehold Improvements if you rent)
- Meals and Entertainment
- Office Equipment (telephones, fax machine, copier, scanner, shredder, etc)
- Office Furniture (desks, chairs, lamps, radio, book cases, etc)
- Office Supplies (stationary, pens, labels, file folders, etc.)
- Postage/Courier
- Property Taxes
- Travel
- Utilities
 - Cellular phone
 - Telephone
 - Fax line
 - Internet connection
 - Heating/Lighting
 - Rent
- Vehicle expenses
 - Fuel
 - Repairs and Maintenance
 - Insurance

Education and Professional Development

- Include any business related courses you take, including seminar information, conference information, online courses, continuing education courses, staff development courses, etc.

Financial

- Accounts Payable - Current
- Accounts Receivable – Current
- Accounts Receivable – 30-60 days
- Accounts Receivable – 60-90 days
- Accounts Receivable – 90-120 days
- Accounts Receivable – In Collection
- Balance Sheets – Monthly
- Bank or Credit Union Monthly Statements (store only 1 year in active file/retain up to 10 years worth, depending on Federal/Provincial/State laws)

- Bank Loans (original loan papers, interest rates, amount borrowed, payment terms, etc)
- Capital Cost Allowance Information (Canada)
- Corporate/Business Tax Returns (retain for up to 10 years, depending on Federal/Provincial/State laws)
- Credit Card statements
- GST/HST Forms (Canada)
- Income Statements – Monthly/Annually
- Payroll Records and Taxes
- State tax remittances
- Tax Forms

Inventory

- Inventory Count
 - by product name/number
- Invoices/Statements
 - by Supplier Name
 - then ordered by Invoice Number
- Suppliers
 - listed alphabetically
 - ordering/contact information at front of file

Marketing

- Advertising – Print
- Advertising – Radio
- Advertising – Television
- Advertising – Web site
- Advertising – Internet
- Articles of Interest
- Business Plan (review annually – archive old copies)
- Information Package (about your business)
- Press Releases
- Trade Show Information

Memberships

- Professional/Trade Organizations to which you belong
- Boards on which you serve

Personnel Files

- Each employee by Last Name, First Name
 - resume/application form, tax forms (Canada – TD1), payroll records, information on benefits package (medical/dental, RRSP, 401k, etc)
 - performance evaluations/reviews, disciplinary information, record of education provided by the company, etc.
 - record of salary/wage rate, and notes on raises, Direct Deposit information (if you provide EFT)
- Miscellaneous tax forms

- Procedures Manual
- Resumes/Applications kept on file for six months
- Record of Employment forms

Jill Chongva is known as the Virtual Assistant Diva, and she manages her business filing system, her household filing system and her children's less than neat filing systems. You can find her at www.vadiva.com.

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How Long Do I Need to Keep This? A Guide to Receipts, Statements and Financial Clutter at Home

In most homes, paper causes clutter and it seems to mysteriously multiply by itself. But just how long do you need to keep all those receipts, bank and credit card statements and other financial papers? Below is a handy reference that you can use for dealing with your home paper trail.

Toss after One Month

ATM and bank deposit/withdrawal slips

- keep in a file folder until monthly statement received
- reconcile with your statement to ensure that charges and payments have been properly processed
- if for major purchase with warranty, staple receipt to the owner's manual and file for the term of the warranty
- if for major purchase without warranty, keep receipt if item replacement cost is higher than the deductible on your homeowner's insurance policy
- if for minor purchase without warranty, shred

Cash purchase receipts

- enter into your chequebook or computer software to ensure that you are accounting for all your purchases
- if for major purchase with warranty, staple to the owner's manual and file for the term of the warranty
- if for major purchase without warranty, keep receipt if item replacement cost is higher than the deductible on your homeowner's insurance policy
- if for minor purchase without warranty, shred

Credit card receipts

- keep in file until monthly statement received
- reconcile with your statement to ensure charges and payments have been properly processed

- if for major purchase with warranty, staple to the owner's manual and file for the term of the warranty
- if for major purchase without warranty, keep receipt if item replacement cost is higher than the deductible on your homeowner's insurance policy
- if for minor purchase without warranty, shred

Toss after One Calendar Year

Bank/Financial Institution monthly statements (unless needed for home business)

Brokerage/Mutual Fund Statements (Monthly/Quarterly)

- reconcile with your annual statement

Credit card monthly statements

Credit reports

- you should request your credit report annually to ensure that all information is accurate and up-to-date, especially with regard to accounts you have closed in the course of the year
- requesting this file annually helps to detect any suspicious activity that may be an indicator of identity theft, so you can see who has requested the report and for what purpose

Monthly Mortgage Statements

- reconcile with your annual statement

Pay stubs

- shred after reconciling with your W-2 or 1099 (US) or T4 (Canada)

Telephone/Utility bills

Keep for 7-10 Years

Any T4 Forms – including T4E, etc. (Canada)

Annual Mortgage Statements

Supporting documentation (cancelled cheques/receipts/statements) for tax returns including but not limited to:

- donations
- retirement account contributions
- child care receipts
- alimony/child support paid or received
- medical expenses
- mortgage interest
- property tax payments

W-2 or 1099 Forms (US)

Year End statements from Credit cards (if provided)

Year End statements from utility companies (if provided)

Keep Indefinitely

Adoption Records

Auto/Home/Life Insurance policy information

- keep purchase records for as long as policy is in force

Automobile Records (ownership certificate/registration)

- keep for as long as you own your vehicle
- if annual registration required, keep only current registration paper

Birth Certificates

Business Income Tax returns, and supporting documentation, if self-employed

Death Certificate

Divorce Agreement/Child Custody Court Orders

Investment records clearly showing beneficiary information

- purchase records
- sales records

Marriage Certificate

Medical records

- Immunization records to children

Military service records

Pension Plan records

Receipts for major home improvements/renovations

Receipts for major purchases that have long life expectancy (refrigerator, stove, freezer, vehicles)

Religious records

School/Education records

Tax Returns

- In the US, the IRS has 3 years from the date you file your tax return to examine your return for errors and up to 6 years to audit your return if they suspect that you have underreported your gross income by 25% or more. There is no statute of limitations on an audit when deliberate fraud is suspected.
- In Canada, CCRA advises you to keep your tax returns, Notices of Assessment, and all supporting documentation for 6 years from the date of filing your personal income tax return.
- I recommend keeping these indefinitely because they take up little space and can often be a valuable resource if there is any dispute over such things as income tax paid, child support/alimony paid or received and pension plan benefits.

Will and/or Power of Attorney

- should be kept securely in a fire-proof home safe or safety deposit box at your financial institution

Year End Investment account summaries

Now what?

Now that you know what to keep, where are you supposed to put it all?

Set up a simple home filing system to cover the basics, and invest in a couple of sturdy cardboard or plastic filing boxes for the information you should keep long-term or indefinitely. See my article called “Covering the Basics” at www.vadiva.com/articles.htm (click on Resources>>Articles, for a sample outline of a filing system.)

And a final caution – when you decide that you no longer need to keep certain documents, make sure you shred them **and DO NOT put them in the general trash or recycling**. Sensitive financial information or personal information should always be **DESTROYED** to avoid any chance of identity theft that could lead to headaches greater than you can imagine.

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Follow Up Forms

Use these forms for your regular client follow-up. They are easy to use and you can print out as many copies as you need per client.

[Business Activity Form](#)

[Administratorstm Assessment with Hot Buttons table](#)

[So Happy Together Follow-Up Assessment](#)

[Where Are You Going? Follow-Up Form](#)

[Tell Me All Your Secrets Follow-Up Form](#)