

### Switching from Employee to Business Mindset

I see many people posting on forums asking where they can find work at home jobs, because they want to be virtual assistants. First, let's clarify what you're looking for by working at home. When you work a job, you are an actual employee. If you are looking for a job to stay at home, you are going to be sorely disappointed. The few work at home job opportunities that do exist pay minimum wage or barely above. If that's what you're currently making outside the home or you just need to supplement another income that would be fine for you.

But if you are an experienced administrative assistant, you're probably used to making \$8.00 per hour and up, depending the pay scale where you live. You're not going to get that kind of money being an employee from home, unless you manage to convince your current employer that it would be more beneficial to them for you to work from home.

However, you can find plenty of opportunities to work from home as an independent contractor. A virtual assistant is an independent contractor, not an employee. You are self-employed as a virtual assistant. You may or may not have an EIN (see my article on Safety and Your SSN), and you may be a sole proprietorship. But you will not be an employee. And you will not be looking for jobs, working jobs, or interviewing for jobs.

The biggest hurdle I see with most people starting is that they have a difficult time remembering they are a business selling products. Your products as a virtual assistant just happen to be your skills that you offer in the form of services. You have to think about how you want to market those skills. Here are some things to consider:

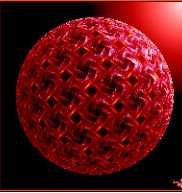
Why would someone want to purchase your ability to

- create newsletters?
- type quickly and efficiently?
- transcribe audio files?
- Invoice their customers?

In doing this, you start to look at yourself more like a product line in a business and less like an employee. You've been an employee for a long time, so it is hard to shake this frame of mind. But you will not be successful as a virtual assistant until you not only view yourself as a business, but also represent yourself to others as a business. That is the next step in moving toward your goal of becoming a virtual assistant.

When you speak to potential clients whether it's posting ads online, creating bids for freelance bidding sites, writing your brochures, speaking on the telephone or at networking meetings, it is imperative to always represent yourself as a business. Now this doesn't mean you can't let your personality shine through in those things. Your personality and your quality of work will become your brand for your business, so those are important to keep.

## Secretaries on Demand



However, you must relay the fact you're not some homemaker with four kids and a zoo of pets working from home in between running your kids around to all their appointments. Yes, you may very well be doing that. And there's nothing wrong with doing that provide you do have quiet time set aside to work (see more in my article on Separation of Lives - Home vs. Work). But when you are first introducing your services to possible future clients, you do not want to misrepresent yourself as a work at home employee.

For people to take you seriously, you have to act seriously. Represent yourself as if you were a large corporation even if you're not. Do you remember how your boss at your last traditional job acted when he met with new customers or spoke to them on the phone? In most cases, (unless your boss was really awful) that is how you should conduct yourself when dealing with potential clients in print and in conversation.

Finally, the most important step in crossing over from employee to business mindset is to make sure your FAMILY and FRIENDS know that you are not "working from home." You are running a business from home. You are the owner of the business. And you are no one's employee, and you do not have bosses. You have clients.

The understanding of this by your friends and family is important, because their views of you will affect you and your ability to carry yourself as a business. So be sure you relay the importance to them that they understand what it is you're doing.

Once you are in the correct mindset with the support of those you love around you in the same mindset, you can move forward down the path of becoming a successful virtual assistant. You are a business. And you should be proud, because so many people are too afraid to take the first step you're taking. Not everyone can be a business owner.