

MADINA AKHMEDOVA

HOW TO BECOME A VA SOLOPRENEUR IN THE UAE

**Your Easy-to-Follow Guide on how to start your own
online business from zero as a Business Support Provider
and work from home!**

Working from home finally became possible!

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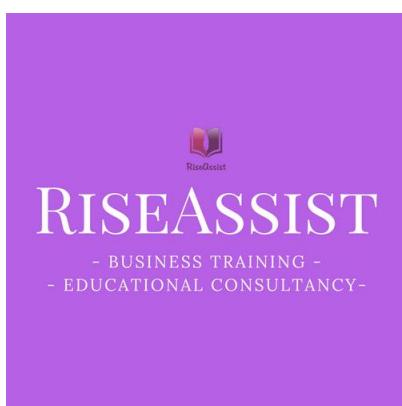
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Message from the author

What is this book about

Hello there😊

Big, big Thank you for downloading my book😊 It's the first step toward your success and I am very happy for you. Well done!

The more people take full control of their destiny (like yourself😊) the more the rest of us will benefit from it and as a natural effect – the world will expand and evolve more and more and more.

As such, you have my heartfelt congratulations and a friendly pat on your shoulder. 😊

This book has been designed to guide you. It explains how you can become a virtual assistant in the UAE, what skills you need to acquire/develop and how you can set up an online business as a Virtual Assistant/solopreneur/ remote business support service provider.

It is my strong belief that this book will help you to start working on your own terms, from anywhere/anytime and finally attain that sweet flexibility/freedom that your heart so wants.

Terrific stuff, isn't it? Already bubbling with excitement to dive in? Awesome! Let's get started!

As a quick table of contents, here's what we'll be talking about:

*I am going to explain the virtual assistant's (VA) role

*Overview of the VA's industry

*The list of soft and technical skills which are required in order to become an in-demand virtual assistant and always be fully be booked with clients.

*The legal requirements in the UAE in order to start working online and how to establish your online VA business. Yay!

But the good stuff doesn't end here😊

I will also walk you through the mindset transformation as mindset is vital when you are starting an online business. It is important to transform your employee mindset to business owner mindset. Quite a difference, isn't it?

I will briefly explain the existing strategies to become mouth-watering to your clients, and the ground work steps before launching your business & offering your services.

And now, how about getting properly acquainted?

I am Madina Akhmedova, certified business coach, VA/PA trainer and owner of RiseAssist, UAE. Virtual Assistant training program was launched in 2016, it was born out of a natural demand: a lot of women were (and still are) struggling to return to the working market, or achieve their career goals for a number of reasons while UAE entrepreneurs and small businesses started hiring freelancers to save costs and time. We wanted to create new working opportunities for women wanting to utilize their skills and time or find the career which would allow them to earn as per their income goals. Our program helps UAE-based women start working from home as remote business support service providers and scale their business in future. At RiseAssist we pride ourselves in being the only VA Solopreneur live training program provider in the UAE and our program combines everything you need to know to start working on completion.

RiseAssist trains only women. The course is a harmonious mix of live training, one-on-one business coaching and video tutorials (software trainings and hacks).

We teach business setup, mindset transformation, soft & technical skills, strategies to land/create a flow of clients and market your services successfully so that you can serve at a global scale.

Upon completion of the course, our students still have access to our online school with all materials, recordings, video software tutorials and library and they can access it online from any device for lifetime.

It's been done so in order to ensure that students can go back and refresh their knowledge at any time.

Our relationship with our students is much more than a training course for we help them before-during-after the course through various ways and tools.

All our live training courses are conducted in 5 star venues as we are giving our students a transformational learning experience. Dreaming big is easier when you are learning like a boss!

Chapter 1.

VA Community in Dubai

The VA concept in the region is quite new and at the moment we provide our students with community support even after they finish the course.

We have a meet up group which is called Dubai Virtual Assistants and you are more than welcome to join and meet our members!

We get together once or twice a month and, around a nice cup of coffee, we exchange experiences, tips/advises, learn from each other and enjoy a social and friendly environment.

Every now and then we're also doing educational workshops & networking events, an idea that is in alignment with our desire to offer the best experience to our students as well as growing the VA community.

You can find out more about our activities from our Facebook group- Dubai Virtual Assistants Community.

It's a private group and we welcome there women who want to become a Virtual Assistant or are already working as one. I am sharing a daily dose of useful (and free) content and everybody in the group is absolutely free to interact/meet other members, ask for advises and guidance/support. Hungry to see more? Lovely! You can have a look on our VA job posts which we've started receiving from our corporate contacts in Dubai and abroad.

We are working on strengthening our community outreach and hopefully soon we will be getting more support from the corporate sector. If you become a member of our community, (totally free, by the way) you will have access to all those resources (and they are freebies, yes) :)

Want to do a good deed? We'd be happy to have you with us as right now we are looking for volunteers to help us with tasks in establishing the VA community.

So, if you would like to apply, please send an e-mail to info@riseassist.net and someone from our team will get back to you:)

Now, before moving further, I want to share something with you, something you've heard of - I have no doubt - but are unaware perhaps of these terrific details :)

What's more so, all them are from the notes I took while attending Achieving Women Forum 2017, Industry event by Entrepreneur.com Middle East and it goes like this:

- 90% of women will take independent financial decisions at some point in their life due to divorce or longer life duration- Rana Nawas, Elevate Network Dubai
- In 2015, 600 women in the Gulf region were surveyed. Conclusion: 50% of responders aspire to a leadership position.
- Only 45% of women believe they have achieved work-life balance
- Only 2% of the Achieving Women Forum attendees said they would like to go to a C-Suite position. Women lack confidence and what usually stops them is thinking that they do not know enough yet or they are not good enough for this position. Fear of failure is a woman thing because we analyze a lot.
- By the age of 6 girls are less confident than boys- Research Findings.
- Statistics say that women-owned enterprises earn more than men-owned.
- Women control 70% of global spending.
- Women take decisions slower than men because of deeper analysis.

- Only 16% of women in the GCC currently sit in the boardrooms.

And to wrap it up nicely, here are two of the quotes that went straight to my heart while listening the event speakers:

“Be ready that not everyone will like you”.

“Stop seeking approvals and validations all the time”.

Pure gems, isn't it?:)

Chapter 2.

Myths and misconceptions about VA role.

Before being able to properly dive into what a VA does and doesn't, we need to get clear on several myths. See them below please :)

Myth 1.

Virtual Assistant is a secretary/admin assistant/PA that works from home.

Virtual assistant is a new concept in the UAE region. A lot of people never even heard about Virtual assistants, while most of the others think that a virtual assistant is a secretary who is working from home for a business owner or for an organization.

Well, I can say this is not 100% correct (but it's not incorrect either!) because the term, the role and the skillset of the virtual assistant has evolved and changed over the years. We will look at the history a bit later.

For now, it's enough to know that a Virtual Assistant is an online business owner (solopreneur) that provides remote assistance with tech, admin and business support tasks to organizations, entrepreneurs, executives and business owners.

Myth 2.

Virtual Assistant is a part-time employee.

Well, it might be in some individual cases. Some VAs work for organizations and it is a salaried job. However, in the modern era the Virtual Assistant is providing services in remote, freelancing mode just like any agency or consultancy does.

VAs work for one or multiple clients - it is absolutely up to them and their terms.

Myth 3.

Virtual Assistant provides secretarial and admin support tasks.

As I mentioned earlier, the role has evolved and changed.

If previously, VAs were mostly hired to perform secretarial and admin tasks, now the marketable skillset includes more than 55 tech and business support skills. That is also the reason VAs manage to scale their online business and grow it into a proper company at the later stage.

Myth 4.

Virtual Assistants earn 5-10 \$ per hour.

This is slightly similar to Myth 3. As the skillset has expanded and developed, the rates for VA services have also changed.

So, today in order to become a really competitive and in-demand VA in the digital marketplace, offering just secretarial and admin tasks will simply not be enough to generate full-time income.

Not only such limited skillset will not allow you to generate the required income but you will also not be able to establish your own online VA business, market your services and have processes and systems set in place to handle multiple clients and ensure a smooth & constant client flow.

In other words, the skillset that VAs should obtain is essential for their own business setup and running as well as providing quality services to their clients and get well-paid.

Unfortunately, some beginning virtual assistants get quickly discouraged and disappointed because they decided to offer admin support and find their clients only through freelancing platforms, which results in very low earning and draining process of constant client search.

As per classic definition, a virtual assistant is an admin and business support professional that provides relevant services for entrepreneurs, business owners and organizations.

However, I prefer the definition that is used by **The International Virtual Assistants Association** (IVAA) as it is more up-to-date and illustrates the complete service offering package of a modern VA.

“Virtual assistants are independent contractors who (from a remote location, usually their home or office) support multiple clients in a variety of industries by providing administrative, creative, and technical services.”—Source: IVAA.org

As a Virtual Assistant, you can choose to work for a number of clients or you can choose to have only one client on your plate.

In fact, it's all up to you and to the demand which your profile is going to face.

It is important to remember that virtual assistance is all about working on your own terms, so you will have to define who you will be working with, in which mode and how are you going to schedule and systemize your work.

The evidence shows that a skilled virtual assistant could potentially outperform a personal assistant (again because of the marketable and in-demand skillset that they are able to offer).

The combination of tech, business and admin support services puts virtual assistants at a different stage due to a variety of support services that they can offer to their clients (local and international).

According to Forbes business experts, 2017 is already being dubbed “the year of the freelancer”. By 2020, the US predicts 50 percent of its workforce will be freelancing, a trend that’s already beginning to trickle down to the UAE (as recently mentioned by Timeout Dubai).

Many organizations and entrepreneurs worldwide have already understood the benefits of hiring a skilled VA and they are hiring remote workers for all kinds of services.

Such respectable business media sources as Entrepreneur.com and Forbes.com are confirming that the demand for remote business support services is increasing each year.

68% of U.S. workers say that they expect to work remotely in the future. -Forbes.com

This time last year, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that 15.5 million people in the United States were self-employed. By 2020, that number is expected to shoot to roughly 60 million, or more than 40 percent of our nation's workforce. - Entrepreneur.com

About the local UAE market, Loulou Khazen Baz - the founder and chief executive of Nabbesh a portal that connects freelancers with employers - says there has been a 40 per cent increase in the number of freelancers being hired by UAE companies in the first quarter of this year versus the fourth quarter of last year.

Nabbesh, the home-grown company which was launched in Dubai in April 2012, has also reported a recent rise in its database of registered freelancers to over 90,000 in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Also, it is interesting that UAE businesses are hiring overseas freelancers online. UAE companies such as Wally have a strong demand for freelance websites. Businesses in the Emirates are California-based Upwork's fifth largest market, and have spent more

than Dh390 million to date on the service, which launched in the UAE as Elance o-Desk in June 2014.

FUTURE OF WORK STUDY SHOWS 44 PERCENT OF ARABS IN UAE BELIEVE WORK IS SHIFTING ONLINE.

Upwork.com recently released the results of its YouGov “Future of Work” study in the UAE, which revealed 44 percent of the country’s Arabs see work moving online and almost half the UAE population is open to leaving their job to work for themselves in the future. The findings come as Elance-oDesk – the world’s largest freelance talent marketplace – announced its global re-launch as Upwork. The workplace revolution in the UAE is already apparent — businesses in the UAE have spent more than AED 390 million to date on Upwork; the country is also ranked as the 5th largest global spender in terms of online talent hiring in 2014.

I wanted to bring these facts just to illustrate that the demand is growing and there are more clients locally and internationally for virtual assistants that are starting their own online businesses.

According to the observations and statistics collected by various sources, virtual assistants with background in Executive Assistance, Social Media Management and Digital Marketing stand to profit the most in the businesses which are hiring VAs.

In other words, if you learn in depth the social media management and digital marketing strategies, you are almost guaranteeing yourself a constant stream of clients, if you can deliver the promised quality – of course.

There are so many sub niches and narrow areas that a VA can specialize in. But, it is important to choose the service offering that you are really good at, keep learning and become a real expert in that area in time.

If you perform the mentioned steps in addition to solid marketing strategy for your VA services, you won't be worrying about getting clients because experts are always in demand.

Social media and digital marketing are the most promising niches growth -wise, so it is worth focusing on them.

As such, if you're doing a really good job and you are visible, you build your network daily and you keep in touch with your contacts, you will actually have enough constant demand to reach your income goals and scale your business in future into a proper service providing company. Referrals are everything in this business (well, in most of the businesses).

Chapter 3.

History of the virtual assistant role.

Even though the virtual assistant trend is at its peak right now and is still a new and shiny concept in the UAE (and in some other regions), the term of virtual assistant is quite old.

Below is a quoted abstract from Virtual Assistant Inc. blog which explains an interesting story of VA role.

The Birth of Virtual Assistance

The term “virtual assistant” was born in 1996. It commenced from a simple conversation between Anastacia Brice and life coach Thomas Leonard when the latter coined the term while having phone conversation with the former.

With the idea already in mind, Brice borrowed the term to name the new emerging profession and in the next year, she witnessed how the profession was formalized. It was in February 1997 that the event happened when Anastacia Brice opened the first organization for virtual assistants called the AssistU. The succeeding years until today witness many more developments in this profession. In 1999, **International Virtual Assistants Association** was formed in order to respond to the growing number of people involved in the industry and just like any organization - it will help represent the profession to the world.

Virtual assistance has grown and departed from the bosom of its mother profession and created upon itself a unique distinction that marked its identity to the world. From being simply a sub-category of secretarial services, it equaled the profession and yet later surpassed it in measures beyond of what the mother profession could have offer.

Today, the work of a virtual assistant is getting more in demand in the business world as more entrepreneurs, small businesses and

executives prefer the services of virtual assistants than hiring a personal secretary for two economic reasons:

*Hiring a virtual assistant is cost effective

*Efficiency of work is more possibly achieved.

-Quoted from <https://virtualassistantinc.wordpress.com/>

The demand for virtual assistance services is growing in the UAE, as well. For instance, after RiseAssist started offering the VA training program, a number of entrepreneurs and business owners and even organizations started contacting us, asking to refer our course graduates to them!

Chapter 4.

Overview of virtual assistant industry statistics.

In 2016 a number of business owners and entrepreneurs worldwide were asked to fill a survey to measure the demand for remote virtual assistance services. 60% of respondents wanted help with many projects, while 28% of respondents wanted help with ongoing support.

The business owners are ready to hand over the majority of their tasks to remote working professionals. With the current technology advancement, tools and softwares it all became possible now!

A small number of respondents were not sure what VA services could they use which means that the society still needs some additional education about VA role, concept and skillset.

As a VA, you will meet clients who do not know what exactly you can help them with and that's when it becomes a part of your job to educate them about your offering and brainstorm together how you can help their business grow.

70% of the same survey respondents wanted help from a dedicated point of contact, while 25% of respondents wanted help from a team of contacts. It is clearly illustrated that most virtual assistants have a good chance to get a retaining client, basically a client who will be working with them on permanent basis - given that they perform really well and deliver according to the clients' expectations & their mutual agreement.

In fact, having three/four clients who are working with you on a permanent basis (retainer package) is a perfect scenario for any VA as that will give you the opportunity to generate the desired income.

Of course, rates will depend on the services which you are able to provide with your existing skillset.

More than 70% of business owners wanted up to 10 hours of help per week, less than 20 wanted 10 to 20 hours of help per week and under 10% wanted to 20 to 40 hours of help per week.

As VAs are setting their own schedule and choosing their own hours, they are signing up for projects with those clients who can accommodate the terms of the VA.

Usually, when you deliver high-quality work clients rarely let you go as it is better for them to deal with the same “verified VA”. Plus, those clients are most likely to bring you the referrals and generate a great word-of-mouth about your services. One of my students got a referral from her boss after she told him that she will be switching to a VA online business.

As per VA talent research report, it's predicted that by 2018, online working industry including VA service will be worth \$5 billion as the demand for online VA's continues to grow.

Hence, there is a great potential for remote business support providers (VAs) to establish a reputation and secure a future career and scalable business opportunity excelling as a VA.

Chapter 5.

Earnings and schedule of virtual assistants.

Virtual assistants are charging their clients either per hour, per month or project. It is absolutely up to them because, as I said earlier, freelancing is all about comfort and your own terms. So only you can set up your schedule, your rates and your packages.

As per statistics, VAs earn from 10\$ to 60\$ per hour. The top bar is 60 (USD) per hour and the lowest bar is \$10 (USD). Some virtual assistants are charging even \$5 (USD) per hour (you have probably seen the gigs on Fiverr and other platforms), but usually those are VAs (often from Asia where the currency difference makes 5\$ a feasible rate) that provide very limited services such as meetings scheduling, typing and phone/email answering.

\$60 is not in fact the highest bar but I would say it is an average bar. There are virtual assistants who are charging more than \$100 per hour. However, those are people who have long years of experience as a social media manager, strategist or funnel specialist and therefore, are able to showcase the portfolio of the platforms that they manage, successful blogs, or successful growth of followers for their business accounts or anything else similar to that. Their results are usually super-impressive; they are able to establish processes, advice and consult. That is the different level of business support and it takes time and effort to establish that high-level expert positioning. The good news that it is all doable with dedication, hard work and constant learning.

VAs are working according to their own timetable so clients and VAs usually have to discuss their needs and identify the right fit for both parties.

That means you have to outline first during which hours are you going to be available for work, how many hours per week you can dedicate to your clients. You will also have to discuss that with the client prior to

signing the contract so that disappointment and inconveniences can be avoided. In fact, that's the best way to secure the satisfactory relationship with your client.

Most virtual assistants are working during standard business hours (9 to 5). Others work around school drop-off and pick-ups. A lot of virtual assistants are stay-at-home moms or ladies who are on maternity leaves, or simply women who chose freelancing so that they can spend more time with their children.

Other virtual assistants work whenever you need them.

Those are people who can accommodate and don't mind working extra hours, or they have a lot of free time and they want to utilize it.

Again, it's all up to you which path or which mode you are going to choose. Make sure it really suits your needs; it really suits your timings so you can deliver high-quality work to the client.

You need to ensure you are fully available during the outlined hours to perform the VA services which you are offering/marketing.

I thought it would be interesting for you to learn the current virtual assistants` worldwide earning, what their gender is and what their involvement of busy hours is.

So, Virtual Assistant Networking Association ran a survey recently and 761 virtual assistants completed that survey. The findings say that the dominating gender of the virtual assistant industry right now is female

(the industry is dominated by women, yes:) Out of all surveyed virtual assistants working worldwide, 96% are women.

Men started considering the VA opportunity recently and there are male VAs offering their services already, but the number is still very small (around 3,5%).

Virtual assistance for more than half of the respondents is a full time business. That means that they don't do anything else except working

from home as a VA and they manage to generate constant flow of income.

41 % of the respondents said they are still doing it as a part time job. Usually, those are people who are still in transition mode (they still didn't quit their 9 to 5 jobs but they are slowly preparing the ground for it).

At first, most of these VAs are just “testing the water” and working part time for one or two clients in their free time in order to transform the VA business into full time later. That is a smart decision as that allows them to build a portfolio first, become known and visible online and earn a reputation. That way they will enter the VA world with everything set and ready for marketing their VA services and working for multiple clients simultaneously.

The same survey respondents reported that their average hourly rate is \$21-40\$ (majority of respondents). Less percentage said they charge 40 and above and around 3% said that they charge 80-100\$ per hour.

Chapter 6.

Soft Skills.

No matter how good you are in tech stuff and how quickly you type, it all loses the attractiveness if your English is weak or if you make mistakes when you write. English and communication are the foundation of your VA business success. You have to be really fluent in English, and even more so when it comes to your written English.

You have to know the business communication etiquette and rules of corporate correspondence. I always repeat during my classes that Virtual Assistants have no right to do mistakes as they are the ones who should find and correct them.

The ability to manage your time, working process and business flow as well as productivity habits are going to help you the most as a freelancer/solopreneur.

My VA program is split in three parts and the first part is dedicated solely to mindset transformation, productivity, business setup and management. If you won't know how to manage your own time and business, you will be also struggling to provide quality service to your clients.

Working at home seems really attractive, but few people understand the challenge of managing your own work, holding yourself accountable and responsible. As a VA, you won't have a boss, a manager, or a peer to control you; it will be completely managed by you. It sounds easy, but it can be quite challenging once you start.

My students reported mindset and self-management as one of the biggest challenges they faced during the beginning stage of their VA business.

Communication and networking, of course, are also extremely important. Those are the skills that will help your business grow, acquire new clients and retain the existing ones. You really need to master the art of building your network, approaching people and arouse their interest with your services and starting conversations.

Communication is everything in your VA business as you are the only service generator (you are working solo) and you are your brand ambassador at the same time. Being a great communicator will help you to increase visibility, online presence and make people like you, trust you and buy from you. Also, it is a vital part of client attraction and retention.

I would also like to mention listening as a skill which will be useful for you, not only for your virtual assistant business but for your life, too. Listening is very important for a virtual assistant because you need to know how to focus virtually on what your client is saying. Listen to understand, not to respond. If you do not listen carefully, you can actually make your working process harder. For example, if you didn't listen carefully to your client during the initial conversation, you are going to go back to the client and ask them the questions during your work, and that's the last thing the client wants to see from a virtual assistant. They are hiring you as a specialist so that you make their life easier, not more difficult. Most of the successful entrepreneurs that I have been interviewing for my Virtual Assistant program, said that the biggest turn-off factor in the process of working with a VA is a constant flow of questions asked in the working process. One of the interviewees said: "At some point you think, it is easier and faster to do the task yourself instead of responding to questions for 3 hours in total!"

Self-motivation and organization.

The ability to motivate yourself and organize your new life & working style is another part which is extremely important for a freelancer/solopreneur. You will need to establish a process to keep yourself going and have a person who will motivate you in the beginning (it might be yourself, as well). I would advise to adopt mindset exercises, mindfulness and positivity practices, and also know how to organize your day and organize your work without any supervision.

Practicing gratitude, eliminating impostor syndrome and self-doubts are the most useful challenges and exercises as per feedback of the students of my VA program.

Knowing how to work on your own, in the comfort of your own home can be a challenge for some people and the transition from employee to a freelancer can be quite difficult for the same reason.

Chapter 7.

Technical skill set.

There are more than 50 skills that are currently in demand and are mostly searched for by potential clients.

Of course, you don't have to know every single skill from the list that I am mentioning in this book in order to become a virtual assistant. You can pick a few of them; however, it is advised that you know at least the majority to some extent, as it will not only increase your earnings but will take your VA business to a different level as you can use the same skills to scale your own business. Remember, that a solopreneur that is building a scalable business from scratch relies mostly on his/her skills, mindset and productivity as business assets.

I will go through each skill and I will explain how that can be used in your work & solo service business as a virtual assistant.

Basic Accounting

It's understandable that some business owners can hire a VA to do their basic accounting stuff either for their personal life or for their business. If you're good with numbers, this calls for you :)

Advertisement Copy

A lot of business owners are hiring a VA to design their ads; it can be social media ads, digital ads or ads for media and materials. You need to know how to structure the text body of the ad and how to incorporate the necessary elements to ensure the audience's interest is caught.

Administrative Support

You have to know how to answer the calls, even though calls are becoming less and less in demand for virtual assistants these days. However, knowing how to speak with the clients' contacts over the phone, how to respond to their emails, schedule meetings, maybe some basic Excel contact list and drafting, travel itinerary, things which are usually performed by a secretary - that's called the admin support for VAs.

Adobe

It is advised that you know how to use Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop as there is a great chance that you will be working a lot with the visual posts (for your own business, Social Media platforms and materials, and for your clients). Learning the mentioned softwares is definitely going to be beneficial for your portfolio.

Blogging

One of the most in-demand VA services. Also, blogging VAs are those who charge the most. It's not easy to run a successful blog but learning to master researching, writing, keywords and SEO friendliness will definitely bring you huge rewards on the long term. There are a lot of hidden tricks and strategies that a blogging VA should know and knowing these will make you sought after by clients.

Bookkeeping

It's pretty much aligned with basic accounting. You need to know the simple tools and spreadsheets for bookkeeping, be familiar with softwares and be able to record the correct information and perform a basic analysis of it.

Business Development Support

This skill may involve researching, networking and basic PR as well as lead generation.

Calendar (Diary) Management

This is a simple task that almost everybody knows how to do these days. Perfecting it, learning some advanced time management and diary management for your supervisor will be definitely a benefit for your VA portfolio.

Graphic Designing

I would say basic knowledge is a must. You need to know how to create powerful visual posts and design materials with visuals. If not for your clients, then at least for your VA business presentation and online presence. If you have never done that, don't be scared; it's not as difficult as it may seem. During our course, we are teaching basic graphic design with the help of template-based software which allows you to create any kind of visual posts, marketing materials, email headers, HTMLs, postcards, event covers and so on.

Client management

Managing the contacts, communicating and following-up along with client relationship knowledge will add value to your service offerings.

Contact Management

Sorting the contact lists, compiling spreadsheets and filing the contacts.

Document Content and Copywriting

Copywriting is a “golden” skill for any VA. Not only it increases your earning power, but it also creates new opportunities for your business.

Learning how to write copy that sells every kind of materials is a great skill to acquire.

Customer Service

If you are going to talk to your clients and clients of your clients you need to know the strategies and tools for effective customer service.

Data entry.

This is a very basic task which usually is underpaid. However, adding it to your skills won't harm if you are a beginner.

Document Management and Filing

It's really important to know how to work with online repositories, clouds, storages, how to locate and group files in order to ease the search process for your client.

Membership Management

You need to learn first what a membership-based business is as these days a lot of business owners are creating their products on membership base access. You will need to know how to organize the membership, how to communicate with the members and how to maintain the platform.

EBook covers & Copy

A lot of business owners are writing books and eBooks to educate their audience about the concept, product or service and establish an expert positioning. Having a VA that can help with proofreading, editing, content structuring in addition to book cover design is definitely an attractive benefit.

Ghost-writing.

This is a unique skill and very few people can offer quality writing in this particular format. Ghost writing means providing written content based on the given outline.

Editing and Proofreading

These skills are mandatory for your business and as a service offering. As a VA you will be receiving a lot of raw draft documents, which you will need to edit, proofread and align.

Email Newsletters and Marketing

This skill requires a combination of understanding the audience, research, copywriting, graphic design and software knowledge. You should be able to produce content, create a logical connection between your emails and know how to segment the audience for those email communications.

Executive assistance

You need to know how to correspond on behalf of your supervisor, how to schedule their travel itinerary, how to manage their events and lifestyle, travel arrangements, etc.

Expense Reports

This goes pretty much together with bookkeeping and accounting. It is all about recording the correct data, structuring the information effectively and producing the basic analysis.

Social Media Management (SMM)

This is one of the most demanded and highly-paid skills for a VA. Also, it is one of those skills that you need to perfect, upgrade and master all the time! If you position yourself as an expert you have to be always up-to-date with the trends and changes, as well as keep consuming every piece of information available.

You need to know how to manage business pages, how to engage with audience and groups, how to design effective engaging posts, how to generate and schedule the content and how to interact with the users on the platforms (and that is just the top of the iceberg). There are a lot of things that VAs need to learn about social media management, but skipping that would mean losing the earnings. So I would strongly recommend you to learn it.

Most of my students come to the course saying that they already know what they will be offering their clients. Of course, SMM! It is as interesting, easy and attractive as a service. On the completion of the course usually only 40% of the group decides to keep SMM as their core service offer. It happens because the amount of work, learning and mastery that happens behind the scenes does not suit everyone.

Engagement with Clients

It has everything to do with communication, content design and client management.

Ads Setup and Monitoring

This is a purely digital marketing skill. You need to know how to setup, manage and run Facebook ads/Instagram/LinkedIn ads/Google Ads; how to target the correct audience and how to effectively design the campaigns that will attract and convert.

Funnels and Lead Magnet Design

My students say that these are the most difficult modules of our course but by the time we finish the course, all of them want to do Funnels and Lead Magnets for their clients!

I would say that they are the most rewarding skills. Also, it is a highly creative task with limitless creativity borders! Building funnels is an in demand, highly-paid task, but there is a lot that need to be learned before you can offer that as a service to your clients. And also, it allows you to create funnels for your own business and that means you are going to have more and more clients.

Creative HTML, Visual Posts, Illustrations

The skillset is in demand for the same reasons that I outlined above.

It is not a secret that attractive graphics are the keys to engagement.

Event Coordination is important.

A lot of business owners, even if they are not living in the UAE (international clients) might need your help with creating their event online, promoting it online, taking the registrations, following up, collecting RSVPs, sending the cards, etc. That also applies to offline, live events.

Invoicing

The ability to produce digital invoices is a valuable skill for any VA. Ability to focus and being extremely careful while entering the data is crucial.

Launch Strategy

Usually this skill is developed after a year or two of VA marketing experience (of course, depending on the VA niche). Strategic VAs are always in demand as their knowledge can help the beginning business

owners/entrepreneurs to avoid expensive mistakes. This one of those skills that takes your VA business to the next level, upgrades your earnings and gives you a different title (strategist, consultant, or maybe even a strategy coach).

Logo Designs, Media Kits

This is a combination of designing and copywriting skills. Branding material is a must for any kind of business and you can apply the same skill to design your own branding.

Meeting Agendas and Minutes

You can be typing minutes from a sent voice recording or you can be asked to attend the meeting via Zoom/Skype. Usually you will be asked to produce the document and send it to the attendees within a certain timeframe.

Microsoft Office

This is pretty understandable, isn't it? VAs need to be experts in MS because you are going to use that heavily every day.

Office Management

You need to know how to manage an e-Office, sort and group information, make it easily findable and be familiar with repository platforms (Box, Cloud, and DropBox etc.).

Project Management

This is also an in-demand skill. VAs sometimes are asked to manage a project and/or a small team. You will need to learn the dedicated softwares, techniques and boards, understand the concepts and systems.

This is a highly valuable skill for your VA business, too. (Launching each step of your VA business is a project).

PDFs, Presentations and Worksheets Design

That should be quite easy once you learn graphic designing and copywriting.

Press Releases

A combination of research, writing, editing and content packaging.

Sales Copy

I was mentioning this earlier, it's about writing copy that sells.

This is going to help your business tremendously and business of your clients, as well.

What makes selling successful, is the impression. Usually the impression is made with the help of appealing copy.

Landing Page

You need to know how to design the landing page for your business and for your clients. A landing page is a page of the website/dedicated software, which the advertisement of your services or client's services is leading to. So you need to know how to make it appealing, catchy and interesting for the people who are clicking on it.

SEO

I cannot say that you need to learn SEO in-depth because that is a career in itself. But, if you know at least how to produce the right tags,

keywords and how to describe the page/image correctly so that it can be found online, that's going to be really good for you.

Design of the Document Templates, Transcriptions, Travel Planning

I've spoken about the necessity of those skills earlier, but wanted to mention it as a separate block as a possible VA service offering (addition to the package).

Web Copy

The text body of the website page is often asked to be written by a VA by online entrepreneurs, small businesses and other solopreneurs.

Webinars

Scheduling, marketing and managing webinars is an in-demand skill for all VAs who're working with online business owners, especially educators and coaches. You need to know how to schedule the webinar, advertise it and organize it.

WordPress/Wix

Indispensable skill for any VA business and service offering. First of all, it gives you an ability to save costs and create your own website and maintain it. Also, you can offer your clients another service at affordable rates. This is one of the skills that requires tech learning and practicing, but it is all possible.

All of our VA program graduates design websites for themselves! (www.vabloom.com- is one of them)

Youtube

VAs are often asked to maintain or create a YouTube channel and

manage it after that. There are a lot of tricks, hacks and rules of “youtubeing” as it is a known tool for driving the free, quality traffic.

Video and Photo Editing

As social media popularity is increasing, the ability to produce quality visuals and video materials is also in demand.

As a summary...

Now, we have looked at 50+ technical skills of a VA.

You do not need to learn them all! But, if you want to become a highly paid VA and if you are planning to play big, I would advise you to consider acquiring most of them.

Our course graduates learn almost everything mentioned above within 58 hours! So only the sky is the limit, right?

Of course, they will need to perfect, practice and master their chosen “niche” and skills in the process, but it prepares them for work and for delivery of quality services immediately.

Chapter 8.

Freelancing in the UAE.

I will briefly explain what is the procedure of becoming a freelancer in the UAE. Most people think that freelancing is not permitted in the UAE.

Well, I've dived into really reliable local sources and publications - and I found out that freelancing in the UAE is permitted in various modes and you can choose the suitable terms.

If you are on husband/father visa, you will need to obtain an NOL from the local authority that issued the visa of your husband. If you want to do it as a part time job, you will need an NOL from your employer, allowing you to work part-time.

If you want to take it as a full-time online business and you don't have a husband or dependent Visa, you can acquire Freelance Visa from different UAE free zones. Abu Dhabi Media Zone Authority offers freelancing visas starting from 1, 250 AED (6 months) and there are many other free zones that you can choose from.

Or, you can actually start a business/startup and provide virtual assistance maybe with some other colleagues or friends who will become virtual assistants; that's very convenient and some of my students are already doing that in the UAE (www.facebook.com/yourvabloom). You will share the cost and you will provide services as a company, which will be accepted by some clients more positively.

Also, you can work remotely only with international clients. That would require a freelancing permit, too.

Chapter 9.

10 Step Process for your VA Business setup

Step 1

You need to have a business plan. Without a plan, it's going to be extremely difficult for you to follow the steps. You're definitely going to forget something or you're going to forget to follow up on an action item/communication which can have a big impact on your business.

Step 2

Acquire marketable skills. Remember that if you are not going to learn the in-demand skills, then the chances for you to earn a sufficient amount of money are really low and once you started offering your services online, it's really difficult later to change the personal branding and perceptions of your clients and referrals that come from them. Digital world remembers and records everything, which makes your reputation extremely important.

I would advise you to be really careful before you start offering your services and prepare everything thoroughly. Being a VA and working from home might be really appealing, and it's a really good opportunity – without a single doubt - but it requires a lot of ongoing learning, managing and strategic business scaling, and if you don't do that, most likely it's not going to work the way you want.

Step 3

Your Niche

After you learn the marketable skills, you need to identify your niche (core service offering and specialization). You can become a Digital Marketing VA, Copywriting VA, Social Media Manager, Branding Specialist, Ads Expert etc.

There are currently more than 72 titles that VAs adopt after identifying their niche. You can even create your own title! There are endless niches that you can specialize in.

After you've identified your niche and specialty, you can get yourself a title that will not even be a VA. It's absolutely up to you.

Step 4

Home office setup

It might sound not so important but finding a room - or at least a corner or workspace - where nothing will distract you and have all the equipment ready is going to save you a lot of time and make your day more productive.

Step 5

Client Profile

This is the foundation of your business and marketing. If you're not clear who you are targeting (who are you going to serve) then your business is going to suffer. You need to know whom you're selling to, what's the niche of your clients and where can you find them. You cannot sell to everyone and you cannot say that you can serve any kind of business owner because that simply doesn't work for an expert VA. It also affects your positioning which is closely aligned to the impression that your VA business creates. Also, VAs who are specialized in some niche and are serving a certain client niche, are usually able to charge more and scale their business faster.

If you are saying that you work only with business and life coaches, you are going to attract the mentioned category. Your potential clients will develop an understanding of your unique specialization which is exactly serving their business niche.

Identifying your client's profile is not an easy process and you don't need to rush with it. My students usually need around 3-4 weeks to

figure that out completely during the course. But I will give you now a hint if you want to do it yourself. There is an exercise which is called **Describing Your Ideal Client Profile** and you can find it online in various formats. That is one of the ways to initiate your potential client selection and that is the first step towards future client targeting and approaching.

Step 6

Defining your services

When you're designing your portfolio and service offerings, you need to list in a very detailed manner which services you can provide. Here you need to be really careful in order to promise only something which is really doable and deliverable. Make sure your skills are developed at the required level to start serving your clients and you have access to the required tools, softwares and templates.

Step 7

Your profiling, presence and visibility.

You will need to create the platforms for your VA business to ensure you are visible. That way people will know how to find you and your portfolio will be easily accessible. Ideally you have some testimonials to show (you can collect them during beta-testing stage), completed projects, screen-shots - that is the groundwork that a VA needs to do. I would also advise to start exploring the relevant forums and groups, participate in discussions, help others and start positioning yourself as an expert in your niche so that once you advertise your VA services, you'll already have warm potential clients' leads, which you will only need to nurture and convert.

Step 8

Legal Setup

You have to obtain the necessary legal licenses and permits in the UAE before you start advertising and earning.

Step 9

Marketing your services

You have to create a marketing strategy for your VA business with a plan as marketing your services is extremely important and you should be really careful how you do that and how you present it. I mentioned above that your reputation is important as well as your personal branding. Make sure your platforms` content, visibility and presence are strategized and thought-through. Again, planning - that is one of the most important tasks you should do before launching your VA business.

Step 10

Mindset Transformation.

Patience, gratitude and self-awareness.

The first part of my course is focusing on the student`s mindset. If you don`t transform your mindset and you start working as a VA with employee mindset, that won't bring too many satisfying results for you.

Most likely, you are going to stress more, earn less and end up creating another job for yourself. That's not what a VA business is about. A VA business is about freedom, flexibility and the lifestyle that you want to create for you and your family.

All of us have lots of skills, abilities, capabilities, experience and we can monetize those so that we can live how we choose to.

But, usually because of the self-doubts, lack of confidence and lack of self-awareness people usually experience worry, anxiety and inability to see what they can accomplish during the VA business. That is why I recommend you to crush your fears and doubts and gain the required confidence before you start your business. You need to learn how to position yourself as an expert, speak with authority and manage your business as a CEO.

You must adopt the growth mindset in order to bring the desired number of clients and income. It's all about you and the way you think because if you are not going to break that, then it's going to be shown in your work, your talk and your positioning. It's going to be presented as lack of confidence in your communication, or you will be afraid to be visible, or to give expert advises and that's going to ruin all the work that you have done.

Everything starts with the mindset. Self-doubt is a major block and in some cases people cannot even start their VA business as they're afraid to post and market themselves. Doubts are stopping them from their success as the fear of failure is paralyzing them.

In general, fear of failure is a "woman thing".

We ask ourselves: "Am I good enough? Do I really know everything? Will people comment? Will people reject me?"

Please remember that those are the blocks that are stopping people from being successful. Also, learning and mastering your knowledge and skills are going to boost your confidence and help you crush your fears and doubts.

Chapter 10.

Where do VAs find clients?

This is the most asked question by the beginners and by all of my new students. Before I explain the places to go to, I would like to first explain the reasons of hiring Vas. It's important to understand why a business owner or organization would hire you.

So, business owners hire VAs because they either lack time, skills or the tools to do the job. Also, they need another "pair of eyes", partner and colleague to advise, guide and assist them. VAs are saving businesses two most valuable assets: time and money.

Normally you are earning businesses' money by saving them time because when somebody's hiring a freelancer he's taking a ready talent, somebody who is really experienced, somebody who is an expert for what he/she is doing so you are saving a lot of time which results in them saving money. Also, you are saving the hiring costs (visa, insurance, office space, car/phone/gas allowances etc.).

Also, you are drastically reducing the learning curve so they don't need to train you, they don't need to guide you. They know that you are going to take the project and you are going to deliver it exactly according to their expectations. Also, they are hiring you because you have the talent that they need to make their business succeed in the online world.

Another valid point is the access to tools. As a VA, you are using a lot of useful modern softwares and applications, you have a lot of resources ready to access and you might have some particular developer licenses purchased, also you might be a member of some support networks, you are always on top of the industry trends, you know the latest tricks, you know the tips, and all of that usually is not really something that an average corporate worker would have because you are going much in depth and you are becoming an expert, indeed.

So WHERE?

Freelancing platforms

Most of beginning VAs heavily rely on finding clients via freelancing platforms. My personal opinion is that it can be an option only at the beginning of your journey (in case the other strategies failed) or you can have it as a back-up. Never make the freelancing platform your fulltime earning expectation because eventually you are going to be disappointed. Those platforms are splitting your earnings (as they make a living from the commissions paid) and provide you with clients that are rarely going to turn into retaining. Do not forget the fierce competition with 5\$ per hour service providers!

When I was interviewing entrepreneurs before launching the VA program, one of the questions asked was :"Do you hire your VAs through Fiverr/Upwork/Freelancer etc.?"

Unfortunately, most of the answers sounded like :"Not anymore, I learned that you get "what you pay for". I would rather pay more, but get the desired quality".

A number of freelancers registering there are not really having the experience/skills they claim, and it is really difficult to stand out from that crowd and proof that you are different.

Also, you cannot really charge what you are worth or what your talent is worth because of the high competition. You will have to offer a "competitive" rate based on the average.

However, in the beginning or as a back-up, you can use that option.

Dedicated JobBoards. There are online boards where entrepreneur business owners are posting their ads of virtual assistants, social media manager, marketing assistants, remote workers, etc., and I used to get the job posts out of those boards for my first batch of students to recommend to. Now we are often contacted by businesses asking us to refer our VA graduates to them (if you are a member of Dubai Virtual Assistants Community -Facebook group, you have probably seen those).

Facebook and LinkedIn + Relevant Groups

Right now social media groups tend to be the best sources for finding high paying, retaining clients given you have done well all the ground work mentioned earlier. Once you identify your niche and client's profile, you'll definitely know where to find them online.

After you learn the techniques of VA service pitching, you can approach your client and offer without selling, help and assistance and then later converting that long-term relationship into a long-term contract.

Pitching your services should be done in a strategic, non-pushy manner and it is an art that each VA needs to master.

Spamming people with your pitch is going to negatively impact on your reputation, turn your audience and potential clients off and create an undesired impression about your expertise.

Make sure your communication is professional everywhere and your online presence is focused not on purely "selling". In online world you should learn how to "give" to be able to "receive".

Referrals

Referrals are the best and the most pleasant source of getting clients because once you delivered a great piece of work to one of your clients, in most cases that person is going to refer you in the places like thematical forums or to their friends, to their contacts. If you delivered what you promised, you are going to have a lot of referrals.

You can also ask your friends and social network for referrals! Those sources are also extremely useful.

Local Businesses.

There are a lot of strategies to approach local businesses and even if they didn't think about hiring a virtual assistant, you can actually offer them a package of services which can solve their problem and pain.

Create an irresistible offer, prove your ability to deliver and position yourself as an expert (again!). And believe me, very few businesses will

refuse your help if you really can deliver the results (proven by RiseAssist VA Students).

Network = Net worth

I highly recommend mastering the art of online (LinkedIn/Facebook/Quora) and offline networking and building the relevant connections because that is the place where you are going to approach the new clients with bigger titles, as much as you will develop your profile and portfolio. Knowing how to approach them, knowing how to offer your services is extremely important and you have to be very careful there because it is very easy to lose a lead due to one small communication mistake.

Traffic

And the last, but not the least tool is traffic, which you should be driving to your profile/page/website; of course, it takes a lot of work, time, and knowledge to drive that traffic wisely and to attract the right audience, and again it all starts with identifying your client's profile. Once you master that and once you learn the tools for driving the quality traffic you are going to get the warm leads (people which are searching for your services or could potentially use them) instead of you going out there and searching for them.

Chapter 11.

Pre-launch work.

In this section you will learn the steps that you need to take before you will start working as a virtual assistant and also I'm giving you here a really good bonus: an extract from our virtual assistant program to help you identify your profile – **VA Success Formula**.

Success formula includes your target customer (think who you will be serving) and the current problem of your current customer (what you can help them with).

Please remember that people pay only for their immediate needs, so you need to know well which urgent problems are your target clients having right now.

After you identify both, you need to come up with a solution (how are you going to solve their immediate burning problems).

If you combine those three points and you will select them carefully, there is a great chance to start a successful VA business.

I would also advise you to write down in a notebook which skills do you have that will help your clients to solve their current urgent problems and what is the expected result (estimation).

So, before launching your VA business, perform the following steps:

1- Start with mindset transformation and make that an ongoing process (work on your mindset every day!).

2- Go ahead and crush your business fears.

If you are afraid that you are not going to make the sufficient amount of money, or that your services will not be in demand,

start by working on yourself first to get your confidence and then continue.

3- Define your working schedule. You have to decide which days you will be working, which hours, how many hours per month you will be available, how many clients can you serve - that is very important.

4- Assess your skills set.

5- Acquire the missing skills. Again, it is extremely important to have all the marketable skills in order to start working as a virtual assistant and generate the desired income.

6- Define your service offering - basically you have to design your packages and VA services on offer.

7- Narrow down your audience selection. I highly recommend making it as narrow as possible because that is what will bring you that list of high paying clients which are going to stay with you for a long time as soon as you figure out the niche. I always tell my students that choosing your niche and audience is just like writing a PhD thesis. In the beginning you want to write about everything, but, in process you are narrowing the topic down until you come up with a small existing gap that your knowledge can fill and figure your topic out!

8- Identify which pain points of your clients you can solve.

9- Define your VA business positioning.

10-Define your financial goals.

Write everything down, keep your goals in front of you! Go back and look at them every day because that is what will keep you going; that is what will keep you motivated.

11-Define your message, niche, domain and elevator pitch.

Decide what you are going to say about yourself and your VA services, and how you're going to attract your clients. Your elevator pitch and message is the key of client attraction. Identifying your niche and domain is going to help you to minimize the effort to get your high paying clients.

12-Design your own VA business success formula.

13-Start becoming visible and show up online.

Provide valuable advice and support in relevant groups, interact and network, start conversations and connect with people. If you start applying those advises, you will have your own audience before offering your services and that's so precious because those are all people who can potentially become your client or refer a client to you!

Chapter 12.

The transition from employee to freelancer

You can, of course, choose to do this the way you want and it's not necessary to follow my advice; but I find it the safest and most comfortable approach for beginners who are transitioning from employee to freelancer after analyzing the success patterns, researching the trends and demand.

First of all, **complete the ground work** before launching your business and before taking the VA business to full-time mode.

Beta test! If you don't know what that means, you will be working for some clients in the beginning for free or for very low rates in exchange of testimonials and honest feedback.

Run that beta testing before charging for your services! See what people say about your work. You might need to improve, or change/add something to your offering or maybe improve your skillset. Beta testing results will save you from a lot of expensive mistakes in future while running your full-time VA business.

I always tell my students to test the waters before making VA your full-time business. I recommend you to take one or two clients and do a couple of hours per week for them to see if this is really something you can do full-time, if it's convenient for you and if you can get passionate about it. It's important to have passion in this business in order to grow it and make it something sustainable. Don't put pressure on yourself; this journey is your way to relax not to stress more. If you feel it is too much to handle and maintain- you might reconsider taking this career route.

Chapter 13.

Personal Tips and reminders.

Remember why you started.

It's very important to remember why the solopreneurial journey is important to you, what this business can change in your life, what it can bring to you and why going on is important. Your goals and your own personal reasons will keep you going and keep you motivated.

Remember, you didn't start the VA journey to make your life worse; you started it to make it better and to make yourself more comfortable. So, if you are feeling that it's even more pressurizing for you than the corporate job, I think that you shouldn't do it because the purpose of this whole thing is to make you live on your own terms; to make you more relaxed and enjoy life.

Focus on becoming an expert and positioning yourself as one!

Read, learn, ask and communicate with like-minded people. Never stop learning and keeping your knowledge up-to-date.

Work hard on your platforms` attractiveness and visibility.

So, your platforms, your blogs, your website; it will be better if they are all perfected long before you take the VA business to full-time mode. Driving the right traffic and attracting the right audience takes time. It will cost you some mistakes, some failures in the beginning, disappointments; you have to go through all that before you start doing your VA business full time.

And the last advice, **don't commit for more than eight hours a week in the beginning.** Believe me, that is not going to be convenient for you and you're going to stress yourself even more. In the beginning you will spend a lot of time doing the first tasks. You will do a lot of research, testing, validating and verifying - maybe you will do many revisions as well. Eight hours is the perfect number of hours for you to not feel stressed and at the same time, to be able to deliver the right quality work to the client in order not to spoil your VA reputation.

Conclusion.

I think I have covered everything I promised in this book. I really hope it was useful for you.

If you would like to stay only for exploring the VA opportunity, feel free to join our meet-up and Facebook community and you will be kept updated about what's happening in our community. You'll receive free pieces of advice every day, too.

Thank you so much for reading this book. I really appreciate your time and attention and I'm wishing you every success in your solopreneurial beginnings.

I sincerely hope that one day, your virtual assistance will become your business and you will be extremely happy that you started this journey.

If you found the book useful, please help us to spread the word about it by writing a brief review on our facebook page: www.facebook.com/riseassist and sharing the link with your friends!



Thank you!

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