The Virtual Assistant's Guide To The Multi-VA Business

A comprehensive guide to creating and operating a multi-VA business

MICHELLE JAMISON

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michelle Jamison has been a Virtual Assistant since 1998 and a successful multi-VA business owner since early 2001. Her company MJVA & Associates (www.mjva.ca) has become one of the most recognized multi-VA businesses in Canada and has attributed to the popularity of the multi-VA business model.

In addition to running her multi-VA business, Michelle is the founder of the Canadian Virtual Assistant Network (www.canadianva.net), a networking organization, devoted to providing support, resources and learning opportunities to Canadian Virtual Assistants.

Passionate about supporting VA's, Michelle has also received formal training as a Professional Coach and is a graduate of Corporate Coach U, the foremost coach training school for corporate and business coaches. Michelle uses these skills to coach and mentor other VA's with their business goals. Her coaching specialties include VA start ups, marketing a VA business, work/life balance, and of course, creating a multi-VA business.

True to her passion, Michelle is very involved in the training of Virtual Assistants. She is currently an instructor for Red Deer College (www.rdc.ab.ca), where she teaches Marketing, Office Management and How to Start a VA Business for the online Virtual Assistant Certificate Program. As well as instructing at Red Deer College, she is also developing curriculum and instructing advanced courses for the Virtual Assistant Training Program (www.vatp.ca), one of these courses focusing on the multi-VA business.

Michelle is also the author of the popular book, *The Virtual Assistant's Guide To Marketing,* which is currently being used by a number of virtual assistant training programs and VA start up kits. The new edition of this book is scheduled to launch in 2008.

On a personal note, Michelle is married to a wonderful and supportive husband and has two children, Jacob and Hannah (with a 14 year age difference).

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This book would not have been possible without the support of so many individuals. My family has been extremely patient and supportive throughout the process and without their encouragement I'm not sure that I would be here writing this today.

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Finally I would like to acknowledge an individual who has contributed greatly to the success of my multi-VA business and it is to her that I dedicate this book. **Laura Sandham** has been an Associate of my multi-VA business for over 5 years. In my opinion she is the epitome of the perfect Associate. She has been a partner, a friend, a confident, and without her MJVA would not be the success it is today. What can I say? You're the best!!

Thank you!

AUTHORS REQUEST

I ask that you please do not copy, share or give-away this e-book. Seven years of my life and business experience have been collected to create this book and I would appreciate that you honour this request. If you have a friend, colleague or acquaintance who is interested in this book please direct them to my website, www.mjva.ca to purchase their copy.

INTRODUCTION

Since it's inception we have seen dramatic growth in the Virtual Assistant Profession. Not only in regards to individuals joining the profession, but business owners utilizing the services of Virtual Assistants.

The Virtual Assistant profession is making a huge impact on business owners world wide. Everyday, businesses of all sizes are realizing the benefits of outsourcing their work to skilled admin professionals such as Virtual Assistants.

These benefits are clear and proven over and over again.

However, as our client base increases and our businesses swell to full capacity, we often find ourselves in the unpleasant situation of turning away clients. We simply can't do it all. This is where the multi-VA business comes in.

More and more solo Virtual Assistants are catching on to the fact that there is an alternative to turning away clients. The multi-VA business allows solo VA's an opportunity to continue to grow their business by providing numerous clients with skilled VA support, more services and shorter time lines.

This book will cover all aspects of creating and managing a successful multi-VA business:

- Learn what a multi-VA business is and isn't.
- Where to start and how to structure your business.
- The roles and responsibilities of both the Associate and multi-VA business owner.
- How to find and hire the best VA Associate team possible.
- How to successfully define and communicate your business to clients.
- Sample materials and resources to implement in your multi-VA business.

If you're ready to take your business to the next level….let's get started!

DEFINING THE MULTI-VA BUSINESS

The VA profession is still a fairly new profession, only about 12 -15 years old (but does anyone really know for sure?). Back then it was almost unheard of that a VA would not be the only person working on their client's projects.

When I established my VA business in 1998, there were these views that if you sub-contracted out to other VA's, you were "farming" your work out. There was concern that VA's were not being forthright with clients and telling the client that they themselves were not doing the work but another VA was.

I understood this concern and agree wholeheartedly that if you are not doing the work, then simply do not say you are, and give credit where it is due.

In early 2001, I found myself in a position as so many other VA's do, turning clients away. My practice was full, and I knew there had to be another way. I knew if I could utilize the expertise of other VA's I could ultimately grow my business to a whole new level. I wanted to take a team approach to Virtual Assisting. I wanted to create a company that highlighted the skills of my team and not keep them hidden in the background. This is what a multi-VA business is all about.

Definition:

Multi-VA business: *a Virtual Assistant business which takes a team approach to Virtual Assisting and has more than one VA providing clients with services.*

It's really rather simple isn't it? A multi-VA business is about providing clients with options. Options such as who they work with, the skill sets they require and the services they need.

It provides an alternative to Virtual Assistants who want to take their business in a new direction, offer a variety of services they themselves cannot offer, continue to grow their business and never have to turn business away again.

What a Multi-VA Business Is and Isn't

As we established on the previous page, a multi-VA business isn't about sub-contracting work to other VA's, hiding them in the shadow and taking the credit. A multi-VA business is simply the structure you have chosen for your VA business.

A multi-VA business is….

All about teamwork!

It's not about just you anymore, but the team of VA's that are working for you and your clients. A multi-VA business is made up of highly skilled Virtual Assistants who may specialize in one or two services, or provide all-around services to your clients. These Virtual Assistants are referred to as VA Associates. They are not employees but subcontractors and they become an important part of your business and are an integral part of your success. The majority of the VA Associates you will hire will also have their own businesses or may work for other multi-VA businesses. Finding and hiring the right Associate for your business will be the key to your success.

Not hidden, but displayed proudly!

Bring attention to the fact that you are a multi-VA business and proudly highlighting your VA Associates and their amazing talents. A multi-VA business is not a multi-VA business, unless it is communicated as such. It is about the structure of your company and not simply subcontracting some overflow work to other VA's. Managing a this type of business is very different than running a solo VA practice. Remember you are not only managing yourself and your clients, but a team of VA's who are going to look to you for guidance, support and leadership.

A win-win situation for all involved

This business model provides advantages for all involved. VA Associates not only receive a fair fee, they also reap the benefits of on-going training, knowledge sharing and clients, without the added work of marketing. Clients receive a ready-made team or a highly skilled Associate who has the time to focus on their needs. Clients will also benefit from a wider variety of services and shorter completion times for projects. The multi-VA business owner will increase their companies earning potential, grow professionally and if structured properly, will have more time to focus on other projects.

A multi-VA business is not….

A get rich quick scheme

In fact it is not about getting rich at all. Although the potential to increase your income is a reality with a multi-VA business, it takes time and a lot of hard work to grow a multi-VA business. If your primary reason for owning a multi-VA business is to buy that 65ft luxury yacht, then think again!

About retiring from client work

Unless you have 50 Associates and 300 clients you will not be able to live off the profits your Associate VA's are making. It is very unrealistic to think you will make enough money to support your lifestyle based on the multi-VA business profits. It does not work this way. As a multi-VA business owner, you are still going to need to work and have your clients as you always have. The ideal situation with a multi-VA business is that your income is your income, and the Associate VA profit goes to paying business expenses.

About control, but giving up control

In order for a multi-VA business to be successful, the multi-VA business owner must be prepared to give up some control. This is not an easy thing to do for someone who has been in control of their business from the get go however, it's a must do. A multi-VA business owner will have to trust the abilities of their Associates. You will need to step back and let the Associates do the work. By being involved in every aspect of work that comes through your business, it will not only burn you out, but it is inefficient. Your need to ensure 't's are crossed and 'i's have dots will not improve the output, only take additional time and make the VA Associate feel inadequate.

Why Start a Multi-VA Business??

Now that we've covered what a multi-VA business is and isn't, it's time to ask yourself why exactly you want to start a multi-VA business.

There may be numerous reasons why a VA has decided to transition from a solo VA practice to a multi-VA business, the most common being:

1. The VA is consistently turning away clients, because he/she simply does not have the space.
2. The VA is looking to expand his/her service offerings, services they themselves are not comfortable providing.
3. The VA is looking to expand their market internationally.
4. The VA is looking to grow personally and professionally.

Let's look at these in greater detail….

Are you consistently turning away clients?

This is usually the most common reason VA's start a multi-VA business. There comes a point in a VA's business when they do not have any more time, space or focus to take on new clients. Each client they are turning away is potential income for that company, however a solo VA can not do it all themselves. It is at this point when starting this business model.

Are you looking to expand your service offerings?

There are always certain services that we either do not like to do or do not have the skills to perform it well. It's at this point that utilizing the expertise of another VA or admin professional works well. By adding to your services you will not only attract new types of clients but also entice current clients to sign up for more services they did not have available to them in the past.

For example, if you are like me, I'm not a numbers person, never enjoyed bookkeeping, so when I created my multi-VA business, the first Associate VA I brought into my company was a VA who was experienced and enjoyed doing bookkeeping. Not only did we receive new clients, but quite a few of my current clients also signed up for this new service and really appreciated the fact that all of their business admin tasks were being handled by one company. We became a one–stop shop for admin services.

Are you ready to grow your business internationally?

Although location is never an issue for Virtual Assistants, in fact most of us work with international clients, there are still some clients who prefer to work with VA's within their own country. These clients are looking for VA's who share the same culture, time zones, local calling etc. So why not meet this demand by building a multi-VA business based on international VA'?.

Are you ready to take your business to the next level?

Some VA's simply have a burning entrepreneurial spirit that cannot be put out. These individuals have been all they can be and are looking for new challenges and experiences. These VA's are always looking to grow personally and professionally and starting a multi-VA business may be the answer.

You may find you have alternative reasons for why starting a multi-VA business appeals to you. Whatever the reason may be, ensure that you take the time to put a plan in action, are up for the challenge and all that comes along with being a multi-VA business owner.

The transition from solo VA to multi-VA business owner can at times be a little overwhelming. Use the tips on the following pages to help you with this transition and to help you decide whether or not this is the direction of your company you want to take.

Transitioning from Solo VA to Multi-VA Business

Making the transition from solo VA to multi-VA business owner is not only entails professional growth, but also personal growth. It's about leadership, letting go and trusting in the abilities of those individuals you have representing your company.

This can be difficult when in one moment you oversee every aspect of your business and then being faced with having much less control over the day to day interaction with your client's work (depending on how you structure you business).

Although you may be giving up some control, this has nothing to do with the standards you have instilled for your company. Some people think if you give up control you are therefore also giving up the high standards that you have set for your practice. This is not so. The high standards you have set for your business, is something that you will have plenty of say over and so you should. Keeping in mind that as a multi-VA business owner you are in charge of who works for your company, who works with your clients and setting the standards for those who represent your company. It is up to you to ensure you communicate your standards, that those standards are being met and that you take action if they are not being met. This is the most important role of the multi-VA business owner.

Another important role of the owner is to provide the leadership your team will come to expect. Again, it is no longer just about you and your needs. It's about meeting the needs of your VA Associates and providing them with whatever it is they require in order for them to do their job efficiently and effectively. You will be responsible for providing training, advice, support, guidance, leadership, and financial compensation. In other words, you are a mentor, coach, boss, all rolled into one package. How you handle this role will be a determining factor of how successful your business is.

Transitioning to a multi-VA business owner is a process, and one that will not take place over night. It's a role that you will grow into, but you can start building the foundation right away from the moment you decide this is the next step for your business. Use the tips on the following page to help guide you through this process.

Tips for the transition

- **Have a mentor/coach**

It's important that you have someone you can share ideas and brainstorm with during this transition. You will not only need to look at what will need to take place professionally to make this happen but, you will also need to do some work on yourself, personally. Build a solid foundation for both you and your business to ensure this will be a successful venture.

- **Have realistic expectations**

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a multi-VA business is not about getting rich quick. Your company will obviously have increased revenue, but do not have the unrealistic expectation that a multi-VA business is the road to riches. It's a lot of hard work and in some cases a lot of un-billable time for a multi-VA business owner. Your earning potential will increase, however it will take some time.

- **Be willing to change**

Be open and willing to change the way you currently operate your business. What worked for you as a solo VA, may not work for you as a multi-VA business owner. You will need to re-invent your business and change is a huge part of this. Be prepared to change the way you work, interact with clients and run your business.

- **Be prepared for setbacks**

As with all new business ventures, setback are part of the process. One day you will have hired the perfect VA Associate, only to have them resign a week later. You will have an Associate VA working for a client, only to find that the client and the VA are not working well together. Set backs will happen and expect them. Be calm, learn from the experience and move on.

- **Get ready to make some hard decisions**

The success of your company must be a priority not only for you, but for your clients and your VA Associates. With that in mind, you will need to make some hard decisions. This may be to let go of one of your VA Associates since their quality of work is lacking and does not meet your company standards or, come to the aid of one of your VA Associates who has been treated unfairly by a client and fire the client. These decisions will not only affect you but those around you now.

- **Let go of having to doing it all yourself**

You will now have a team of VA's, which means you can feel confident to let go of the idea that you need to do it all yourself. This is a self-defeating attitude and it will have a negative effect on your company. Believe in the individuals you have hired, and you will reap the benefits. Let go of being everything to everyone.

- **Be prepared to lead**

As mentioned you will need to be mentor/coach/boss. This is a tall order for anyone, but as a multi-VA business owner, it comes with the territory. You are going to be available to your Associate VA's at a moments notice. They need to feel comfortable to come to you with questions and need to feel acknowledged for the great work that they do. Being a leader is not about giving commands but instilling loyalty, trust and confidence in your VA Associates. Your VA Associates will be the life line of your business; guide them to success, don't command it.

- **Define your business**

As with any business it is important for you to be able to define your business to clients and understand the specific benefits client will receive by partnering with a multi-VA business. You need to be clear on who you are, what you do and what makes you different.

- **Get ready to make mistakes and learn from them**

You cannot own a multi-VA business without making mistakes. This is part of the process of growing as a business owner. You will hire the wrong people, only to have let go some of the best people. You will bring on clients who you feel would match well with an Associate VA, only to find that they can't stand each other. These are mistakes and they will happen and for each mistake that you make, you will learn from it. Use these mistakes as an opportunity for growth.

Are You Ready to be a Multi-VA Business Owner?

Take the quiz!

Answer yes or no honestly to the questions below!

1	Are you consistently turning away clients?	YES	NO
2	Are there services that you would like to offer but do not enjoy providing or do not have the skill?	YES	NO
3	Are you looking to expand your business internationally?	YES	NO
4	Are you prepared to make changes to your current business structure?	YES	NO
5	Do you feel you are a good judge of character?	YES	NO
6	Are you ready to give up some control and trust to others?	YES	NO
7	Are you comfortable making hard decisions that will affect others?	YES	NO
8	Can you easily separate business from personal feelings?	YES	NO
9	Would you say that you are an effective leader?	YES	NO
10	Are you readily available for questions?	YES	NO
11	Are you in a position to offer un-billable hours?	YES	NO
12	Have you done a reality check and are you clear on income expectations?	YES	NO
13	Are you now or will you work with a mentor/coach?	YES	NO
14	Are you organized enough to manage clients, associates and yourself?	YES	NO
15	Do you have good strong emotional health?	YES	NO
16	Are you ready and willing to delegate?	YES	NO
17	Do you have standards of practice?	YES	NO
18	Are you effective in communicating your standards and company policies?	YES	NO
19	Are you prepared for a challenge?	YES	NO
20	Are you willing to work towards not only professional growth, but personal?	YES	NO

SCORING: Every 'Yes' is worth 1 point; every 'No' is worth 0 points. The more points you have the more ready you are to be a multi-VA business owner.

THE STRUCTURE OF A MULTI-VA BUSINESS

The structure of your multi-VA business is not written in stone. In fact, you will modify your business procedures quite often until you find the structure that works best for you, your Associates and clients.

However, in order to keep it as simple as possible we will focus on two common methods for structuring a multi-VA business.

Structure 1:
Associates have direct contact with clients and have a one-on-one relationship with the client. The owner is still present within the VA/client relationship however all projects are communicated via client to Associate VA. As with both structures, the owner has his/her own clients. The Associate VA's get paid for the time they have worked and all VA profit goes to the business expenses, such as taxes, operating costs, etc. The multi-VA business owner's client earnings go direct to the multi-VA business owner since the VA profit is paying business expenses.

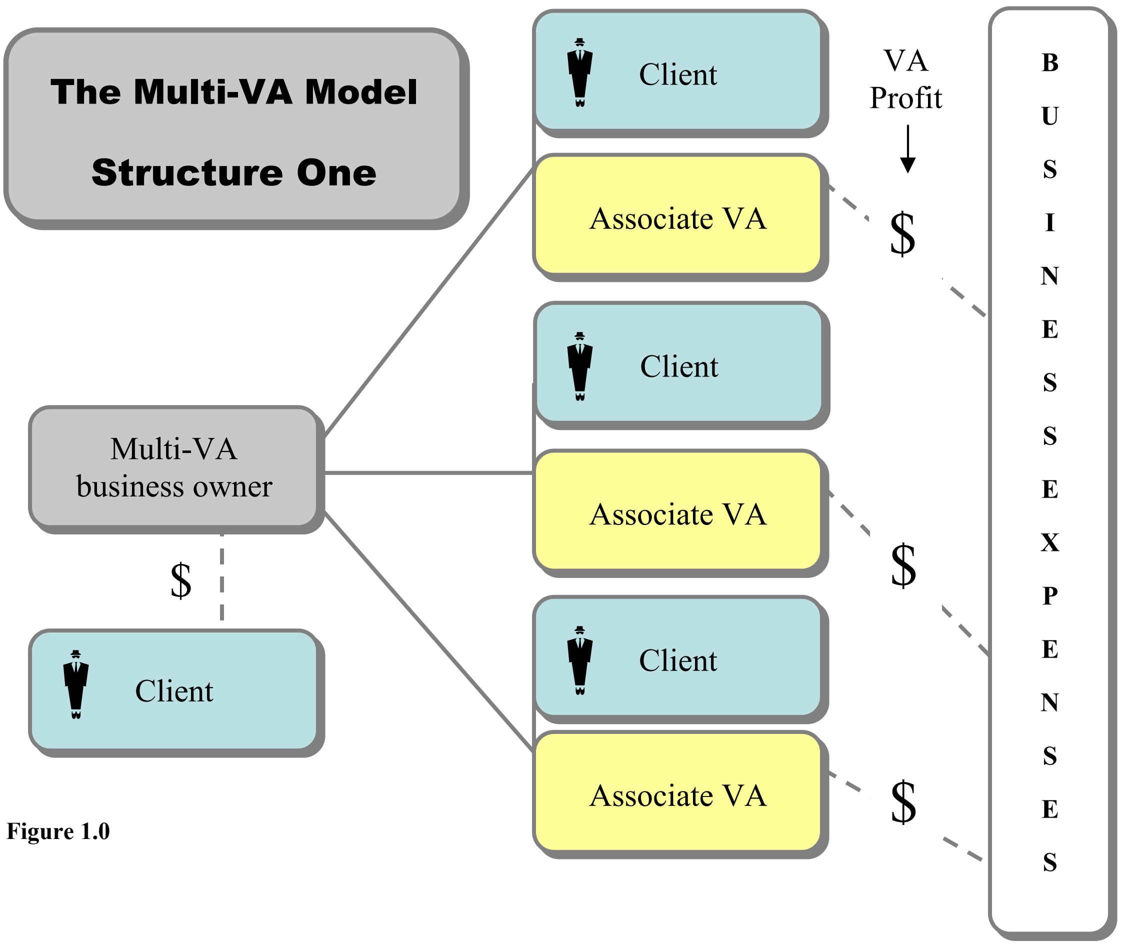


Figure 1.0

Structure 2:
Associates have no contact with clients and the multi-VA business owner takes on the role of Project Manager. All work projects are managed by the owner and distributed to the Associate VA's. The client is still fully aware that other VA's are working on the project however only communicates with the owner. Again the same applies as with Structure 1, the VA profit goes to the business expenses, such as taxes, operating costs, etc. The multi-VA business owner's client earnings go direct to them since the VA profit is paying business expenses.

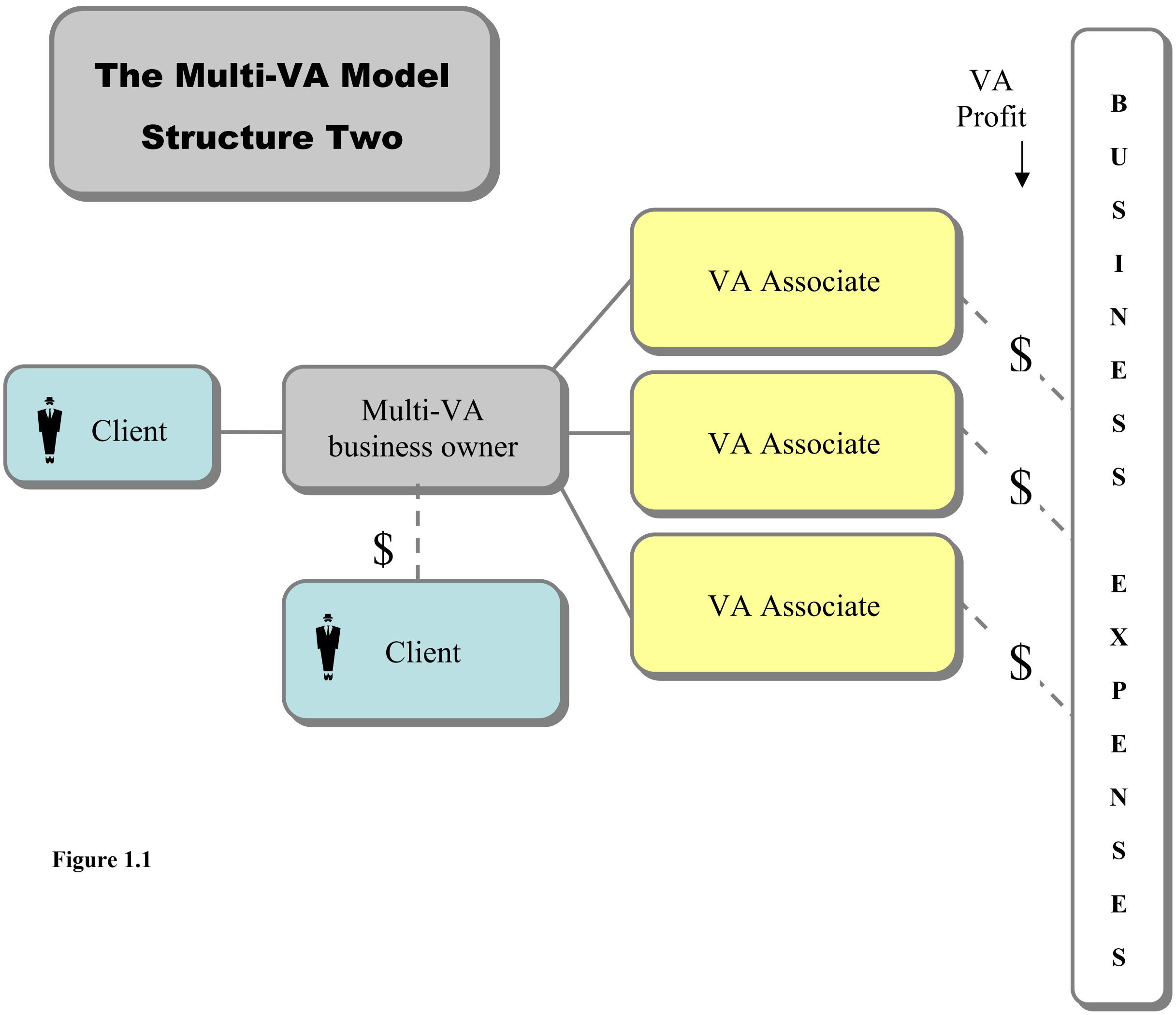


Figure 1.1

How you structure the business model is based on personal preference. You may decide to design your own model of multi-VA business, using some elements of Structure 1 and some of Structure 2. Let's look at both of these structures in more detail.

Choosing Your Multi-VA Business Structure

Structure 1: Associate VA's are in direct contact with clients

This structure is by far the easiest for the multi-VA business owner. In this option the Associate VA's are working and communicating with your clients as if they would their own clients, on a one-on-one basis.

You are responsible for having the initial contact with the client and discussing the service, needs and criteria the client is looking for. After having this initial conversation you then select the best matched Associate for that client. The following items need to be considered when matching your client with an Associate:

- The client's service needs
- Specific skill sets
- Personality of the client
- Time demands
- Time zone/location (if there is a preference)

Your responsibility is to know your Associates well enough to determine who would be the most appropriate match for any new client. You want to ensure this is a win/win situation for everyone involved.

Once you have chosen an Associate VA for your client, you will want to tell your client a little about them; highlight their talents and why you feel they would be a good match. If the client is interested in moving forward, then it's up to you to get in touch with the Associate to brief them on the prospective client.

During this briefing session, it's extremely important you are clear with your Associate on the client's expectations, since it was you who carried out this initial conversation. Be honest with your Associate in terms of the client's projects, time lines, specific requests, so the Associate is prepared for the introductory call with the client.

Provide the Associate with the clients contact information and ask that she/he contact them as soon as possible to introduce themselves and facilitate the next steps. Have your Associate contact you once this introductory call is completed to debrief on the conversation.

Based on this conversation, the prospective client will choose to sign up with your company or not. This is why it's extremely important to have Associate VA's who are professionals in all that they do.

In most cases the client will indicate to the Associate VA that they are interested in working with him/her. Either way you will want to follow up with the client to confirm they would like to move forward and outline your company's terms and conditions. As you would in a solo-VA business, a signed agreement is a must and ensure this is returned to you before services commence. A sample client agreement for a multi-VA business is provided in the section entitled **The Multi-VA Tool Kit.**

This structure allows you to be involved in the initial conversation, yet allows the VA and client to begin building that necessary VA/client relationship. By using this structure is also ensures you are not obligated to be the "third-party". For me this structure really defines what a multi-VA business is all about.

Quick view – Structure Recap

Structure 1: Associate VA's are in direct contact with Clients

⇒ Easiest of the two structures reviewed in this book

⇒ Multi-VA business owner is responsible for initial contact with the client

⇒ Associate is then chosen based on needs and criteria of client

⇒ Communicate to the client why you feel the chosen Associate would be the perfect match

⇒ A briefing with the Associate regarding the client, needs, expectations

⇒ The Associate then gets in touch with client to begin the process

⇒ Follow up with Associate and client and determine next steps

⇒ If the client moves forward send the contract and do not commence work until the contract has been signed and returned

Structure 2: Associates have no contact with clients

You will find that by structuring your business in this way, it tends to be a little more difficult for to manage. In this structure the client communicates only with the owner and all assignments are delivered through the multi-VA business owner and on to the Associates. Due to this structure, you will take on the role of Project Manager and are responsible for assigning and managing client projects.

As you can imagine, this structure is much more time consuming. Along with the additional time, there are quite a few un-billable hours associated with this structure, unless you have devised a Project Manager fee that is added to your client billings. Although it is a way to ensure that you are being compensated for your time, some clients are not all that eager to spend additional funds for a management fee.

For this particular structure, you must be very detail-oriented and organized. You are responsible to be aware of all assignments and requests that are being worked on and what the final expectation is. This can be extremely difficult if you have a large multi-VA business. Not impossible though.

You will find that this structure is very similar to simply sub-contracting out work to VA's however, on a much larger scale. The difference is that you are still communicating to clients that your Associates are doing the work and very much still promoting the team work atmosphere and highlighting your Associates talents. Regardless of what structure you use, your Associates still remain in the spotlight – this is what defines a multi-VA business.

As with Structure 1, the multi-VA business owner will still be responsible for the initial conversation with the client. In fact you will be responsible for all the communications with your clients. By assessing the prospective client's needs during the initial conversation, you will choose the best VA for the work. Even though the Associate VA and the client are not working together in a one-on-one basis, you still want to ensure that you have chosen the best VA for the project at hand. In this particular structure, you are responsible for ensuring that the VA is clear on what is expected, deadline dates and any other special requests. The multi-VA business owner is solely accountable for the output to the client and it is up to them to provide quality control.

Since the business owner is the focus of all communications with the client, the Associate VA is not required to do the introductory session with the client and can simply be brought in to discuss the work criteria. Also there will be no need to follow up with the VA or the prospective client.

After assessing the client's needs and discussing your business, the prospective client will decide whether your company is a fit or not. If it is, a contract must be sent and signed before work commences.

It is recommended that the multi-VA business owner keep detailed notes of all projects requested, deadline dates and who is working on each one. Using a project management software or even Excel will help you to be better organized and be clear on what's coming in and what needs to go out. Choose whatever method works the best for you to stay organized on project details.

Quick view – Structure Recap

Structure 2: Associate VA's have no contact with clients

⇒ Most difficult and time consuming of the two structures discussed in this book

⇒ Similar to simply subcontracting work

⇒ Multi-VA business owner takes on the responsibility for project management and quality control

⇒ Multi-VA business owner is responsible for initial contact with the client and all communications there after

⇒ Un-billable hours are common

⇒ Associates are still chosen on skill sets

⇒ Ensure client is aware that work is being done by other VA's

⇒ No need to brief Associate as there is no introductory call between Associate VA's and client

⇒ Communicate to the Associate VA that a new client is "in the works"

⇒ Communicate to the Associate VA the project details and expectations

⇒ If the client moves forward, send the contract and do not commence work until the contract has been signed and returned

⇒ Use a method that works best for you to keep track of project details

Pros and Cons of the Multi-VA Business Structures

Structure 1: Associate VA's are in direct contact with clients

Pros	Cons
Less managing needed - If your associates are directly in touch with the client, there is much less work and managing needed on your part.	You are not as involved in the VA/client relationship with this structure.
Client is in direct contact with Associate and you do not need to be the 3rd party. Remember the old saying "two many fingers in the pot and someone's going to get burned" That's what can happen when there are too many individuals involved. Something is bound to get lost in communication.	Builds VA loyalty as opposed to Company loyalty. Since the client is in contact with the Associate VA on a daily basis, the multi-VA business owner must continue to stay in touch with the client.
Associate VA's are clear on directions which are coming directly from the client. There is rarely any miscommunication.	Multi-VA business owners must trust that the Associate VA is doing the work and doing it to the client's expectations.
Associate VA's are fully accountable for output. If something isn't correct it is up to the Associate VA to ensure that the work meets the client's expectations.	You have to learn to **GIVE UP CONTROL!** In order to make this structure work, you have to allow your Associates to do the work.

Structure 2: Associates have no contact with clients

Pros	Cons
You have much more control over the client/VA relationships since you are in communication with the client as opposed to the Associate VA.	Very time consuming. The multi-VA business owner will be spending a considerable amount of time managing client projects which will interfere with their own client work.
Establishes company loyalty as opposed to VA loyalty as the client is not in contact with the Associate VA.	Un-billable time is common within this structure.
Briefing the Associate VA and the introductory call between Associate VA and client is not needed. This structure removes this additional step.	The Associate VA's will not grow professionally if they remain in the background and do not facilitate one-on-one relationships with clients. Valuing the client/VA relationship is important and may be lost in this structure.
The multi-VA business owner is involved with all aspects of the client's work and this includes quality control. This ensures that the client's expectations are being met.	Associate VA's are not held accountable for their work with the client. If something is not right, it is up to the multi-VA business owner to ensure that it gets done right. It is the multi-VA business owner who must contend with the client if the work is not correct.

Which structure is right for you?

In order to choose the best structure for your business, you need to ask yourself a few questions. Answering these questions will help you better determine and provide additional clarity on the structure of your business.

1) What are my desired outcomes of owning a multi-VA business?

If your desired outcome is to increase your income then both structures will allow you to do this however, if your desired outcome is to have more time to focus on other goals such as writing a book, developing a training program etc, then structure 1 will allow more opportunity to do this.

2) How important is it for me to be involved in all aspects of the client work?

If you are more comfortable with playing a larger role in your client projects and enjoy handling all aspects of your clients work and quality control, then structure 2 is for you. If you are happy with not having as much involvement and trust your Associates to do the work so you can venture on to other projects, then structure 1 will most likely work well for you.

3) Am I prepared for un-billable time in order to maintain control?

If having control over the output is worth some un-billable time then choose structure 2. If you're not comfortable working without being compensated in order to maintain control then structure 1 is your best choice.

4) Am I organized and able to manage numerous projects and deadline dates?

If you are exceptionally organized and enjoy managing numerous projects then structure 2 may be for you. If you do not enjoy this aspect, then structure 1 will be the better solution.

5) Am I fearful of one of my Associates leaving with a client? Fearful enough that it will interfere with my letting go of control?

If your fear of an Associate leaving with your client prevents you from being able to give up control and could interfere with their productivity then structure 2 will work better. If you have the belief that if an Associate leaves with a client, then neither of them are right for your company, then structure 1 is the way to go!

The Multi-VA Business Fee Structure

This section would not be complete if we did not discuss the fee structure for a multi-VA business. Setting your fee structure is one of the most important items you will do for your business. Again, keep in mind that the ideal situation for a multi-VA business owner is that the Associate VA profit goes towards business expenses. If your Associate VA profit pays more than just the business expenses, then you have a very successful multi-VA business model and have done outstanding.

It's been my experience that the best way to structure fees is by time for task billing or in other words, on an hourly basis. I've found that retainer rates can be somewhat confusing and in some cases you may find your self in the "red" as opposed to making a profit.

By using the simplicity of only hourly rates, it makes project billing and Associate billing much easier to manage.

For example a fee structure for your company could be the following:

Company hourly rate (what you charge the client) - $40.00/hr
Associate fee (what you pay your associates) - $20.00/hr

Company profit per hour = $20.00/hr
(This will be used towards your business expenses such as taxes, Internet, telephone, supplies, marketing costs, etc.)

By structuring your fees in this way, it allows all the income you make, your income; it does not go towards the business' expenses. These are paid from the Associate fees.

Now you may be wondering if $20.00/hour is a fair fee for an Associate and I believe that it is. Keep in mind the Associate is not responsible for networking marketing themselves or closing the sale and their Associate position is a supplement to their own VA business. There are quite a few VA's out there that would prefer additional income without having to get out there and market themselves as they have to constantly do for their own business.

We'll be covering additional information regarding Associates in the section entitled **Your Team, VA Associates**.

CLIENTS AND THE MULTI-VA BUSINESS

Whether you are a solo or a multi-VA business your primary focus should be on delivering only superior client service. All VA businesses are client driven; without the clients you do not have the business.

So, what are the benefits for clients in working with a multi-VA business?

They have access to not only one VA but a team of VA's.

Clients have access to the knowledge, skills and experiences of all VA's in a multi-VA business. If their VA is not sure on how to do something, that VA has a team of other VA's they can go to and get the answer from right away.

They have a larger selection of services to choose from.

The most obvious benefit is that clients have a wider variety of services to choose from. By building a multi-VA business with Associate VA's that have various skills and specialties; the owner is able to provide clients with a one-stop shop. This also ensures services are being handled by Associate VA's who have in-depth knowledge and who enjoy doing that particular service. In most cases if not all cases, if you enjoy what you do, you do it extremely well.

Large projects can be completed in half the time.

With a team of VA's you can delegate larger projects to be split among your Associates and have them completed in a much shorter time period then if you were a solo VA.

Clients have a ready-made team to handle different aspects of their business.

This benefit is an interesting one. You can help small businesses look like big business by having a ready-made team to support them in different aspects of their business. For example, one of your Associates can take on the role as the client company's Accounts Manager and handle bookkeeping, billing, invoices, etc. Another Associate VA will take on the role as the Marketing Manager and provide the client with marketing support. Therefore a small business can get an entire company staffed by simply hiring your multi-VA business.

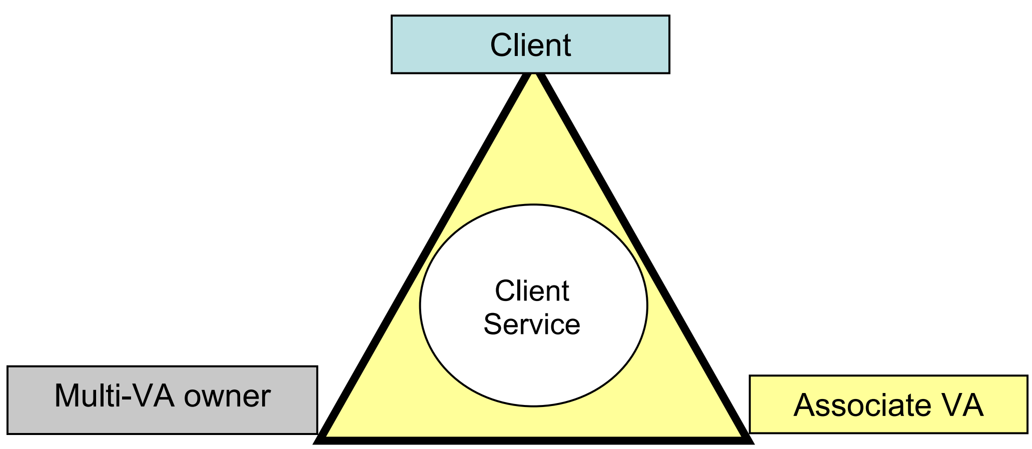
Although all great benefits to the client, it's important to remember that being a Virtual Assistant is not just about providing administrative services. It's also about partnering with your clients to help them reach their goals and assist them in achieving success. As VA's we need to be aware of where our clients presently are in their business, where they want to go and how we can help them get there.

This does not change when you have a multi-VA business. In fact with a multi-VA business, you need to be even more present to where your clients are since you may not be working with them directly, but through one of your Associates.

One of the challenges is that you must establish company loyalty with your clients. Company loyalty ensures that if a problem occurs with an Associate VA or if an Associate VA decides to leave your company, the client remains with you.

We all have a tendency to become 'attached' to individuals who play a role in our business; we wouldn't be human if we didn't. It's known that the majority of our long-term clients are based on the relationship they have with us, opposed to the services we are offering. Over time relationships are built, trust is earned and loyalty is given. In the case of a multi-VA business, this loyalty must be placed in the hands of the multi-VA business owner.

Ultimately we want and encourage a wonderful, rewarding working relationship between client and the Associate VA; however, the VA business owner must be a significant part of this relationship. In essence, a client who works with a multi-VA business should be getting not only one VA, but two. Both the VA Associate and the VA business owner will have a role in the client's business. These roles are defined a little differently, but both equally important!



The Role of the Multi-VA Business Owner Within the Client Relationship

I'm sure you have guessed by now that the multi-VA business owner wears quite a few different hats. As mentioned previously, a multi-VA business owner must be prepared to be a mentor/coach/ leader for their team of VA's. Along with this the owner must also be strategic planner, project leader, and Relations Manager for all their clients.

When you take on the role of multi-VA business owner you have to be ever present within the client/Associate VA relationship. When managing clients, you are accountable for that relationship.

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Multi-VA Business Owner

Have Initial Contact with the Client
Follow up personally on all enquires.
Discuss the multi-VA business structure immediately with the client.
Discuss fees and payment structure/policies.
Ensure client is aware that you will not personally be handling the work, but one of your highly skilled Associates will be.

Assess Client Needs
Have a form available on your website to assess client needs.
Have a client information package.
Follow up to obtain further information regarding needs in initial contact.

Match Client with the VA Associate who Best Meets the Criteria
Based on the services required and skill sets, choose the best matched Associate (You should know your Associates very well).
Consider personality traits.
Be prepared to discuss with the client the chosen Associate's strengths and why you believe he/she would be a perfect match.

Facilitate the Introduction Between the Client and Associate VA
**** only for multi-VA Structure 1***
If the client would like to proceed after assessment and initial conversation, ensure him/her that your Associate will be in touch within the day (sooner is better).
Get in touch with the Associate and discuss prospective client's needs.
Have the Associate contact the client and introduce themselves right away.

Follow up with the Client and Associate VA
****only for multi-VA Structure 1***
After Associate and client meet, follow up with both Associate and client.
If client wants to move forward, prepare the client agreement and list the VA Associate who will be working with the client.
Ensure that the contract is signed before Associate begins working with the client.

Ensure the Client and the VA Associate are Content with the Working Relationship
**** Only for multi-VA Structure 1***
Regular and on-going communication with both client and VA. Weekly "check ins" during the beginning of relationship.
Less frequent check ins are needed as the relationship develops, and the client is more comfortable with the relationship.
The multi-VA business owner must be a constant presence in the client/VA relationship. Be aware not to overwhelm the client with too much attention and focus.

Project Manager and Quality Control
****Only for multi-VA Structure 2***
Ongoing and regular communication with clients regarding new and outstanding projects.
Disperse projects to Associates based on the client's requirements.
Manage all project details, answer Associate questions and ensure deadlines are met.
All projects reviewed before sending to the client to ensure the output is what was required.

Be the Mediator and Problem Solver if Issues Arise within the Relationship
***Only for multi-VA Structure 1**
Discuss issues with both client and VA. Determine best course of action for client's best interest.
Determine where the challenges are and support both the client and the VA with working through the difficulties.
If challenges or conflict is past the point of resolving, the logical next step for the client is to reassign another VA. Ideally the goal is to ensure the client stays with your business.

The Role of the Associate VA within the Client Relationship

Your Associate VA's are a key component in the success of your business. The way they interact with your clients will either produce a winning combination or result in an unhappy client and lost business for you. The primary focus of the Associate VA should always be the client. They should be providing the same high level of service for your clients as they would for their own.

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Associate VA

Understands the Nature of the Client/Associate VA Relationship
The Associate VA understands that the client is the client of the multi-VA business.
Defers to the business owner on topics such as fees, referrals, additional work projects not discussed in initial agreement.
Is clear on company policies, time keeping, invoicing, etc.

Be Available to Work with New Clients
The Associate VA must be open and willing to begin working with new clients.
Must be present and free of distractions when discussing new client needs.
Take direction regarding next steps in meeting the client.

Meeting the Client
***Only for multi-VA Structure 1**
Based on conversation with VA business owner, the Associate VA must contact the client.
Associate VA introduces herself/himself as an Associate VA of the company and begins to develop the relationship.
Once the discussion is finished, the Associate VA and the multi-VA business owner discuss the conversation and whether the Associate VA would like to proceed.

Working with the Client
***Only for multi-VA Structure 1**
Once client agreement has been sent and returned to the multi-VA business owner, the Associate VA contacts the client to begin working relationship.
Associate VA assists the client as he/she would if the client was their own.
Associate VA is in touch with multi-VA business owner to discuss working relationship and for support if needed.
Associate VA keeps detailed time logs and invoices on the specified billing date.

Working on Client Projects
***Only for multi-VA Structure2**
Once client agreement has been sent and returned to the multi-VA business owner, the Associate VA will be delivered the client project.
Associate VA completes the project based on the specifics provided by the VA business owner.
Associate VA is in touch with the business owner to discuss any questions, challenges, etc regarding the project.
Associate VA keeps detailed time logs and invoices on the specified billing date.

If Problems Arise
Associate VA contacts VA business owner immediately with concerns.
The Associate allows the multi-VA business owner to handle the situation as they see fit.
The Associate supports any initiatives that need to happen to ensure the client is content and well taken care of.

Presenting Your Business to the Client

Now, before you even begin working with a client, you'll need to present your business to them. What I mean by presenting your business is simply defining what a multi-VA business is. Although Virtual Assisting is still fairly new, the concept is catching on quickly however, the idea of a multi-VA business takes Virtual Assisting in a new direction. This concept in itself needs a little explaining.

Here are a few tips you can use when presenting your business:

Communicate it
No matter how you are presenting your company, ensure you are communicating that you are a multi-VA business and that your company takes a team approach to Virtual Assisting. This would include your website, marketing materials, client conversations, etc. The moment someone reads your information they should have a clear understanding of how your business is structured and that you have Associate VA's providing services. Again, a multi-VA business is not about hiding your Associates but proudly displaying their talents for all to see.

Be clear on your company structure
In order to communicate effectively about your company, you must be clear yourself on the structure. You need to be able to explain without hesitation the process of work flow, fee structure and the benefits the client will receive by working with a multi-VA business.

Outline the Associate VA/client relationship
It is extremely important that your clients understand the Associate VA/client relationship. Just as you would outline this within a solo VA business, it is even more important that you have this conversation with a multi-VA business. Discuss the terms and conditions of the Associate/client relationship in detail so there are no misunderstandings later.

YOUR TEAM, VA ASSOCIATES

Throughout this book, I've mentioned numerous times the importance of Associate VA's and teamwork. As a multi-VA business your Associates will be the lifeblood of your company. Their professionalism and how they represent you and your business will make it a success or not.

One of the questions I get asked regularly is how do you find Associates for a multi-VA business? This is really not that difficult. In fact, you probably already know or are acquainted with a person who would be a match for your business. However, before we discuss how to find Associates, you need to first be clear on what the benefits are to the Associates of a multi-VA business. Just as you need to be clear on the benefits to clients who work with you, you must be as clear on what the benefits are to your Associates.

In order to attract Associates to your business, you need to ensure it is a win-win situation for everyone involved. What I mean by this is that your Associates will get just as much out of the experience as the multi-VA owner and the client. After all, if they are not enjoying their experience and time with your business, then what's going to keep them?

You want Associate VA's who are content, happy and enjoy the work they are doing. In turn you will receive professionalism, their loyalty and most importantly happy clients. And we all know what happens when we have happy clients, we start getting more clients from word of mouth and referrals!

Let's take a moment and review the benefits to the Associate VA.

Benefits of Being an Associate VA

- **No marketing or networking required!**

Associate VA's are not required to market or network in order to get clients. The multi-VA business is solely responsible for handling the cost and time associated with marketing and networking. The clients are simply given to the Associates with no time or effort on their part.

- **Free training and knowledge sharing**

One of the best benefits for Associate VA's is the opportunity for continuous learning. As an Associate of a multi-VA business, they are able to tap into the knowledge and resources of the business owner and the other VA Associates. If they are unsure of how to do something for a client, it is up to the multi-VA business owner to ensure they have the training or resources in order to provide the client with the highest level of service. Having a team atmosphere allows all Associates to learn new services, new software programs, etc. with no cost to the Associate.

- **Multi-VA business owners handle the client intake**

As an Associate VA of a multi-VA business, it is the responsibility of the multi-VA business owner to have the initial conversation with the client regarding rates and assessing the clients need. To newer VA's this initial conversation can sometimes be a little uncomfortable. It is up to the VA business owner to negotiate rates and "sell" the service. The Associate VA simply begins the VA/client relationship and is provided all the information they need to know about the client from the multi-VA business owner.

- **Special client requirements are provided**

The owner ensures that the Associate VA has everything they need to provide top-notch services to the client. If a client requires the Associate VA to have special software or equipment to provide services, it is the responsibility of the business owner to purchase this. The Associate VA should never have out of pocket expenses in order to provide services to the client. After all, the clients are not theirs but the multi-VA business. Obviously business expenses made on behalf of the client such as long distance, specialty printing, etc are billed back to the client.

Types of Associate VA's

Along with being clear on the benefits to the Associate VA, you need to have a clear understanding of the types of Associate you are looking for. I've found through building my own multi-VA business there are three main types of Associate VA's and you may structure your company with just one type or a combination.

All-Around Associates
An All-Around Associate is simply a VA who has a wide range of skills and services from document preparation to event planning to bookkeeping to presentations. These Associates are able to handle quite a few different tasks as any other Virtual Assistant would. Most multi-VA businesses are structured with All-Around Associates. If a particular service is required such as web design and the All-Around Associate is unable to provide this, then the Specialty Associate would handle this request.

Specialty Associates
A Specialty Associate may only provide one or two specific services to your clients. These services may include but are not limited to web design, internet marketing, SEO (search engine optimization), graphic design, etc; those services that the VA business owner personally is not offering or does not have the skills to provide. In some cases a Specialty Associate may have a different contract with a higher Associate fee due to their particular expertise.

Profession Specific Associates
Instead of providing a wide range of services for everyone, you may want to add a few Associates who specialize in working with specific professions such as Real Estate Agents, Professional Speakers, Coaches, Marketing Consultants, etc. These individuals understand what these professions want and have the tools to support them with all aspects of their business. This works well for multi-VA business owners who want to branch out and provide different sectors to their business, but do not necessarily have the knowledge or skills to provide these services themselves.

In order to start your search for an Associate VA, you need to ensure that you identify which type of VA you will be adding to your multi-VA business. This will determine your course of action in finding your VA and the characteristics, skills and services that are important to you.

Finding Your Associate VA's

Where can you find the perfect Associate VA for your multi-VA business? As mentioned earlier, this isn't all that difficult to do. There are plenty of Virtual Assistants who are eager to enjoy the benefits that a multi-VA business can provide them. There are also quite a few Administrative Professionals who are looking at transitioning to working virtually and what better a way to start than to work with a team of Virtual Assistants.

You will find that in most cases you already have a few acquaintances that you know who would be a match for your company and if not, then there are other avenues you can take.

VA Organizations

As a Virtual Assistant, you are most likely already a member of one or two Virtual Assistant association/organizations. They provide a fantastic resource for anyone looking to hire a VA and this is especially so for finding Associate VA's. Most, if not all, VA organizations have a Request for Proposal (RFP) service for those seeking VA's. This service is most often free and provides you with a way to get the word out on the skills, services and any other criteria you are looking for in an Associate. When submitting an RFP it's important that you are clear that you are a multi-VA business owner looking to add Associates to your business.

Some organizations to help you with your search:

The Canadian Virtual Assistant Network (CVAN)
http://www.canadianva.net

The Virtual Assistant Networking Association (VANA)
http://www.vanetworking.com

The International Virtual Assistant Association (IVAA)
http://www.ivaa.org

VirtualAssistants.com
http://www.virtualassistants.com

VA Training Schools

Another great way in which to find Associate VA's are VA training schools. There are quite a few reputable training programs that provide an in-depth curriculum and also provide a way for you to get in touch with their students. In most cases they will also offer an RFP process, however if not, contact the training school to find out how you can get the "word out" that you are looking for an Associate VA. You'll find that VA students are incredibly enthusiastic about the profession and are always interested in learning more. By working with a multi-VA business, they are getting experience, mentoring and making money while they are working on building their own business. A great start for a new VA!

I have found Associates through both of these training programs for my multi-VA business and they have been wonderful which is why I am recommending them.

The Virtual Assistant Training Program
http://www.vatp.ca
*RFP service

Red Deer College VA Certificate Program
Student Site
http://www.virtualassist.ca
*Contact the Faculty Advisor

Outside the VA Community

There are many administrative professionals who are interested in moving away from the corporate world to self-employment. Working with a multi-VA business gives them the opportunity to transition to working from home and being a business owner. Some individuals may work part time in their corporate job and also work part time for a multi-VA business. In most cases, these individuals have the skills and desire to work as Virtual Assistants, but need the stability of their office job until they are ready to make the transition to a full time VA.

One of my Associate VA's found me while on maternity leave and has been with my company for over 5 years now.

These individuals are a little harder to find and it's not as simple as going to a VA organization or training school. Most of the time you will find that it is by word of mouth that attracts these types of professionals to your business. You may wish to contact an administrative organization such as International Administrative Assistant Professionals (IAAP) and ask if they have any suggestions on how to reach out to their members. I've found that by providing workshops and talks on the subject of Virtual Assisting at various admin professional conferences has provided me with some wonderful prospects to draw from.

On Your Website

Once you have established yourself as a multi-VA business, you will be surprised at the amount of enquiries that you will begin getting from individuals who have found you. Ensure that you have an area on your website that allows individuals to find out more about becoming an Associate of your business. Include information about the benefits of working for your business, what skills you are looking for and what steps they need to take to provide you with more information. Adding a form that an interested individual can fill out and submit is a wonderful way to handle enquiries and provides you with a database of prospective Associates.

Information to include on your form:

- Full contact information
- Describe administrative background
- Rate working knowledge and understanding of the following applications:
    - MS Word
    - MS Excel
    - MS Outlook
    - Quickbooks
    - Adobe Acrobat
    - Other, etc.

- Home office set up
    - Computer Hardware
    - Software
    - Virus Scan
    - Printer/Fax
    - Dedicated phone line
    - Back up

- In 200 words or less tell us why you want to become an Associate.

Keep in mind that this form is merely an introduction to the individual and it's through the interview process that you will get more in-depth regarding skills and characteristics.

Tip: Prepare an **Associate Information Package** that you can send to individuals looking to become an Associate of your company. Similar to a client information package, an Associate Information Package contains all the necessary information someone interested in working for your company should know such as an introduction letter, company bio, benefits of being an Associate, Associate questionnaire and any other relevant material. **A sample Associate package is located in the section entitled <u>The Multi-VA Business Tool Kit</u>**

Tips for Identifying your ideal VA!

In the VA profession we talk a lot about finding our ideal client. Well this goes the same with finding your Associate VA's. You need to be clear on your expectations and outline the characteristics, qualities and skills that you are looking for in your Associate.

Ideal Associate Personality Traits & Attributes Inventory

Print off this inventory to help you identify the traits and attributes that are important for your ideal VA to have.

- [ ] Adaptable
- [ ] Balanced
- [ ] Calmness
- [ ] Caring
- [ ] Candid
- [ ] Cheerful
- [ ] Compassionate
- [ ] Compatible
- [ ] Communication
- [ ] Community
- [ ] Confident
- [ ] Considerate
- [ ] Courteous
- [ ] Creative
- [ ] Dedicated
- [ ] Decisiveness
- [ ] Driven
- [ ] Eager to Learn
- [ ] Empathetic
- [ ] Enthusiastic
- [ ] Ethical
- [ ] Flexible
- [ ] Focused
- [ ] Forgiving
- [ ] Friendly
- [ ] Helpful
- [ ] Honest
- [ ] Influential
- [ ] Initiative
- [ ] Inspiring
- [ ] Integrity
- [ ] Interpersonal Skills
- [ ] Kind
- [ ] Knowledgeable
- [ ] Loyal
- [ ] Motivated
- [ ] Open-Minded
- [ ] Optimistic
- [ ] Organized
- [ ] Passionate
- [ ] Patient
- [ ] Perseverance
- [ ] Perfectionist
- [ ] Positive
- [ ] Prepared
- [ ] Productive
- [ ] Purpose-driven
- [ ] Realistic
- [ ] Reliable
- [ ] Respectful
- [ ] Responsible
- [ ] Self Control
- [ ] Selflessness
- [ ] Sense of Humour
- [ ] Stable
- [ ] Supportive
- [ ] Teamwork oriented
- [ ] Trust worthy
- [ ] Wisdom
- [ ] Works well with others

Ideal Associate Skills Inventory

What are the skills/services you are looking for in your ideal Associate? Print off this inventory to start the process of identifying your ideal Associate.

- ☐ Accounting/Bookkeeping
- ☐ Advertising Assistance
- ☐ Contact Management
- ☐ Customer Service Support
- ☐ Database Management
- ☐ Data Entry
- ☐ Desktop Publishing
- ☐ Editing
- ☐ Ezine Creation
- ☐ Graphic Design
- ☐ HTML
- ☐ Internet Research
- ☐ Legal Assistance
- ☐ Live Phone Support
- ☐ Marketing Assistance
- ☐ Market Research
- ☐ Medical Transcription
- ☐ Meeting and Convention Planning
- ☐ Organizational Consulting
- ☐ Presentation Formatting
- ☐ PR Assistance
- ☐ Project Assistance
- ☐ Proofreading
- ☐ Real Estate Support Specialist
- ☐ Resume Writing
- ☐ Spreadsheet Specialty
- ☐ Transcription Services
- ☐ Travel Planning
- ☐ Word Processing
- ☐ Web Design

Other:

____
____
____
____
____

Hiring Your Associate VA's

Once you have a few qualified candidates, it's time to dive into the hiring process. Before you do this you need to have an understanding of what that process looks like. I highly recommend that you have a formal hiring process. A formal hiring process for a multi-VA business consists of the following:

- Submission of resume
- Submission of one or two work samples
- Completion of an editing/proofing test (optional)

And most importantly:

- A dual interview process
- Reference check

A dual interview process is a highly recommended approach to hiring. It consists of two individuals holding two separate interviews of the candidates and then discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each interview. Having a dual interview process allows different questions and perspectives on each candidate. One interviewer may notice something with one candidate that the other did not catch on to. By having a second interviewer, someone whose judgment and opinion you trust, you will increase the chances of hiring the best matched Associate for your business.

Another important item is the candidate's references. You want to ensure that references are provided and you contact the references. After all, we are talking about your business; take the time to follow up on references and be sure to ask the questions that are important to you.

Example reference questions:

- How long have you known…..
- How was their work ethic?
- In your opinion what was their greatest strength, weakness…
- What responsibilities did they have?
- Would you say they were pro-active when given assignments?
- Did they work well with little direction?

Important note: When looking to hire an Associate VA, refrain from hiring relatives and close friends. The line between personal and business can get blurred very easily. Keep business and personal separate.

After you have reviewed work samples and determined the individuals who you want to interview, it's important you communicate clearly the date, time and location (normally by phone) of the interview. Be sure that they have all the information needed to be prepared for this meeting.

Before the interview
You want to ensure that you are well-prepared and clear about what you are trying to achieve. Know what qualities, skills and characteristics you are looking for. Be sure to familiarize yourself with all of this before the call takes place. Have a note pad and pen to take notes and a copy of the questions you will be asking prepared a head of time. Sample interview questions are located in the section entitled The Multi-VA Business Tool Kit.

During the interview
Create a comfortable environment for the interview. Just because an interview is structured does not mean that it cannot be conducted in a conversational manner as oppose to a strict Q & A. Be sure that you are free of distraction so that you can be 100% present in the moment. Maintain a positive, interested and encouraging manner when asking your interview questions to help the candidate feel more at ease. Also be sure to leave plenty of opportunity to answer any questions the candidate may have about the procedures of your business.

A few more interview tips:

- Ask the question of the candidate do not read it as if it were a script.
- Allow silence. After asking a question, resist the temptation to break silence.
- Restate or paraphrase when necessary. If the applicant cannot think of a response or an example, or gives a response that is not what is needed, restate or rephrase the question.
- Listen carefully and critically to what is being said.
- Be prepared to be open-minded to what the applicant is saying even though you may disagree with it.
- If the applicant speaks too quickly, don't be afraid to ask them to slow down or repeat what they said.
- Note taking is essential. It helps you pay attention and organize your thoughts.

Concluding the Interview
Once the interview has been completed, maintain the rapport and leave the applicant with a positive impression. Let the applicant know what the next steps are and how soon they can expect to be contacted regarding the results. Do not make any remarks that could be construed as a decision having already been made – either to hire or not. Conclude with a warm, friendly close, and thank the applicant for his/her time.

Go over your notes while everything is still fresh in your mind. Make notes about strengths/ weaknesses, items which stuck out for you and any other important information that will help you make your decision.

Making the final decision
If you implemented a dual interview process, ensure that you and the other interviewer take some time to discuss each of the candidates. Compare notes and be sure to share all aspects of the interview. You want to make certain that you choose the ideal Associate for your business so discuss elements such as skills, work samples and pay particular attention to personality characteristics. Clients will forgive a mistake here and there, but they will not forgive someone who has a negative attitude.

Once you have decided on the ideal candidate, it's time to share the news with them. Contact them by telephone and let them know the good news. It's also important to re-iterate some additional information just to make certain they are clear on the arrangements:

1. Associates are not employees but sub-contractors.
2. As owner of a multi-VA business, you do not guarantee any amount of clients, hours or projects.
3. You provide an Associate fee, which all Associates receive.
4. The clients they are working with are clients of the companies.
5. Associates must keep accurate time logs and be able to provide these on invoice dates.
6. Associates must have a clear understanding of their work limitations, what services they can and cannot provide.

If the Associate is in agreement and understands these arrangements, then an Associate Contract, Time Log and Company Policy Manual should be sent to them to further define the relationship.

> **Tip:** When you have made your final decision and hired your Associate VA be sure to assign them a company email address. You want to ensure that they are communicating with your clients under your company domain and not their personal email addresses.
> E.g. jen@multivas.com, pam@multivas.com

Associate Contract and Time Keeping

As with any type of business relationship, expectations and responsibilities need to be outlined. That is why it's imperative for you to create and have each of your Associates sign an Associate Contract.

Your Associate Contract must include the following sections:
- Payment for Services
- Relationship of Parties
- Term/Termination
- Work Product Ownership
- Confidentiality

A sample contract is available in the section entitled <u>The Multi-VA Tool Kit.</u>

Just as important as the contract is the expectation for accurate time keeping. Ensure that your Associate is clear on what information is required on a time log. They may use a software program such as Excel for manual record keeping or software programs such as Time Stamp or TraxTime. The method they use is entirely up to them providing it includes the following:

- Clients Name
- Time In
- Time Out
- Project Description
- Total Time
- Any other relevant material you or your clients need

Be sure that your Associates are clear on when the billing days are and what the process is. I've found when structuring my multi-VA business that it was much easier to have two billing periods, one on the 15th of the month and another on the 30th of the month. By having two billing periods you are ensuring continuous cash flow each month.

All information such as billing periods, invoicing and time tracking should be included in your Company Policy & Procedure Manual. A manual is highly recommended for a multi-VA business.

The Multi-VA Business Company Policy & Procedure Manual

Every multi-VA business should have a company policy and procedure manual. A manual is simply a comprehensive document that encompasses all of the basics: your mission statement, Associate policies, and general procedures such as billing, invoicing, training, reimbursements, and most importantly the standards and expectations of your business.

It will provide a solid understanding of your company's mission and goals and help to avoid unnecessary confusion. A good policy manual establishes trust, prevents misunderstandings and clarifies expectations for both the multi-VA business owner and the Associate.

Creating a Company Policy & Procedure Manual will be one of the most important items you do in creating your multi-VA business. It will solidify your goals, standards, expectations and help you get clear on the direction of your business.

Recommended items to include but not limited to:

Welcome Letter
A personal letter to make your Associates feel welcomed.

Organization Description
Provide a description of your company and its structure and your mission, vision and goals. Also include information on your services, standards and ethics.

Introductory Statement
A brief statement that outlines the reason for the policy and procedure manual and encourages the Associate to review and become familiar with the information included.

Customer/Client Relations
Include policies and procedures regarding communicating and expectations when working with clients.

Employment
This section will discuss the nature of employment - contractor status. It will also cover information such as Associate relations, business ethics and conduct, conflicts of interest and outside contracting.

Associate Status & Records
Includes information regarding Associate contact information, reference checks, Associate questionnaires, and performance evaluations (if you intend on implementing evaluations).

Associate Benefits
Provides an outline of benefits provided to the Associate such as training, software reimbursement and procedures for vacation coverage.

Timekeeping/Payroll
Includes detailed information on policies and procedures regarding time logs, invoicing, client billing, and payments.

Associate Termination
Includes information regarding policies and procedures surrounding the termination of an Associate. Make sure to note items such as giving notice, transferring client files and time lines in which this is to happen.

Work Conditions and Hours
This section will explain what it means to work "virtually" and the items needed to work effectively. Requirements such as high speed Internet, voice mail, a good long distance plan and an efficient work environment should be noted. If your company uses an intranet also include this information.

Associate Conduct and Work Rules
Provides policies surrounding acceptable and unacceptable behaviours when working with clients. Also includes information regarding attendance at regular Associate meetings, resignation and problem resolution.

Miscellaneous
This section will cover any additional company policies or procedures such as referral programs, monthly meetings, trade shows, etc.

Your Company Policy and Procedure manual is a reflection of you and your business so take the time to develop this. Think about all the items that are important for you to share with someone who is part of your team.

A full, comprehensive sample of a multi-VA business policy and procedure manual is included in the section entitled **The Multi-VA Tool Kit**. Please keep in mind that this manual is simply a sample and you will need to tailor it specifically to your company. Some items may work for you while others don't.

CONCLUSION: ON A PERSONAL NOTE

As mentioned at the beginning of this book, I have been a VA since 1998 and a multi-VA business owner since 2001. As with any new venture you have your ups and downs and its no different with a multi-VA business. I get asked quite often if I had to do it all over again, would I have still created my multi-VA business and my answer is always the same….Absolutely!

I have found that the rewards have far out weighed the challenges and I'd like to take this opportunity to share with you my personal note on these experiences.

My personal challenges:

I'm responsible for more than just me!
It's about having a team. I have other people who are looking for guidance, leadership and I'm responsible for ensuring they have that. It's very different from being a solo VA.

Associates need to get paid – whether the cash is there or not
If one of my clients does not come through with payment or are late with payment it doesn't matter; my Associates did the work and need to get paid. Although, I have never had clients not pay for services rendered. My Associates get paid before I get paid.

Being a multi-VA business owner is time consuming
Although I love being a multi-VA business owner, it's extremely time consuming. Not only am I responsible for the overall team management, but also for the "behind the scenes" items such as client billing, invoicing, time keeping, etc. I now currently have an Associate that handles the company billings and highly recommend this.

Losing clients to Associates
I am mentioning this, not because it is a common challenge, but it is a reality of owning a multi-VA business. At one point or another you may be faced with this. If it does happen, you are going to feel a range of emotions: angry, betrayed, sad; however, it's how you handle this that is a true test of your commitment to your business.

All you can do is hire the best individuals you can hire, set the foundation for standards and ethics for your company, outline the working relationship between client and Associate, and ensure that you are involved in that relationship.

And know that if this does happen, the client and the Associate weren't right for you in the first place.

My personal rewards:

Personal and professional growth
I have had tremendous growth personally and professionally. I can't even begin to tell you the growth that I have experienced since I started my business. I'm more willing to let go, I now know its okay not to be in control. I trust more, I listen more. I understand what it means to be a leader and how to provide unconditional support to others. I understand the line between personal and business which was hard at first, but I got it.

I may not have learned any of this if I hadn't started my multi-VA business.

I have a great team who are loyal to me and my business
One of my biggest rewards is I have made great connections and I have a fantastic team of Associates who are dedicated and loyal. These individuals have had a huge impact on me and my business and I attribute the success of my business to them. As a multi-VA business owner you will come across certain VA's who really make a difference in your life. When you find them, hold on to them.

I have had more time to pursue outside interests
By trusting, letting go and giving up control, I've been able to accomplish more. I have pursued other interests such as teaching, writing and speaking. As a multi-VA business owner, I've experience a new found freedom which has been sensational.

I have increased my income without increasing the chance of burn out
Need I say anymore, I believe this says it all!

FINAL NOTE:

The intention of this book is to provide Virtual Assistants with an alternative business model and disperse some of the myths associated with the multi-VA business. I hope I have succeeded in offering a new insight into this fascinating option. Whether you decide to be a multi-VA business owner or not, I wish you all the best with your business!!

THE

MULTI-VA BUSINESS

TOOL KIT

ASSOCIATE INFORMATION PACKAGE

Since your company/professional profile will be unique to you and your business, I've made some recommendations on what to include. Remember that you are tailoring this to Associates and not to clients, so the information must be relevant to them.

YOUR Company Profile

Your company profile is simply just a brief description of your company.

1. How long you have been a multi-VA business?
2. Why did you create your multi-VA business?
3. What types of clients are your working with?
4. What does your business represent to you?
5. What can an Associate expect from working with your company?

YOUR Professional Profile

Your professional profile is your bio.

1. How long have you been a VA?
2. What attracted you to the profession?
3. Education/work experience
4. How can you support your Associates?
5. What can an Associate expect by working with YOU?

** Try to condense the company and professional profile to one page.

Becoming an Associate of __________

10 Things to Know

1. You will be part of an amazing team of VA's who are like-minded and goal driven. We communicate openly and honestly with one another and our clients.

2. We only offer those services we provide well and with integrity and must remain true to our companies' policies and procedures.

3. As a team we support one another in all endeavors. As an Associate you become part of our family of experienced Virtual Assistants.

4. In order to become an Associate you must go through a screening process. An Associate questionnaire must be filled out. We will require a resume and references from past employees. An interview will be scheduled with one or more members from our team. If your services are obtained as an Associate, an Associate contract must be signed.

5. As we are a client-based business, we do not guarantee set hours of work. Available work varies according to our client needs.

6. You are not an employee of ______ but an independent contractor. We do not hold any obligation to provide benefits of any kind.

7. Associates are paid a fair and competitive wage. All payments are made in (CDN/USD) dollars.

8. You may work as many or as few hours as you wish, providing the work is available. However, if you decline work on more than 2 separate occasions we will assume that you are too busy for further projects.

9. You are required to attend a monthly meeting. This is our way of remaining connected to our Associates. We provide a safe working environment for all our Associates, please feel free to communicate with us any problems or concerns you may have.

10. We offer support and guidance to all our Associates. Training can be provided in most cases however, only those who have past administrative experience will be selected for Associates.

Associate Questionnaire

Name:____________________________ Bus Phone:____________________

Address:__________________________ Res Phone:____________________

City/State:________________________ Fax:__________________________

Postal/Zip Code:____________________ E-mail:_______________________

Briefly Describe your Administrative Background*:*

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

As an administrative professional, what services do you provide?
(Ex, word processing, desktop publishing, data processing etc.)

Any Specialties?
(Ex. Web design, graphic artist, etc.)

Do you have working knowledge and understanding of the following?

Computer Applications

MS Word	Yes	No
MS Excel	Yes	No
MS PowerPoint	Yes	No
MS Outlook (any email programs)	Yes	No
MS Publisher	Yes	No
WordPerfect	Yes	No
ACT!	Yes	No
Adobe Acrobat	Yes	No
Virus Scan	Yes	No
QuickBooks (any accounting /bookkeeping software)	Yes	No
Photoshop, Illustrator (any graphics programs)	Yes	No

Any other applications?

Please tell us about your current office set up:

Computer Hardware: ____

(PC/MAC)

Operating System: ____
(Windows XP, Vista)

Computer Software:
(Word, Excel, Publisher) ____
____

Email Program:__________________________

Virus Scan: _____________________________

Internet Browser:_________________________

Printer:__________________________________

Anything Else?_______

In 200 Words or less tell us about yourself and why you would like to be an Associate team member.

ASSOCIATE CONTRACT

This contract is simply an example and is not intended to replace proper legal advice. Please ensure that you contact the appropriate professional with regards to any legal advice and/or services.

Associate's Contract

1. Associate's Agreement

a. The Associate's Agreement (hereinafter referred to as the Agreement) contains the entire Agreement of the parties, and there are no other promises or conditions in any contract whether oral or written.

b. In this Agreement, the party who is contracting to receive the services shall be referred to as the Associate and the party who will be providing the services shall be referred to as <company name>.

c. This Agreement shall be governed first and foremost by the laws of Province/State and Country.

2. Payment For Services

a. The Associate shall be paid the sum of $**.** hour **CDN/US**.

b. The Associate shall complete and submit to <company name> the monthly Associate Time and Service Log along with an invoice.

c. The Associate shall be paid no later than two weeks from the date of the last time sheet submitted.

d. The Associate agrees that all payments for services rendered shall be the sole responsibility of <company name>. At no time shall the Associate contact any client, directly or indirectly for payment.

e. If any dispute arises between the parties concerning the time sheets, the final decision shall rest with <company name>.

3. Term/Termination

a. This Agreement shall have a term of _____year(s).

b. It is agreed between the two parties that the life of this Agreement shall survive past this period unless terminated by either of the parties.

c. This Agreement may be terminated by either party upon_______ days written notice to the other party.

d. If the Associate declines 2 consecutive projects, there will be no more projects issued. Each case will be reviewed individually.

4. Relationship of Parties

a. It is agreed between the parties that the Associate is not an employee of <company name>.

b. It is further agreed and understood between the parties that the Associate is an independent contractor and that <company name> holds no obligation to provide the Associate with any benefits.

c. At no time does <company name> guarantee any set hours of work.

5. Work Product Ownership

a. It is agreed between the parties that from time to time <company name>will provide various work assignments from various clients for the Associate to perform.

b. It is further agreed between the parties that any and all work produced or developed in whole or in part by the Associate shall be the exclusive property of <company name>.

c. The Associate agrees that any and all clients solicited directly or indirectly shall be the ownership of <company name>, for the term of this Agreement and beyond.

6. Confidentiality

a. It is assumed that from time to time the Associate will be aware of the names of the clients, which are the property of <company name>.

b. It is agreed by the Associate that he/she will not at any time or in any manner, either directly or indirectly use this for the personal benefit of the Associate, or divulge, disclose, or communicate in any manner any information that is the property of <company name>.

c. The Associate at no time either directly or indirectly shall retain a list of clients belonging to <company name>.

d. Upon termination of this Agreement the Associate will return to <company name> all records, notes, documentation and any other items that were used, created, or controlled by the Associate during the term of this Agreement.

e. The provisions of this Agreement shall continue to be in effect after the termination of this Agreement.

7. Severability

a. If any provisions of this Agreement shall be held to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, the remaining provisions shall continue to be valid and enforceable. If a court finds that any provision of this Agreement is invalid or unenforceable, but that by limiting such provision it would become valid and enforceable, then such provision shall be deemed to be written, construed, and enforced as so limited.

Party Contracting Services:
By: ___________________________ Date: ___________________

Service Provider:
By: ___________________________ Date: ___________________

ASSOCIATE INTERVIEW FORM

Print a copy in preparation for your interview process

Associate Interview Form

Name of VA candidate: ______________________________

Contact number: ______________________________

Pre-Interview checklist

☐ I have reviewed the candidate's information such as resume, questionnaire, etc.

☐ I have asked for and received references.

☐ I have set up a date and time for the interview.

Interview Details

Date of interview: ______________________________

Time of interview: ______________________________

Interview Questions

What would you say are your greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?

If you were in a situation where you knew you could not meet a deadline that you already promised to a client, what would you do?

How would you partner with a client?

How would you evaluate your ability to deal with conflict? Do you have an example?

Which is more important: creativity or efficiency? Why?

Describe the most rewarding experience of your career thus far.

Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.

Is there anything you think I should know about you?

Do you have any questions for me at this time?

Additional questions that are important to me:

Interview Notes and Observations

Is this the VA for me? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **Possibly** ☐ **No**

Why I feel this would work or not work?

CLIENT CONTRACT FOR A MULTI-VA BUSINESS

This contract is simply an example and is not intended to replace proper legal advice. Please ensure that you contact the appropriate professional with regards to any legal advice and or services.

Statement
Of
General Terms and Conditions

Confidentiality
It is understood that in the performance of duties by <company name> we will obtain information about both the client and their customers/clients, and that such information is confidential. We provide a 100% confidentiality policy to all our clients.

Independent Contractor
<company name> are hired as independent contractors and are not eligible for any benefits programs or tax withholding obligations on the part of the client.

Provision of Services
It is understood that <company name> is a multi-VA business**.** In contracting with <company name> the client agrees that <company name> will designate one or more virtual assistants who will fulfill the service needs of said client. In such arrangement, <company name> reserves the right to change this personnel based on client needs and will inform the client ____ days prior to such change.

Presently your assigned Virtual Assistant will be ___________________.

Payment Policy
Invoices will be submitted on __________ and payment is due _________. Payments can be made by ________________. A ___% per month late penalty charge will apply to all delinquent accounts. ________ reserves the right to discontinue services for any client who is _____ days past due after all attempts at collecting payments through goodwill have been unsuccessful.

Pricing Policy
<company name> have been contracted for the purpose of Virtual Assistant Services. All services provided will be billed at the hourly rate of $##.##.

Reimbursable Expenses
The following expenses incurred on behalf of the client will be billed at direct cost:

a) Long distance charges on behalf of client
b) Courier charges
c) Mailing costs
d) Specialty paper

Ownership
Any rejected plans, ideas or designs created by <company name> remain exclusive property of <company name>.

Acceptance by Client
Party indicates acceptance by signing below:

____
Name of Client

______________________________ ______________________
Signature of Client Date Signed

Please print clearly – Please fax agreement back to ###-###-###.

Please provide full contact information below for billing purposes:

Full Name:
Mailing Address
Phone:
Fax:
Email:

I would like to pay my monthly invoices by:

□ **VISA** - Credit Card #__________________________________ Exp__________

Authorization Signature: ____

□ **Cheque** – Payable to

□ **PayPal**

COMPANY POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

For effectiveness a fictional company (Multi-VA's R US) has been used. This policy and procedure manual is used only as an example and you will need to modify to suit your company.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Policy numbers in brackets

Welcome new team member!

On behalf of all of us, we welcome you to Multi-VA's R US. We wish you every success here.

We believe that each Associate contributes directly to not only Multi-VA's R US growth and success, but to that of the Virtual Assistant profession as a whole, and we hope you will take pride in being a member of our team.

This handbook was developed to describe some of the expectations we have of our Associates, and to outline the policies and procedures of this company. Associates should familiarize themselves with the contents of this handbook as soon as possible, for it will answer many questions about working within Multi-VA's R US.

We hope that your experience here will be challenging, enjoyable and rewarding. Again, welcome!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Smith
President

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

BASIC DESCRIPTION

Multi-VA's R US is a sole proprietorship, owned and operated by Jennifer Smith. The company consists of no employees, but independent Associates who are Multi-VA's R US Associates. Multi-VA's R US main purpose is to provide high-quality Virtual Assistant services to clients world wide

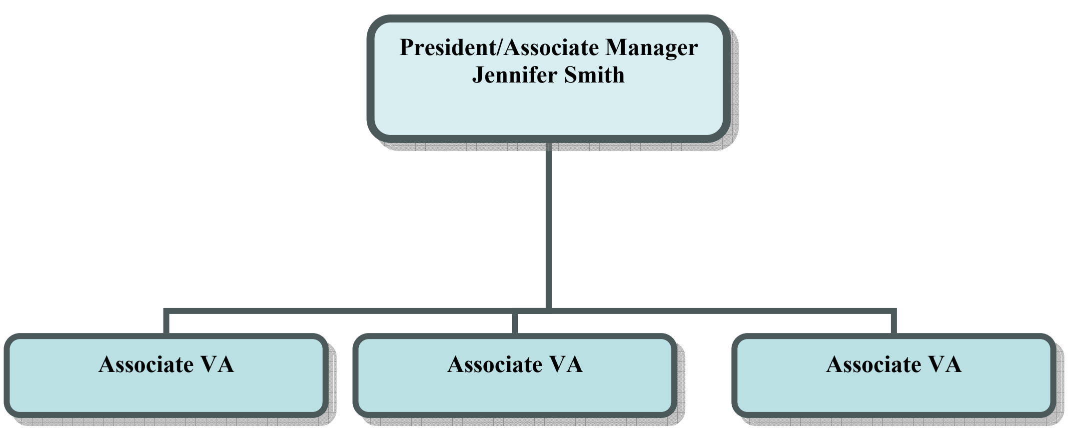
SERVICES TO CLIENTS

Multi-VA's R US provides only those services we do well and with integrity. We assist clients with all their administrative needs in a cost effective, timely and professional manner. We uphold our client's confidences and provide a 100% confidentiality clause in all our service agreements.

FACILITES AND LOCATIONS

Multi-VA's R US is a completely VIRTUAL company; however headquarters is located at 222 Merry St, Toronto, ON, the home of Jennifer Smith. The majority of Associates work out of their home offices and are located literally all across the US and Canada.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



THE HISTORY OF Multi-VA's R US

Multi-VA's R US was founded in 2003. Jennifer Smith, the President, has been a Virtual Assistant since 2000. The vision of this company is to provide a team approach to virtual assisting, allowing clients access to not just one VA, but to as many needed to achieve superior support within the client's business. By hiring highly qualified VA's (Associates) we are able to provide our clients with a range of unique and specialized services by providing a well-balanced team of experts.

Multi-VA's R US PROMISE

- To communicate openly and truthfully
- Exercise integrity, honesty and diligence in all that we do
- Protect the interests of our client at all times while staying true to our values
- Safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all information entrusted to us
- Present a fair, honest and objective perspective
- Avoid conflicts of interest and ensure that our client is aware of any potential conflicts
- Accept full responsibility for work that we perform
- Offer only those services, which we perform well, and assist the client in finding support for the tasks which we are unable to perform
- Represent truthfully, information concerning the capabilities of our equipment, software or systems

Multi-VA's R US STANDARDS AND ETHICS

Multi-VA's R US supports and promotes ethical standards and behavior on the part of our Associates and clients. To that end, the ethics and standards presented here serve as a guide to the everyday conduct of Multi-VA's R US Associates. Multi-VA's R US holds that these standards are essential to upholding the integrity of the profession and its continued health and growth.

I. CLIENT AND VA RELATIONSHIP

As an Associate VA, I pledge to all my ability to support Multi-VA's R US clients with integrity and honesty. I will remain constructive and instrumental in any feedback or exchange between us and will put first and only the well-being and expressed desires of my client(s) and their business(es) and at no time consider my own self interest or personal gain as it pertains to the VA / client relationship.

II. CONFIDENTIALITY

I agree to maintain the confidentiality of my client(s) and the VA relationship. I will hold confidential the name(s) of my client(s), information about their personal and/or professional life, colleagues or related parties without the express permission from the client.

III. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

I will provide services to clients only in the areas of my expertise or that I am trained and guided to do so by my Manager. Services will be provided in a cost-effective, timely and professional manner. If it becomes apparent that the client has challenges or problems I will be pro-active and discuss, research and follow up on alternative solutions. If after alternative solutions have failed and the challenges are beyond my expertise, I will communicate this to my Manager, Jennifer Smith, and it will be up to her to resolve the situation.

IV. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I pledge to continually advance my development as a virtual assistant by making a commitment to my own professional development. I will stay in touch with the latest technologies, equipment and software, to the best of my ability.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

This handbook is designed to acquaint you with Multi-VA's R US and provide you with information about working conditions, being an Associate, policies and the overall operations of Multi-VA's R US. You should read, understand, and comply with all provisions of this manual. It describes many of your responsibilities as a team member and what is required of you as a Multi-VA's R US Associate. One of our objectives is to provide a work environment that is conducive to both personal and professional growth.

No manual can anticipate every circumstance or question about policy. As Multi-VA's R US continues to grow, the need may arise and Multi-VA's R US reserves the right to revise, supplement, or rescind any policies or portion of this manual from time to time as it deems appropriate, in its sole and absolute discretion. Associates will, of course, be notified of such changes to the manual as they occur.

The contents of this manual are strictly confidential and may not be shared with anyone outside of Multi-VA's R US.

CUSTOMER RELATIONS

Our clients are among our company's most valuable assets. Every Associate represents Multi-VA's R US to our clients. The way we conduct ourselves presents an image of the entire organization; therefore, one of our first business priorities is to assist any potential clients and existing clients. Nothing is more important than being courteous, friendly, helpful, and prompt in the attention you give.

Our personal contact with clients, our manners on the telephone, and the email communications we send, are a reflection not only of ourselves, but also of the professionalism of Multi-VA's R US. Positive client relations not only enhance the public's perception or image of Multi-VA's R US, but also result in greater client loyalty.

COMMUNICATION WITH CLIENTS:

It's imperative that all Associates have a mutually successful relationship with clients and communication is the key. It may be necessary to communicate with clients on a daily basis by email or by phone. You should be courteous, considerate and never be preoccupied when speaking with a client; they should have your full attention at all times.

Weekly meetings with clients to discuss action items, project details and business updates should be considered by both parties. If the client is unable to meet weekly, you should propose bi-weekly meetings.

You need to develop a trusting and mutually beneficial relationship. In order to achieve this you must communicate regularly. If you have not heard from a client via email or phone you must follow up to ensure client satisfaction. If no response is received within 5 days, bring it to the attention of the President and contact the client by phone. This is extremely important when working virtually. Constant flow of communication is a MUST.

WORKING WITH CLIENTS:

All client projects will be distributed by your Manager (Jennifer Smith) via phone or email. An initial conversation will take place between the Associate and Manager to ensure clarity on the project. It is imperative that the Associate communicate their thoughts, ideas and challenges regarding the project upfront with the Manager before agreeing to perform the work. Once the Associate is clear on the task, they will be required to contact the client directly by phone to discuss the project. There may be more than one Associate working with one client and each Associate must contact the client individually.

Commencing the Client/Associate Relationship:

- Once the project has been given and agreed upon, the Associate must contact the client (contact information will be provided by the Manager)
- Associate must phone client and indicate to them, their name and that they are the Multi-VA's R US Associate who will be assisting them
- Be professional at all times during this conversation
- Let them know that you have been briefed on the project and would like to find out more: when the client would like you to start, and most importantly – the deadline
- Once you have a start date, proceed with the project
- Contact your Manager, Jennifer Smith, to let her know that you have contacted the client and it is a go
- REMEMBER: Never be afraid to contact the client to get further information or to ask questions, they will appreciate this

Doing client work:

- Make sure you are comfortable with the task
- Ask questions, get ideas and suggestions from colleagues
- When a project is complete, feel free to send to your Manager for feedback before sending to client
- Working with a client is a learning process; you will begin to figure out what they like and don't like

EMPLOYMENT

[101] *NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT*

The nature of employment between the Associate and Multi-VA's R US is that of a contractual relationship. Multi-VA's R US contracts with each Associate to provide services to clients of Multi-VA's R US, as required. As such, Multi-VA's R US does not guarantee the number of hours of work that an Associate will be given.

Also, given the contractual relationship with Multi-VA's R US, Associates will be paid based on the hours worked, multiplied by the hourly wage negotiated. Statutory deductions are NOT taken and Associates are responsible for all remittances to government agencies. In keeping with this arrangement, Multi-VA's R US does not provide for medical/dental benefits or any other type of benefit as this is not an employee/employer relationship.

Neither the Associate nor Multi-VA's R US is bound to continue the employment relationship if either chooses, at their will, to end the relationship at any time.

[102] *ASSOCIATE RELATIONS*

Multi-VA's R US believes that the working conditions it offers to Associates are competitive with those offered by other multi-VA businesses. If Associates have concerns about working conditions or compensation, they are strongly encouraged to voice these concerns openly and directly to their Manager, Jennifer Smith. It is important to know that the well being of our Associates is one of our core values.

We work diligently to demonstrate our values in our work together. Our experience has shown that when team members deal openly and directly with Managers and other VA Associates, the work environment can be excellent, communications can be clear and attitudes can be positive. We believe that Multi-VA's R US amply demonstrates its commitment to Associates by responding effectively to its team members concerns.

PERSONAL GROWTH
Multi-VA's R US is dedicated to the ongoing growth and development of it's Associates. This can be in the form of simply reading, watching video or appropriate television programs, listening to audio tapes, attending workshops, seminars, and conferences. As a company whose services are based on the development and growth of technology, it is important for all who are involved to stay on the cutting edge of what we do.

[103] *EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY*

Multi-VA's R US does not discriminate in employment opportunities or practices on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law.

[104] *BUSINESS ETHICS AND CONDUCT*

The successful business operation and reputation of Multi-VA's R US is built on the principles of fair dealing and ethical conduct of our Associates. Our reputation for integrity and excellence requires careful observance of the spirit and letter of all applicable laws and regulations, as well as a scrupulous regard for the highest standards of conduct and personal integrity.

The continued success of Multi-VA's R US is dependent upon our clients' trust and we are dedicated to preserving that trust. Associates owe a duty to Multi-VA's R US and its clients, to act in a way that will merit the continued trust and confidence of our clients.

Multi-VA's R US will comply with all applicable laws and regulations and expects its Associates to conduct business in accordance with the letter, spirit and intent of all relevant laws and to refrain from any illegal, dishonest or unethical conduct.

In general, the use of good judgment, based on high ethical principles, will guide you with respect to lines of acceptable conduct. If a situation arises where it is difficult to determine the proper course of action, the matter should be discussed openly with your Manager.

Compliance with this policy of business ethics and conduct is the responsibility of every Multi-VA's R US Associate. Disregarding or failing to comply with this standard of business ethics and conduct could lead to disciplinary action, up to and including possible termination of the contractual arrangement.

[105] *CONFLICTS OF INTEREST*

Associates have an obligation to conduct business within guidelines that prohibit actual or potential conflicts of interest. This policy establishes only the framework

within which Multi-VA's R US wishes the business to operate. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide general direction so that Associates can seek further clarification on issues related to the subject of acceptable standards of operation.

An actual or potential conflict of interest occurs when an Associate is in a position to influence a decision that may result in personal gain for that Associate or as a result of Multi-VA's R US business dealings.

[106] *OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT*

Any Associate of Multi-VA's R US may hold employment with another multi-VA business as long as he or she satisfactorily performs his or her responsibilities with Multi-VA's R US. All Associates will be judged by the same performance standards and will be subject to Multi-VA's R US project demands, regardless of any existing outside work requirements.

If Multi-VA's R US determines that an Associate's alternative contracting interferes with their performance or the ability to meet the requirements of Multi-VA's R US as they are modified from time to time, the Associate may be given a choice between one company and the other.

Outside employment will present a conflict of interest if it has an adverse impact on Multi-VA's R US and our clients.

[107] *NON-DISCLOSURE*

The protection of confidential business information and trade secrets is vital to the interests and the success of Multi-VA's R US. Such confidential information includes, but is not limited to, the following examples:

- Associate information
- Client lists
- Financial information
- New materials research
- Research and development of new products

Associates who improperly use or disclose trade secrets or confidential business information will be subject to termination of the contractual arrangement with Multi-VA's R US, even if they do not actually benefit from the disclosed information.

ASSOCIATE STATUS & RECORDS

[201] *EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES*

It is the intent of Multi-VA's R US to clarify the definitions of employment classifications so that Associates understand their employment status and benefit eligibility. These classifications do not guarantee employment for any specified period of time. Accordingly, the right to terminate the employment relationship at will at any time is retained by both the Associate and Multi-VA's R US.

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR is the only status Multi-VA's R US provides. Associate positions can be temporary, or project related positions.

[202] *ACCESS TO PERSONNEL FILES*

Multi-VA's R US maintains a personnel file for each Associate. The personnel file includes such information as the Associate's application, resume, and may contain other employment records.

Personnel files are the property of Multi-VA's R US, and access to the information they contain is restricted.

Associates wishing to review their own file should contact their Associate Manager.

[203] *REFERENCE CHECKS*

To ensure that individuals who join Multi-VA's R US are well qualified and have a strong potential to be productive and successful, it is the policy of Multi-VA's R US to check the employment references of all applicants.

Multi-VA's R US will respond to all reference check inquiries from other employers. Responses to such inquiries will confirm only dates of contract agreement, wage rates and position(s) held.

[204] *PERSONAL DATA CHANGES*

It is the responsibility of each Associate to promptly notify Multi-VA's R US of any changes in personal data: mailing addresses, telephone numbers, etc. If any personal data has changed, notify your Manager (Jennifer Smith).

[205] *ASSOCIATE QUESTIONNAIRES*

Multi-VA's R US relies upon the accuracy of information contained in the Associate questionnaire, as well as the accuracy of other data presented throughout the interview process. Any misrepresentations, falsifications, or material omissions in any of this information or data may result in the exclusion of the individual from further consideration for Associate status with Multi-VA's R US or, if the person has been hired, termination of the contractual agreement.

[207] *PERFORMANCE EVALUATION*

Associates are strongly encouraged to discuss job performance and goals on an informal level with your Manager on a day-to-day basis. Multi-VA's R US provides no formal performance evaluation process at this time, but relies heavily on client comments and reports.

ASSOCIATE BENEFITS

[301] *EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE*

Multi-VA's R US recognizes that the skills and knowledge of its Associates are critical to the success of the company. Multi-VA's R US will provide educational assistance to those who are eligible. Multi-VA's R US encourages personal development through formal education so that Associates can maintain and improve job-related skills. Only those skills related to the services or potential services provided by Multi-VA's R US will be considered for assistance.

Multi-VA's R US will provide a portion of educational assistance to all eligible Associates who have completed 365 calendar days of service, or solely on the decision of Jennifer Smith. To maintain eligibility, Associates must be performing their work satisfactorily through completion of each course.

[302] *VACATION TIME*

In keeping with the contractual relationship, Associates of Multi-VA's R US are not eligible for paid vacation time.

It is imperative that Associates communicate when they will be taking their vacations to their Manager in order to ensure that client work and projects are taken care of for the duration. If taking holidays for longer than 1 week, it is up to the Associate to make sure that client work is complete and clients have been notified of their absence and that another Associate is available in case an emergency arises with a client.

TIMEKEEPING/PAYROLL

[401] *TIMEKEEPING*

The accurate recording of time worked is the responsibility of every Associate. Associates are given a time log in an excel spreadsheet that will be used to record your time, based on client work. You must keep accurate time logs to ensure proper payment. Your records should include: the clients name, project description, time started and time ended and total time

Altering, falsifying, tampering with time records, or recording time on another Associates time record may result in termination of the contractual agreement.

[402] *BILLABLE/NON-BILLABLE TIME*

When working as a Virtual Assistant and an independent Associate, there is a thin line between billable and non-billable time. Not everything you do will be billable.

For example:

- Clarifying a project with a client because you are unclear is not billable
- Talking to a client's client about how to set up a spreadsheet is billable

Use your judgment, if you are unsure contact Jennifer Smith

[403] *PAYDAYS/INVOICING*

Invoicing is done on the 15th and 30th of each month. You must submit your invoice and your time log to the Associate Manager before 8:00 pm on the day before invoicing. Your invoice and log should be email attachments. Cheques are issued 3 days after clients have been billed.

Please see sample invoice on following page.

Your invoice should include the following information:

INVOICE:

To: Multi-VA's R US

Period covered: August 1 to August 15, 2007

Description: VA Services for:

Tom Jones – 5 hrs
Brenda White – 10 hrs
Jonathon Hall – 4 hrs

Reimbursements:

Brenda White - postage – $3.50
Jonathan Hall – specialty paper - $4.50

Amount due: Rate x hours

Payable/mail to: your street address city/state/country/zip

It is suggested that Associates keep copies of all invoices and reimbursement expenses.

REIMBURSEMENT: Reimbursements will be paid to all Associates providing that the expenses have been discussed and approved by Jennifer Smith before the expenditures. All receipts must be sent to Jennifer Smith.

ASSOCIATE TERMINATION

[501] *TERMINATION OF CONTRACT*

Termination of contract is an inevitable part of any company. Below are examples of some of the most common circumstances under which an Associate is terminated:

- Resignation - voluntary employment termination initiated by an Associate
- Discharge - involuntary employment termination initiated by the company

If an Associate resigns or is discharged, it is the responsibility of the Associate to return all client and Multi-VA's R US data to Jennifer Smith within 5 working days. This data should be put on disk and mailed to Multi-VA's R US. If there is any outstanding payments owed to the Associate, the Associate must send an invoice and a cheque will be issued within 24 hrs.

Since employment with Multi-VA's R US is based on mutual consent, both the Associate and Multi-VA's R US have the right to terminate the relationship at will, with or without cause, at any time.

WORK CONDITIONS & HOURS

[601] *WORK SCHEDULES*

Work schedules of Associates vary throughout our company. At no time does Multi-VA's R US guarantee a set number of working hours.

Multi-VA's R US is flexible in terms of work schedules, as long as the client's needs are met in a timely manner. If your outside work/personal schedule interferes with client service you will be asked to negotiate a more reasonable time schedule. If the Associate is unable to meet these requirements and all alternatives have been unsuccessful, termination will be required.

[602] *USE OF TELEPHONES, INTERNET & EMAIL SYSTEMS*

TELEPHONE LINES: Because the nature of our business is virtual, you will be required to use a phone in your own office for your work with Multi-VA's R US. Associates may be required to obtain a dedicated phone line to ensure client service. Voicemail service is always required and must reflect the appropriate greeting. At no time should an Associate of Multi-VA's R US, have a phone that rings busy. Automatic rollover to voice-mail is required when the phone is in use.

To ensure effective telephone communications, Associates should always use the approved greeting and speak in a courteous and professional manner. Please confirm information received from the caller, and hang up only after the caller has done so.

Multi-VA's R US will reimburse Associates for any long distance charges resulting from client business use of the Associate's telephone. This includes calls that you are making on behalf of your client. Telephone charges for calls related to speaking with your Manager are not reimbursable. As an added value to our clients we **do not** charge them for calls we make to them to gain clarity on work projects or to obtain our projects.

FAX ACCESS: All Associates will be required to have access to fax capabilities. These are considered to be the basic tools required to work in a virtual environment, and thus is a condition of your Associate contract.

EMAIL: Internet communication is the primary form of business contact at Multi-VA's R US. All Associates will be required to provide the following tools for work with Multi-VA's R US:

- A computer that can access the internet easily, with the capacity to work in that environment, as needed. As a note, speed of access and computer speed are important to the efficient use of time, so Associates must update their systems regularly.

- Internet access that provides an email account. This account must be set up to receive attachments of various sizes. Associates will receive an email alias from Multi-VA's R US for use and depending on client needs, you may be required to have other email aliases for client work. All materials sent to potential clients or clients must be sent on Multi-VA's R US alias unless an alias is provided by that particular client.

Multi-VA's R US is not responsible for the cost of the internet service provider's services or the hardware/software that relates to it or the email and working programs required. These are deemed minimal tools of the trade and are considered a business investment on the part of the Associate.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE: Because it is difficult to assess 'tone' in a written email, the following basic standards apply to all communications within the virtual community:

- Write in standard lower case except when emphasizing a word or thought. Use of ALL CAPS in a communication is considered 'yelling' or charged. Please use proper punctuation, capitals where appropriate and acceptable grammar.

- When replying to an email, make sure that the text you are writing, if you are responding in the BODY of the mail, can be distinguished from the original email. Use of several asterisk (**) or creating space between the text you are replying to and your answer is helpful.

- For some responses, a follow-up telephone call may be more appropriate. Please be sensitive to the nature of what you need to communicate and choose wisely which form of communication is most appropriate. Note that it is easy, when responding to a LOT of emails, to simply send a response, without much forethought, or skip RE-READING the communication before sending. Again, take care to have HIGH standards of complete communication and assess, if the information is sensitive, the response of the recipient before sending.

REMEMBER, as a virtual company, e-mail is the PRIMARY form of communication. Multi-VA's R US requires that e-mail be checked several times every workday, and be responded to accordingly. Associates may receive a LOT of email and it is important, not only for work to be complete, but that work doesn't fall behind and that deadlines are met.

[603] *COMPUTER & E-MAIL USAGE*

All Associates of Multi-VA's R US are required to provide their own computer, software and internet connection. Multi-VA's R US is at no time responsible for providing the "tools of the trade." It is solely up to the Associate to have the proper hardware and software to provide our clients with professional VA Services.

Multi-VA's R US purchases various software programs to provide services for our clients. If an Associate requires specific software to meet a client's needs and the software is subsequently purchased by Multi-VA's R US, this software is only to be used with Multi-VA's R US clients and not to further your own practice. If you require this software for your own practice as well, a user's fee may be established.

[604] *INTRANET USAGE*

Multi-VA's R US subscribes to an intranet based system to share calendar and contacts with our clients. All Associates are required to have excellent working knowledge of this system. This system is extremely important to our client service and all Associates may be required to use this system with Multi-VA's R US clients.

Information in these systems is strictly confidential and only accessible using a username and password. Under no circumstances should these usernames and passwords be given out. Only those Associates who have clients, or are being trained to use this system, will have access to this information. If an Associate relinquishes the username and password to anyone outside of the Multi-VA's R US family they will automatically be terminated.

If a client expresses interest in sharing contacts and calendars, this must be brought to the attention of Jennifer Smith. Clients requesting this service will be charged an extra fee on their invoice for intranet usage.

ASSOCIATE CONDUCT

[701] *ASSOCIATE CONDUCT AND WORK RULES*

To ensure orderly operations and provide the best possible work environment, Multi-VA's R US expects Associates to follow rules of conduct that will protect the interests of the company.

It is not possible to list all the forms of behavior that are considered unacceptable at Multi-VA's R US. The following are examples of infractions of rules of conduct that may result in termination of the contractual agreement:

- Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of property
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Negligence or improper conduct leading to damage of company-owned or client-owned property
- Insubordination or other disrespectful conduct
- Continuous denial of projects
- Unauthorized disclosure of business "secrets" or confidential information
- Unsatisfactory performance or conduct

Contracting with Multi-VA's R US is at the mutual consent of Multi-VA's R US and the Associate, and either party may terminate that relationship at any time, with or without cause.

[702] *ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY*

To maintain a safe and productive work environment, Multi-VA's R US expects Associate VA's to be reliable and to be punctual in reporting for scheduled work related meetings (telecalls). Absenteeism and tardiness place a burden on other Associates and on Multi-VA's R US. In the rare instances when Associates cannot avoid being late to scheduled telemeetings or are unable to work on scheduled projects, they should notify their Manager as soon as possible.

[703] *RETURN OF PROPERTY*

Associates are responsible for all Multi-VA's R US property, materials or written information issued to them or in their possession or control. Associates must return all Multi-VA's R US & client property within 5 days of termination.

[704] *RESIGNATION*

Resignation is a voluntary act initiated by the Associate to terminate a working relationship with Multi-VA's R US. Although advance notice is not required, Multi-VA's R US requests at least 2 weeks of written resignation notice from all Associates. We understand that everything we do is a stepping stone and if you decide to move on, we are happy to have provided that for you!

Associates may be asked to assist in training a replacement if needed. If this is agreed upon, the Associate will be paid for the agreed upon training period.

[705] *PROBLEM RESOLUTION*

Multi-VA's R US is committed to providing the best possible working conditions for its Associates. Part of this commitment is by encouraging an open and frank atmosphere in which any problem, complaint, suggestion, or question receives a timely response.

Multi-VA's R US strives to ensure fair and honest treatment of all Associates. Associates are expected to treat each other with mutual respect. Associates are encouraged to offer positive and constructive criticism.

If Associates disagree with established rules of conduct, policies, or practices, they can express their concern to Jennifer Smith. No Associate will be penalized, formally or informally, for voicing a complaint with Multi-VA's R US in a reasonable, business-like manner.

MISCELLANEOUS

[801] *MONTHLY MEETINGS*

All Multi-VA's R US Associates are required to attend monthly Associate meetings by teleconference. This gives everyone an opportunity to connect, share client updates, challenges and successes we have had. Phone charges for monthly meetings are not reimbursable.

[802] *REFERRAL PROGRAM*

As an Associate of Multi-VA's R US we ask that you help contribute to our future success and growth. If you refer a client to Multi-VA's R US and they purchase services, you will receive a referral fee in the amount of $100.00. As well, depending on the client's needs you will also be the assigned Associate who will work with this client. This creates a win-win situation.

[803] *TRAINING*

We encourage you to always learn. If there is a particular skill that you would like to be taught, and Multi-VA's R US can provide this training to you personally, we will do so. This is on your time and not billable time.

[804] *TRADE SHOWS*

Multi-VA's R US will every so often attend a trade show to market our services. We will require the assistance of 2 or 3 Associates at these events. You will not be paid for your time at these events however, shared accommodations and travel will be provided for you. Expect to have fun and meet some really great people.

The Virtual Assistant's Guide
To The
Multi-VA Business

A comprehensive guide to creating and operating a multi-VA business

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