



Be Virtual Assistant Wise

VA Business Start-Up Checklist

The business start-up checklist below is meant to remind you of the tasks you may have to perform when starting your VA business.

You do not have to complete each and every step of the checklist below and you may also find yourself jumping around a bit between the different tasks. Don't worry about it, that's perfectly fine!

The most important thing is that you have a complete list of all the typical activities needed to start a business and you can decide what you want to do and what suits your business and your situation the best. You can always return to this list at a later stage.

However, there are a few **Mission Critical Steps** that are quite important to have in any business. We will point them out in the list with the acronym "**MCS**".

**Just have fun with the start-up process.
It's not every day that you get to start your own business!**

SELF ASSESSMENT

	I know and understand what Virtual Assistance is all about MCS
	I know why I want to become a VA and what my motivation is MCS
	I know what I'm good at (my strengths) and what I'm not good at (my weaknesses)
	I know what I want to achieve with my VA business
	I am sure that being self-employed is right for me MCS
	I work well without supervision.
	I don't mind being alone for long stretches of time.
	I am self-motivated and self-disciplined.
	I am confident and enthusiastic about my home-based business.
	I find it easy to manage my own time.
	I don't mind taking risks or facing uncertainty.
	I am not afraid to work hard and for long hours.
	I know who I want to work with – my target market MCS
	I know what services I want to offer and what I have the most experience in, thus I've determined my niche MCS
	I know what makes me different from other VAs and have developed my unique selling proposition.
	I know what additional training I need (if any)



SETTING UP OFFICE

	I have a dedicated place to work
	I have the necessary equipment MCS
	Must haves:
	<i>Good computer with high speed internet connection</i>
	<i>Ability to send and receive faxes</i>
	<i>Reliable email service</i>
	<i>Printer</i>
	<i>Phone</i>
	<i>Filing System</i>
	I have the necessary office furniture and supplies
	<i>Desk</i>
	<i>Chair</i>
	<i>Lamp</i>
	<i>Filing cabinet & trays</i>
	<i>Stationery (e.g. files, folders, paper, pens, pencils, markers, paper clips, stapler, diary)</i>
	My office is organized and ready for business
	I have a daily planner or calendar to keep myself organized

MY BUSINESS

	I have a business name MCS
	I've verified my business name is available
	I've checked to verify that my business name is available as a web domain name
	I have a business email address



MAKE IT LEGAL

	I know what business structure I want to operate (Sole Proprietorship, Close Corporation (CC), Company etc.)
	I have the required licenses and/or permits to run a home based business in my area.
	I've registered my business (only for a CC and company)
	I've registered my business for tax purposes at SARS

BUSINESS PROTECTION

	Contracts
	I have the necessary business contracts to operate my business (ie. Independent contractor agreement, retainer agreement, confidentiality agreement) MCS
	I have a subcontracting agreement – for subcontracting work to other virtual assistants (if desired)
	My attorney reviewed these contracts
	Emergency Preparedness:
	I have a back-up system for all my computer files
	I have a back-up system for Internet access
	I have a trustworthy VA who can cover for me during illness, vacation or overflow work
	Insurance:
	I have the necessary insurance for my home business (if desired)

FINANCES

	I know how I want to receive payment from clients (PayPal, EFT, credit card, cheque, etc.) MCS
	I set up a business account at a local bank
	I've set up an online merchant account (if desired)
	I've determine my start-up expenses
	I've determined my running monthly expenses
	I have enough monetary back-up to survive if I do not find clients right away MCS



RATES

	I've determined my rates MCS
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SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

	I have establish a billing policy and terms of payment MCS
	I have a bookkeeping system MCS
	I have an invoicing system
	I have a system to set up client accounts
	I've determined my working/office hours? Full-time or part-time?
	I have a preferred policy on how I want clients to contact me?

BRANDING

	I've designed a business logo (myself or hire a professional)
	I've designed promotional and business material (website, business cards, sales letter, letter heads, invoice, fax coversheet, brochure, welcome kit, etc.)
	I have an elevator speech when people ask me what I'm doing for a living
	I've setup an email signature line

MARKETING

	I've made a list of all my personal and business contacts
	I have contact details of people in my target market
	I've listed my business in search engines and online directories
	I've create a marketing portfolio for using off-line and online (containing a business card, sales letter, examples of previous work, testimonials of previous clients, business brochure)



WEBSITE

	<i>Decide whether to design a website yourself or hire a website designer</i>
	I've chosen and registered my domain name
	I've set up hosting for my site
	I've set up a business webmail address
	I wrote copy/content for my website
	I have requested testimonials from previous business colleagues to put on my site
	I have a professional photo

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

	I made a list of local networking opportunities (Chamber of Commerce, business associations etc)
	I made a list of online networking opportunities
	I developed a marketing (elevator) speech for networking
	I've joined Virtual Assistant organisations MCS
	I've joined local organisations for networking
	I've joined online forums (virtual assistant forums and forums my target market use) MCS
	I've set up social networking profiles for my business (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, blogs, etc.)

BUSINESS PLANNING

	I have a Mission and Vision statement
	I have written down a number of milestones/goals for my business
	I've develop a business plan MCS
	I've develop a marketing plan MCS
	I've done a SWOT analysis to understand my strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats



FAMILY CONSIDERATIONS

	I have discussed my home-based business plans with my family members. MCS
	My family understands how important my business goals are to me.
	My family is supportive of my home-based business.

GRAND OPENING

	<i>Announce It!</i>
	I've send an email or letter to all my personal and business contacts
	I've send an email or letter to people in my target market
	I've posted in VA forums announcing my business opening
	I've send out a press release

STREAMLINE BUSINESS PROCESSES

	Develop a client consultation process
	Prepare a New Client Welcome Package
	Develop answers to frequently asked questions
	Prepare a list of questions to ask potential clients
	Prepare a Client satisfaction survey
	Prepare a "Thank you for inquiry" letter/email

Congratulations on Starting your own Virtual Assistance Business!!!