

## Suggested Questions for Press/Media on Virtual Assistants

By Tawnya Sutherland



Being the founder of the largest online global meeting place for successful and aspiring Virtual Assistants ([www.VAnetworking.com](http://www.VAnetworking.com)), I am frequently asked questions surrounding the Virtual Assistant industry. I have provided my answers to these questions in this document to hopefully make your interview job easier. These answers will also help you fully understand the Virtual Assistant industry in the event that I miss any important points during our interview. Feel free to use any of my quotes in your editorials, websites, press media, etc. Contact me at [tawnya@vanetworking.com](mailto:tawnya@vanetworking.com) if you have any further questions.

You may easily tour the membership area of [The Virtual Assistant Networking Association](#) (VANA) with your media login: Username = **media** and Password = **media**

## Virtual Assistant Statistics

In October, 2007, VANA put forth a survey to answer the **Who, What, When, Where, Why & How about Virtual Assistants**. [Click here to view the answers](#) tabulated to date from 761 contributors who promote themselves as Virtual Assistants globally.

I have laid out frequently asked questions into three main groups:

- 1) [General Virtual Assistant Questions](#)
- 2) [Tawnya Sutherland's BIO](#)
- 3) [All About VANetworking.com](#)

Virtual Business Solutions

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## General Virtual Assistant Questions

1. [What is a Virtual Assistant \(VA\)?](#)
2. [Is working from home as fulfilling as it sounds?](#)
3. [What advice would you give to a person just starting their VA practice?](#)
4. [What skills or attributes would a person need to be a successful VA?](#)
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17. [Are there any legal things you need to put into place to protect yourself as a VA? \(Non-disclosure, legalese, etc.?\)](#)
18. [What advice would you offer someone wanting to get started in this business?](#)
19. [Do you see this industry growing in the future or do you think it has reached its full potential?](#)

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## Tawnya Sutherland's BIO

Read Tawnya's [Online Bio](#).

1. [How long have you been a Virtual Assistant?](#)
2. [What led you to becoming a Virtual Assistant?](#)
3. [How long have you had your own VA business?](#)
4. [What type of clients/businesses do you generally interact with?](#)
5. [Where do you see your business heading in the future?](#)
6. [Do you feel your business has been successful? If so, why do you think you are doing so well?](#)

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# All About VANetworking.com (VANA)

Read our latest [Press Releases](#)

1. [What is the name of the forum that you originated for Virtual Assistant's around the world?](#)
2. [What is your motto at VANetworking?](#)
3. [Does your network have a standardized set of work ethics?](#)
4. [Why did you decide to open a forum for Virtual Assistants?](#)
5. [What kind of growth have you experienced in the forum?](#)
6. [What is a VAdala and where can I get one?](#)
7. [What are your website stats and demographics?](#)
8. [Does your forum offer advertising or other joint ventures for those wishing to market to this growing community?](#)
9. [In what ways do you promote your forum?](#)
10. [Would the VANetworking.com forum be a good resource for a prospective client that is trying to find the perfect VA for them?](#)
11. [What value or purpose does your forum provide for its' members?](#)
12. [What makes your members keep coming back to the forum on a daily basis?](#)

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## Media Contact

Please contact Arnold Klappe, Media Representative at [media@vanetworking.com](mailto:media@vanetworking.com) or call 604-542-9664 if you want to set up a speaking engagement, radio/talk show, interview or telephone call with Tawnya Sutherland.

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## Virtual Assistance Questions

### 1. What is a Virtual Assistant (VA)?

There are numerous definitions online describing who and what a Virtual Assistant (VA) is. VANetworking.com is the largest online global meeting place for successful and aspiring Virtual Assistants and this is our definition:

"A Virtual Assistant (or VA) works independently at an arm's length, via the Internet, utilizing the latest technologies, to provide immediate professional support, services and skills to busy entrepreneurs and business managers.

Partnering with a VA reduces stress, protects cashflow, eliminates administrative hassles, and enables business people to find the success they originally set out to achieve."

A VA is often referred to as a Virtual Assistant or a Virtual Associate.

## **2. Is working from home as fulfilling as it sounds?**

Yes, think about it...I can organize my day to do whatever I want, however I want, whenever I want! That fulfillment alone results in liberation for me which is as close to Heaven as I'm going to get on Earth.

## **3. What advice would you give to a person just starting their VA practice?**

My 3 P's for success in starting up a VA practice are: Persistence, Passion and Populace.

A **persistence** to never give up and keep pushing through your business plan no matter what obstacles stand in your way. A **passion** and solid desire to reach the vision you have for you and your business. **Populace** (networking) with likeminded people in the VA industry (ie Join our free networking forum at [VANetworking.com](http://VANetworking.com)). Anything you need to know about starting up a VA practice can be found here in the archives of 50,000+ posts from other aspiring and successful Virtual Assistants.

Invest in my VBSS System and work through the process of starting up your VA business. The VBSS System gives you a step-by-step program for starting a successful VA business .. It can be used as a stand-alone startup system or as a complimentary reference tool/VA bible for those completing online training at other VA training centers.

## **4. What skills or attributes would a person need to be a successful VA?**

If you have the ability to **use standard computer programs** and an **entrepreneurial drive to make money** you can be a Virtual Assistant. Having made that simplified statement let me outline a few of the skills that make becoming a Virtual Assistant much easier, and allow for greater profit, although not all are necessary:

- ◇ A solid administrative work history in the corporate world is highly recommended so you understand the basic fundamentals of working as an administrative assistant firsthand.
- ◇ Proficiency in basic office software like Microsoft Word and Excel.
- ◇ An energetic commitment and dedication to learn how to take what you already know as an administrative assistant and apply it to the virtual – You must have basic knowledge of Internet related skills like email, surfing the net, etc.

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- ◇ Being self motivated with superior skills in time management, organization, and communication, along with common business sense. You're providing support for services others can't or don't want to do. Make sure you in turn outsource tasks you're not proficient in. For example, if you know nothing about bookkeeping don't offer it as a service and consider outsourcing your own needs.
- ◇ Self-belief / confidence is a must have, starting your own business is a very daunting task. You must also have, or be able to develop, excellent networking skills to assure the growth of your business.
- ◇ Other skills to bring to the table that may help you are any secretarial skills, desktop publishing, web developing, marketing, data entry, bookkeeping skills, etc.

The skills you can bring to the table that will compliment your business are as big as your mind wants to envision.

The real secret to being successful as a Virtual Assistant is envisioning what you want and going for it step by step until you get there.

#### **5. How much of a market/need is there for Virtual Assistants?**

It's a huge market. I get so many calls that I literally turn work away on a daily basis. With the current trends of corporate downsizing and new home based businesses on the increase both large and small businesses are outsourcing as much work as possible. This is where the need for a Virtual Assistant comes in. Be it simple dictation or massive multimedia presentations, if it can be done on a computer a VA can get it done for them.

#### **6. How much can you charge/earn for this kind of work?**

As much as you want! The great thing about being a Virtual Assistant is that you can dictate your own hours and rates since you are an independent business owner. From a part-time supplementary source of income to a full-blown business opportunity, a VA business allows you to make it whatever you want it to be.

Reading the posts at our [VANetworking.com](http://VANetworking.com) forum you'll find new Virtual Assistants, depending on their skill levels and qualifications, often start their billings at \$30-\$35 per hour. They typically offer service on a monthly retainer basis, some giving discounts for larger retainer packages.

A Virtual Assistant specialized in an area of expertise like graphic design or web developing will charge more than one who only does transcription or proofreading services. For example, I am certified in Internet Marketing and promote myself as an Internet Marketing VA. My hourly rate is currently set at \$95 per hour. So again, depending on your skill sets, your potential income is unlimited.

#### **7. Where do VA's find their clients?**

Many VAs are actually found by their clients through word of mouth referrals or online through the VA's website. Networking online with various groups and organizations

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related to your target market **must** be a part of your online marketing plan. At VANetworking.com we offer potential clients a Request For Proposal (RFP) system to help clients find the right VA for their business needs. Becoming a member of our website gives you access to this job board free of charge so you can apply for these partnerships with clients currently looking for virtual assistance.

### 8. Why would I hire a VA instead of hiring a secretary to have in my office?

**Because you save money!** Although the Virtual Assistant's hourly rate is more than the employee's rate, you save the cost of benefits and overhead that would have to be applied to the new employee's wage. Virtual Assistant's are also typically more experienced, extremely efficient, and better connected than the employee. You'll need to devote far less time to your projects to get the same results, only 480 hours a year versus 2,080 for the new employee. See this proof in the cost comparison chart below for a full-time employee versus a Virtual Assistant:

<b>COST COMPARISON</b>	<b>Full-time Employee</b>	<b>Virtual Assistant</b>
<b>Hourly Rate of Pay</b>	\$20.00	\$35.00
<b>Fringe Benefits</b> @ 35% (Health/Dental/Life Insurance, Retirement Plans)	7.00	None
<b>Overhead Rate</b> @ 50% (Office Space, Equipment & Office Supply expense, UI Insurance, Worker's Compensation, Overtime Pay, Administration Costs)	\$10.00	None
<b>Total Effective Rate of Pay</b>	\$37.00	\$35.00
**Hours Per Year	2,080 hrs.	480 hrs.
<b>TOTAL Annual Labour Cost</b>	<b>\$76,960.00</b>	<b>\$16,800.00</b>

Difference = \$60,160.00 per year

**By hiring a Virtual Assistant...You SAVE over \$60,000.00 per year!**

\*\*Remember, with a Virtual Assistant, you only pay for the time on task by the minute! No more paying for internet surfing, socializing, hour long lunches or frequent trips to the washroom. Your employee's 8 hour day can be crunched into 3-4 hours with a Virtual Assistant.

But what if you want to talk to your VA on the fly? Save yourself time and communicate virtually by picking up the phone, emailing them or messaging them via text chat for an instant response. It's that simple!

Simply put, you should contract with a Virtual Assistant because it's more cost-effective and time effective. Virtual Assistants go above and beyond the normal assistant's duties to impact your own productivity. No task is too big or small for a Virtual Assistant to

handle. Even if you only have 1 hour of work a month for a Virtual Assistant to do, a VA can (and will) do it.

### **9. Where would one train to become a VA?**

Of course, I'm partial to The VBSS System <http://www.vanetworking.com/virtual-assistant-business> I created. This system is geared toward a do-it-yourself type of person, and trust me, you almost *require* this quality to be successful in this business.

The VBSS System is an easy balance between short reading passages, writing exercises, and helpful tips. With over 130 templates and checklists it will keep you both visually and intellectually stimulated on your journey to entrepreneurship.

The VBSS System contains:

- ◇ VBSS System Workbook laid out in a 30 day step by step instructional format
- ◇ Template CD-ROM full of over 130 templates you will use in the everyday workings of your VA business. Having this library of templates already made for you alone will save weeks of work.
- ◇ Completed Business Plan plus Financials
- ◇ Book by Diana Ennen & Kelly Poelker - Virtual Assistant The Series: Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA
- ◇ Book by Michelle Jamieson - The Virtual Assistant's Guide to Marketing
- ◇ Domain Name Registration for your website
- ◇ Website hosting for a year
- ◇ Website templates to use for your website together with a Dreamweaver Tutorial
- ◇ 2 hour coupon for Website Design (This will get your website using one of the VBSS templates up and running if you don't want to do it yourself)
- ◇ Submission of your website to over 50 Search Engines
- ◇ Coupons for CVAC.ca membership & Red Deer College VA Program discounts plus other Premier Partner discounts
- ◇ Coupon for 1 hour coaching with Tawnya Sutherland
- ◇ Membership to exclusive online forum for VBSS System members only.

If you are looking for other VA training programs go to our website and signup for our newsletter at <http://www.vanetworking.com/archives>. Upon signup you will receive a free Special Report presenting the details of other Virtual Assistant groups, organizations and training programs available online. From pricing to accreditations, this document is a must for all Virtual Assistants wanting a comparison report of the VA training available.

### **10. What kind of feedback have you had from the VA's that have purchased your system?**

Overwhelming raves! Here are some recent ones:

The Virtual Business Startup System is an incredible tool for anyone starting a new Virtual Assisting business. Each new day is packed with insightful and thought provoking "next steps" to keep you organized and accountable for your own success. The VBSS is even more powerful with the addition of the VBSS Template CD-ROM. The business templates on the CD are like another gift that Tawnya is sharing with VBSS owners. She removes the burden of starting "from scratch" by offering the best of her experience in a format that you can use and edit for your own business. All of the VBSS System components together truly take the guesswork out of starting your own VA practice. Thank you, Tawnya for becoming a VA partner for OUR success as an industry!

*Warmly,*

*Patricia Beckman*

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My decision to invest in The VBSS System was easy as many well respect leaders in the VA profession, as well as an accredited college, endorse this product. Ms. Sutherland has filled The VBSS System with effective exercises, essential information, and invaluable templates that will ensure the success of System owners. Moreover, the System is enhancement with relevant readings from two prominent Virtual Assisting books. I have not had a moment of buyer's remorse over this one purchase and thank Ms. Sutherland for sharing her wealth of knowledge.

*Tiffeny Russell*

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*Victoria, BC*

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Read more here at the [VANetworking Forum](#) or visit [The VBSS System](#) webpage.

**11. Do you feel that your VBSS system is beneficial for existing VA's as well as a new VA?**

Definitely! The VBSS System Workbook is a Virtual Assistant's living bible or reference tool that every VA should have handy near their office desk. Built as a three-ring binder system, it has room to add notes of your own (ie: Notes from online classes/teleclasses you participate in) or important findings relevant to your business from startup to marketing ideas (ie: Current VA statistics you find on the web to update your business plan). Plus, the CD-ROM is brimming with over 130+ business templates, the exact templates I use in my VA business - Mediamage Business Solutions. These templates can even be a timesaver to a Veteran VA's everyday administrative work since they can

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easily just grab a template off the CD-ROM instead of trying to recreate the wheel each time they require a business template.

## 12. Are all clients' good clients?

Not always will a client be a good fit for your business. Time and experience will help your senses intuitively get to know who you work best with and who you don't.

Before I take on any client I will ask them a list of questions to get to know them better (Questionnaire template included in The VBSS System). I will interview each client to see if they align with me and my business ethics. This is an important process. In the end my business will prosper most if I love what I'm doing, and I'm most likely only going to love what I'm doing if also love the people I work with.

## 13. How do you break up with a client who is not a good fit?

Accept the responsibility for having chosen a match that wasn't properly suited and deal with it quickly.

There is no easy way around this and the simplest and least stressful way is to be honest and accept the responsibility for allowing a business mismatch to start in the first place. It is always better to accept responsibility and have the customer go away happy than it is for them to leave angry and run the risks of them saying not so nice things about your business.

## 14. What are the best ways to attract clients?

1. You need a website. We are virtual are we not? Virtual Assistants should invest the proper time, energy and money into creating a professional looking website for their business.
2. Use online marketing strategies like search engine optimization to bring more traffic to your new website. Email marketing through newsletters, blogging, sending out Press Releases, and writing articles for online submission are also beneficial marketing tools. Since internet marketing is my niche, it just happens the longest chapter in The VBSS System is on marketing and well worth the read.
3. Don't forget about using direct marketing, from brochures to tattooing your URL on your forearm. Just kidding.... but do put your URL on your business cards, flyers, ads and whatever other marketing materials you may develop for your business.
4. Network, network and network some more! Get out there and do it! There are limitless opportunities, from joining your local Chamber of Commerce to online e-lists and networks like my forum VAnetworking.com.
5. Most importantly "go that extra mile" ... that is, **give your clients much more than they anticipated on ever receiving.** That leads to repeat business from satisfied clients. I do this for all my clients. 90% of my business is now referrals from happy clients.

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### **15. Once you find good clients, how do you build relationships and keep them?**

Like I mentioned above, go that extra mile and always exceed your client's expectations. Keep them loving your work and they will be loyal retainer clients for years to come. Give them your absolute attention when you converse with them. Make them feel special and trusting of you. For example, send them a birthday card or flowers if they are ill. You want them to feel like having you on their team is a huge asset to their business success.

### **16. Would you recommend finding a niche to specialize in?**

A most definite yes! For example, I am a Certified Internet Marketing Specialist so I niche myself as an Internet Marketing VA and charge \$95/hour for my retainer fees. Right now, I'm booked solid and cannot take on any new clients for at least another 3 months so it's definitely worth niching your business.

You can niche yourself in many other ways too by just following what you like and going from there. For example I coached one VA who couldn't figure out what to niche her business in since she didn't have any specialized software skills like desktop publishing, bookkeeping, etc. I asked her what some of her personal interests were. She mentioned she loved animals and loved her past work experiences as secretary at various veterinarian clinics. I said, "Well why not focus on working virtually for online businesses surrounding animals like vets, boarding kennels, horse stables, animal breeders, and other businesses like that?" This is how she niched her business and she is now well known in the animal industry as the VA to have onboard if you have animal related administrative needs.

### **17. Are there any legal things you need to put into place to protect yourself as a VA? (Non-disclosure, legalese, etc.?)**

I can't stress enough how important it is to have a contract signed and in place before you start any work with any new client. A contract is a necessity to have in place to bring to the table your business terms and policies or procedures that need to be laid out. I provide many legalese samples in *The VBSS System* for you to use as a starting point when writing your business contracts.

Here are some suggestions mentioned at our [VANetworking.com](http://VANetworking.com) forum of what you could include in your contracts:

- ◇ Name of parties (you and the client)
- ◇ Services (what services are covered with this contract)
- ◇ Time & Place of work (I work at my own office and I determine my own hours, etc)
- ◇ Terms of agreement (mine are month to month but many are 1 year and can be cancelled by either party w/30 days notice)
- ◇ Compensation and Payment terms (include rate, payment terms, other expenses client will be responsible for, payment types that you accept, if you require a deposit, if

there's a penalty for late payments or bounced checks, etc) In my opinion, this is the most important section because you want these things to be crystal clear BEFORE you start.

- ◇ Non-disclosure clause
- ◇ State or Province that contract will be executed in. (if I live in BC and my client in California, which state laws are going to prevail if we have a disagreement).

Those are just a few basic suggestions. Once you draft up your contracts, you should always run them past a proper legal advisor before you use them for any business matters. The more detailed your contracts the less likely it is that problems will arise in the future, since everything is upfront from the start

As far as deciding upon which business structure to follow, be it sole proprietorship, partnership, incorporation, limited, or whatever, you will find there are advantages and disadvantages to each. The easiest way to decide what is best for you is to speak to your legal advisor or a small business startup representative about your personal position and come to a conclusion with them on what setup suits you best.

### **18. What advice would you offer someone wanting to get started in this business?**

Interesting, we just had this thread topic in our forum at [VANetworking.com](http://VANetworking.com). Some of the things suggested were:

- ◇ Do a business plan. The research to produce this document will help you understand so many hidden crevices that you may never have even thought of surrounding your Virtual Assistant business. (I share my completed Virtual Assistant Business plan together with sample financials in The VBSS System to help you write yours).
- ◇ Get a website online right away! Either learn how to get it ranked high in the search engines, or source out this aspect, so you start generating lots of traffic to it.
- ◇ Network, network and network more!
- ◇ Stay positive! There will be naysayers, and there will be days you want to throw in the towel, but you have to be strong enough to move on and keep growing your business. Stay focused on your goals, believe you can reach them and you will.
- ◇ If you have a reasonable grasp of legalese, develop your contracts from templates (again, all provide in The VBSS System) and *then* go see a lawyer.
- ◇ Do your own due diligence. Educate yourself and do your research on the Virtual Assistant industry **before** you setup business. Again, I am going to highly recommend joining my FREE Virtual Assistant Networking Association at [www.VANetworking.com](http://www.VANetworking.com). This forum is the largest online meeting place for successful and aspiring Virtual Assistants worldwide. You can ask whatever questions about the VA industry you like here since there is always someone there who will offer their VA knowledge and experience to you. Our motto is: *"Remember, no question is ever stupid, stupidity comes from not asking when you have the opportunity (www.VANetworking.com) to do so"*

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- ◇ Finally, whether you are a Veteran VA or a VA looking for help starting up your Virtual Assistant business I highly suggest investing in my Virtual Business Startup System. It has a full 45 day money back guarantee. Have a look, and if you don't think it will benefit your VA business, send it back for a full refund with no questions asked. We've yet to have a return!

### **19. Do you see this industry growing in the future or do you think it has reached its full potential?**

Yes, without a doubt! The current size of the VA industry is just the tip of the iceberg. Many businesses are turning to Virtual Assistants for their administrative work and here are a few reasons:

- 1) With harsh economic recessions hitting the business world it has made a huge shift in the workplace. Companies are now seeking ways to stay afloat and cut costs to survive the downturn. Outsourcing is becoming the norm. The cost comparison study mentioned above shows how any business can save money hiring a VA.
- 2) Society in general is becoming more technologically inclined. Working with someone 5,000 miles away is not a dream anymore. You can closely work with your VA utilizing everything from email to web conferencing utilizing the convenience your home office computer.
- 3) Many CEO's and business managers are tired of the long commute and frantic chaos getting back and forth from the downtown office. Working from home is becoming an appealing option.
- 4) Family is starting to play a larger role now in people's lives. CEO's and business managers want to be able to work from home so they are *available* for their families at the drop of a hat. These bosses still require the need for administrative work and a VA fits into their environment better than an in-house assistant.
- 5) With the advent of high-speed internet, many executives are now working from home since there is no technical reason to head to the downtown office anymore. Their home office is well equipped to handle their office work, but still lacks the in-house secretary, which is where a VA comes in.

These statements alone show increased future demand for Virtual Assistants. With organizations like VAnetworking.com educating the public on this growing industry soon the question won't be, "What is a Virtual Assistant, but who is your Virtual Assistant?"

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## Tawnya Sutherland's BIO

Read Tawnya's [Online Bio](#).

### **1. How long have you been a Virtual Assistant?**

In June 1997, my family and I moved 5,000 miles across Canada to start fresh in British Columbia. I started working from home part-time as an administrative assistant to add some mad-pocket-money to my bank account so I could pay for little extras for my children while my husband worked full time. I did not know the term Virtual Assistant existed at that time.

### **2. What led you to becoming a Virtual Assistant?**

Necessity! After just one year of living in British Columbia my husband and I separated. I took an inventory of who and what I was. I was NOW a new single mother of three who needed a full-time job that worked around my childrens' itineraries yet also paid the bills. I had 15 years administrative experience as a legal, medical and government secretary so taking my part-time administrative assistant job at home full-time was an attractive alternative to going back to work and figuring out daycare for three young children.

I re-educated myself at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and obtained my Certificate in Multimedia Studies. I also studied internet marketing at UBC, graduating with honors as a Certified Internet Marketing Specialist and Business Strategist.

My big break or "aha" came when I decided to quit my home business due to a slower than expected start and went back to work in the corporate world. It was a job offer I could not refuse, VP of a local computer service company. However, much to my dismay, after 5 months of working for this company the owner locked the doors on the business with no notice or back pay to any employees. It was now or never. I had to do something to survive. I phoned all this company's clients, convinced them to hire me on to finish their work for no extra compensation. Grateful for this opportunity, they trusted me and took up my offer. They really had nothing to lose, since they'd already lost their deposits when the company I worked for closed its doors the week before. In the end I exceeded my new clients' expectations and got their projects completed for them in record time. Word of mouth referrals started coming at me from all ends, and really the rest is history, I've never had to market for clients since!

### **3. How long have you had your own VA business?**

I ran my VA business under my own name starting in June 1997 and registered a business name, Mediamage Business Solutions, in 2000.

### **4. What type of clients/businesses do you generally interact with?**

I establish relationships with companies that are looking for internet marketing on a long term retainer basis.

## 5. Where do you see your business heading in the future?

I love to give back to society and would like to teach others what I've learned. Most likely I will venture more into the speaking corrals within the Virtual Assistant industry. This was one of my motivators to create *The VBSS System*.

## 6. Do you feel your business has been successful? If so, why do you think you are doing so well?

More successful than I imagined! My 3 P's for success are: Persistence, Passion and Populace.

**Persistence** to never give up and keep pushing through my business plan no matter what obstacles stand in my way.

**Passion** to reach my vision of what I see for myself. This vision is working virtually under three shady palm trees with my wireless topgun laptop, an umbrella drink, exotic fruits, and seafood along side, making money to strive for.

**Populace** of the VA industry through VAnetworking.com

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## All About VAnetworking.com

Read our latest [Press Releases](#)

### 1. What is the name of the forum that you originated for Virtual Assistant's around the world?

VAnetworking.com stands for Virtual Assistant Networking™. We are the largest online meeting place for successful and aspiring assistants the world over. We are also home of the internationally acclaimed VBSS System (Virtual Business Startup System).

### 2. What is your motto at VAnetworking?

"Remember, no question is ever stupid, stupidity comes from not asking when you have the opportunity (www.VAnetworking.com) to do so"

### 3. Does your network have a standardized set of work ethics?

Together as a network, VAnetoworking.com came up with these, which are updated annually.

#### Ethics of a Virtual Assistant (VA):

- ◇ We promote the Virtual Assistance industry with the utmost professionalism and give of our knowledge freely to new and existing VAs and the general public.
- ◇ As Virtual Assistants, we will maintain the highest ethics and honesty in all dealings with clients, colleagues and the general public.

Virtual Business Solutions

[www.VAnetworking.com](http://www.VAnetworking.com) | [media@vanetworking.com](mailto:media@vanetworking.com)

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- ◇ We will seek to deal with colleagues, suppliers and employees in a fair and equitable manner, and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct to bring credit to the Virtual Assistant profession.
- ◇ As highly ethical Virtual Assistants, we only take on projects that are within our abilities. If a project is not within our ability the client will be notified immediately, and we will provide recommendations for other highly skilled Virtual Assistants.
- ◇ Client information will be held in the strictest of confidence and will not be shared with others or used for personal gain.
- ◇ We highly value each client relationship and will not place one client above another.
- ◇ We will make a commitment to possess and increase the required knowledge, skills and training to be proficient and relevant in the provision of services.
- ◇ We are honest about our intentions and never misrepresent our skills, peers, or our profession as a whole, whether to networks or to prospects, clients, and the community at large (virtual or otherwise).
- ◇ We will not knowingly be a part of any illegal or unethical activity.

#### **4. Why did you decide to open a forum for Virtual Assistants?**

POOF and it just happened! I was trying to figure out how to market a forum online for a client and thought that the best way to learn this would be to start up a forum of my own to test run marketing it online. I didn't know what to theme the forum around and my best friend said, "Theme it around VAs since you know a few and at least you will have a couple of members that way". The forum started out with 6 members in October 2003, and as of October 2006 we have over 3,000+ members. It started out as a FREE service and hopefully, through advertising and other revenues, I can keep it free for all Virtual Assistants to learn from. I wish I had had this network back in 1997 when I was starting up, it would have saved me weeks of startup time and countless headaches.

#### **5. What kind of growth have you experienced in the forum?**

I've had to come out of my cocoon which is one of the best parts of my own personal growth related to owning this forum. You can't miss me now at the VA conferences as I'll be the one wearing my VAdala fashioned from VA-violet colored fiber optic crystal glass beads specially entwined into a three dimensional durable stainless steel wire design. And if I'm really having a fun day I'll be sporting our VAnetworking logo on my VA-violet based nails speaking on some subject related to the VA industry.

The forum has put me into a position where I am able to help hundreds of Virtual Assistants who need the support and input of someone who has been there and done that already. I get to give back to the industry that gave me the opportunity to become successful in reaching my financial independence.

#### **6. What is a VAdala and where can I get one?**

The VAdala is the *The First Official Wearable Symbol For Successful and Aspiring Virtual Assistants, Their Clients, Family and Friends who support VAs!* You can read

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more about this at our [VirtualAssistantShop.com](http://VirtualAssistantShop.com) where our members shop for their business needs to help support and keep our forum free for all!

### **7. What are your website stats and demographics?**

You may read our [website stats and demographics here](#).

### **8. Does your forum offer advertising or other joint ventures for those wishing to market to this growing community?**

Yes and you can read about those [advertising opportunities here](#).

### **9. In what ways do you promote your forum?**

I am a Certified Internet Marketing Specialist and my skills are in high demand with my client waiting list 3 months in advance. I utilize these skills in any way I know to help our network outshine online. Just type "[Virtual Assistant Network](#)" into Google and see who is #1. We also are lucky enough to have over [30 dedicated volunteers](#) who help me market our website online plus our own Publicity-VA, Diana Ennen of Virtual Word Publishing.

### **10. Would VAnetworking.com forum be a good resource for a prospective client that is trying to find the perfect VA for them?**

Yes. We offer the largest online [Virtual Assistant Search Engine Directory](#) (over 700 VA websites) to choose a VA from. We also offer a [Request For Proposal System](#) (RFP) to help you post at our job board, frequented daily by hundreds of Virtual Assistants.

### **11. What value or purpose does your forum provide for its' members?**

We offer a safe, comfortable and friendly place to network. Like our motto says, "...no question is ever stupid, stupidity comes from not asking when you have the opportunity to do so" and people don't have to be embarrassed or shy to ask anything since we've all been there or done that and just want to help another out within our network.

Our members also get tons of valuable freebies like:

- ◇ RFP System to Find Work
- ◇ Free Virtual Assistant Article Directory
- ◇ Free Virtual Assistant website
- ◇ Free website critiques
- ◇ Weekly VA chats
- ◇ Webseminar Training
- ◇ Monthly contests for members only
- ◇ Spot the Cool VAccolade of the Month!
- ◇ VAGTs - VA Get Togethers
- ◇ Discounts with Premier Partners
- ◇ PLUS SO MUCH MORE ... [Click to view](#)

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## 12. What makes your members keep coming back to the forum on a daily basis?

I think our members say it all:

I love the truly caring atmosphere, the topics are so interesting, and it seems as though I gain some new knowledge every time I come here. – **LynneC**

A sense of belonging to a global community of VA professionals where knowledge, caring and encouragement comes before back stabbing petty mindedness jealousies and politics ever gets a chance to exist. Empowerment to build a VA business. Encouragement to keep on going! – **LaynieK**

The warmth, friendliness, humor and information (just to name a few) keep me coming back, I have officially become a true VAN addict!! I get my daily fix of encouragement, motivation and pride in being in business from VAN. – **CleriCon**

Very useful site, lots of ideas. It's very helpful to know others are experiencing what you are. If I have a problem, I come here first. – **POKEYS**

I am totally inspired by the professionalism, encouragement and sharing attitude of the forum hostess and moderators. That's really what keeps me coming back. I get a real sense of fulfillment and satisfaction from the respect and credibility that this forum brings to the VA industry. - **Brandi63**

As I said, this is a community that you start to feel a sense of accountability to and that is a good thing--contributing to something a bit bigger than just yourself. – **Karri**

There is a buzz around this forum. - **Diamond Secretarial**

It's my sanity for the day. – **cep**

First and foremost: adult conversation (I'm a stay at home mom for now) but great companionship and support from all of the members. Great ideas and input too! - **AmandaD**

This has pretty well been answered in my other responses above. Basically, as I read through the forum, I see others where I am now and where I want to be, and it reinforces the "I think I can, I know I can; look out - here I come!" mindset. - **Sue Rodney**

I think it draws me in because I learn something new every time I visit, and it is just filled with the most amazing sharing, caring people. – **YvonneMcCoy**

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Everything that I need - advice, tips, resources, help and I get answers to my questions very fast. – **GrainneFoley**

I keep coming back to the forum because I see a genuine caring and bond between the forum members. It is like a well when you are thirsty you long to drink from it.  
- **Caroline Jarzabek**

I keep coming back to see what people are up to, hear some great "wins", and perhaps read a great Q and A that I might find useful in my own business. - **Donna Toothaker**  
All the information keeps me coming back, as well as the camaraderie from fellow VAs.  
- **Erin Banister**

Read more at our [testimonial and raves](#) section of our website.

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## Media Contact

Please contact Arnold Klappe, our Media Representative, if you want to set up a speaking engagement, radio/talk show, interview, etc. with Tawnya Sutherland.

**Arnold Klappe, Media Representative**

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### Visit Our Websites:

The Virtual Assistant Networking Association (VANA)

<http://www.VAnetworking.com>

The Virtual Assistant Shopping Network

<http://www.VirtualAssistantShop.com>

The VA Talk Show

<http://www.VAtalkShow.com>

The Virtual Business Startup System (VBBS)

<http://www.VirtualBusinessStartups.com>

Virtual Business Solutions

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