

“Vision is where tomorrow begins, for it expresses what you and others who share the vision will be working hard to create.

Since most people don't take the time to think systematically about the future, those who do, and who base their strategies and actions on their visions, have inordinate power to shape the future.”

— Burt Nanus

Top 10 Tips for Successful Business Development

By J. J. Murphy

Virtual Assistants face a special set of professional challenges. Virtual service providers must establish client trust in an anonymous online environment. Entrepreneurs, whether virtual or traditional, must self-monitor procedures and practices. International businesses must also bridge cultures.

Successful Virtual Assistants combine all of these special considerations when building their businesses.

1. Integrity

Tell the truth and operate ethically. Never underestimate the value of your reputation. Review IVAA's Code of Ethics for more information: <http://www.ivaa.org/ivaa-code-of-ethics.htm>.

2. Game Plan

Have clear business goals. Evaluate your progress, encourage critiques, and continually upgrade your skills. Embrace creative problem solving techniques. The IVAA Message Boards are a valuable resource: <http://www.ivaa.org/phpBB2/ind ex.php>.

3. Contracts

Create a basic contract along with other simple business forms. Customize it to clearly outline the specifics for each individual client. IVAA maintains a forms library for reference purposes: <http://www.ivaa.org/membersonly/formslibrary.php>.

4. Privacy and Security

When working online, security issues are paramount. You must safeguard your data and client data from outside access. Keep security systems upgraded. Post a privacy policy on your website.

5. Pricing

Offer quality products and services. Charge for the time spent and ensure that your hourly rate will cover expenses and provide a living wage. For a member discussion, see: <http://www.ivaa.org/phpBB2/viewforum.php?f=43>.

6. Clear Communication

Provide your business and billing practices in writing. Inform your client beforehand if you bill for phone time, subcontract work, or charge a rush fee.

7. Professionalism and Cultural Awareness

Pay attention to the needs and boundaries of others. Be sensitive to what is happening globally.

Understand your clients to meet their needs.

8. Networking

Define your goals before attending each networking or business event. Are you attending to gather information? Is this an opportunity to meet individuals essential to your growth and development? Are you “fishing” for new clients? Network with your peers. Realize your clients may have multiple needs that you may not be able to meet solo. Always endeavor to provide a win-win solution.

9. Credibility and Responsibility

As members of a profession, the actions of an individual reflect on the whole. Be sure you can perform the required work before accepting a contract. Never do work that may be considered a conflict of interest. Retain an impeccable level of ethical and moral accountability.

10. Life-Work Balance

In order to “sharpen the saw” and maintain creativity, you need time away from your work to recharge. Spend quality time with your family. Contribute to your community. Enjoy “down” time.

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VA Service Niche: Small Business Coaching and Development

By Angela Allen Parker

The following are a few of the services offered by Business Coaches and Business Development Consultants:

- Guiding owners in developing a workable business plan
- Determining reasonable short term and long term goals
- Developing a plan of action

to measure progress toward those goals

- Assisting clients to determine their niche and their target audiences
- Helping the client to develop a marketing plan to reach the desired audience
- Determining financial goals for the business
- Guidance in accomplishing time management skill building for business owners
- Training on needed skills to improve productivity and reduce time spent for business owners
- Determining the necessary computer hardware, software, and other equipment to effectively run a small business of a specific type
- Ensuring that business owners maintain a life-work balance to enjoy their successes and their personal lives

SUCCESS IS...

“You've achieved success in your field when you don't know whether what you're doing is work or play.”

—Warren Beatty