

How to Find Clients for Your VA Business



Written by Erin Blaskie
The VA Coach
www.thevacoach.com

How to Find & Get Clients for Your Virtual Assistance Business

This short e-book will help you find clients for your VA business. There are two parts. The first part includes two steps we encourage you to take before actually going out to get clients. The second part includes the different means of finding clients.

Let's get started!

Step One

The first thing you'll want to do is create a professional profile. A professional profile tells prospective clients more about you in a professional and concise manner. If you are just starting your business and you don't yet have any clients, you will need a professional profile to send to clients.

A professional profile can be one of two things. First, it can be your website. Your website should showcase your knowledge, your skills, your expertise and how you will help that person solve their problems. If you have a website up, send your potential clients to it so that they can learn more about you before committing to working with you.

Second, it can be a resume style profile. Now, the resume style profile is not like a standard resume. While it will contain a lot of the same information, you want to resonate a more professional feel and put the emphasis on your skills and attributes.

Here's an example of my professional profile:

Erin Blaskie

Professional Profile

Erin Blaskie is a hard-working, determined and motivated professional. She is constantly going beyond the call of duty to maximize her time and to find ways to increase the efficiency in her position and motivate others around her. She has exceptional communication skills and excellent customer service standards which set her apart from the rest.

As a business owner who created a successful business from the ground up, she is always thinking about what is best for the company she is employed by and how she can help drive the business forward to reach and exceed their anticipated goals.

Erin Blaskie holds a diploma in Business Administration and has been educated in the fields of accounting, advertising, public relations and marketing. She has taken her MOUS (Microsoft Office User Specialist) Exams. She is also a Certified VUE Test Center Administrator. Erin also holds a valid security clearance at the Secret level.

Professional History

Business Services, E.T.C.

August 2004 – Present

“Giving Business Owners Freedom by Managing the BS, etc.”

Founder / Business Services Specialist

- Created the business plan for an administrative support company and executed the plan into a full-fledged and successful company.
- Perform various tasks for numerous clients across Canada, the US and the UK all within the realm of administrative and executive support.
- Responsible for all executive decisions in marketing, accounting and human resources.
- Also responsible for managing the sales department and sourcing and retaining new clients.

Willis College of Business & Technology

March 2004 – February 2005

“Willis College maintains a corporate mission statement to provide a quality adult educational learning environment where the creative interests and development of our clients are paramount.”

Public & Internal Relations Advisor / Student Services Administrator / Instructor

- As an Instructor; developed core curriculum for the Business Administration diploma program with other instructors and implemented the curriculum through teaching. Was also responsible for the grading of all assignments and exams.
- As the Student Services Administrator; recorded and reviewed attendance and grades of the students to ensure compliancy with Ministry of Education standards. Prepared diplomas and transcripts for issuance. Ordered all of the textbooks and learning materials and kept inventory of all items.
- As the Public & Internal Relations Advisor; performed executive assistance to the President of the college and managed all contact with media personnel.

Club Assist of North America

September 2002 – March 2004

“Club Assist is committed to providing world leading automotive replacement services to Automotive Club members, adding to the strong service standards of the Clubs they represent.”

Executive Assistant to the CEO / Travel Coordinator / Accounting Clerk / Marketing Coordinator / Human Resources Assistant / Administrative Assistant

- As the Executive Assistant to the CEO; produced and distributed various reports. Maintained and managed calendars and set up all required appointments. Sat in on all meetings to record minutes for company-wide distribution.
- As the Travel Coordinator; performed all travel coordination for over twenty sales professionals who traveled various locations every month. Restructured the corporate travel policy for North America. Set up travel accounts with various companies to maximize our savings and future benefits.

- As an Accounting Clerk; account and department coded all incoming accounts payables. Prepared manual cheques and recorded them in the appropriate cheque register. Processed all employee expense reports and implemented a more efficient way of handling expenses.
- As the Marketing Coordinator; was responsible for the ordering and inventorying of all marketing supplies company-wide. Created an Access database to track the movement of inventory. Created forms for our sales professionals to use when requiring marketing materials.
- As the Human Resources Assistant; restructured and distributed a new employee handbook to be used across Canada. Sat on a human resources team that met bi-monthly to discuss employee incentives, ways to boost team spirit and how to improve overall efficiency.
- As the Administrative Assistant; was responsible for the organization of the office including supply ordering, filing, answering phones, relaying messages and mail distribution. Was also responsible for training new hires.

TRM Technologies Inc.

November 2001 – September 2002

“TRM Technologies, Inc. is an Ottawa, Ontario-based information technology, systems engineering and consulting firm with a vertical strength in communications and network architecture.”

Administrative Assistant

- Responsible for the organization of the office including office supply ordering, filing, answering phones, relaying messages and mail distribution.
- Responsible for editing and revising all of the resumes for our potential candidates.
- Reviewed RFPs (Request for Proposals) that came into TRM and matched the RFP to the proposal to ensure we were following all of the required guidelines.
- Booked all required travel arrangements for the employees at TRM.
- Provided executive assistant, when required, to the President.

Education

Willis College of Business & Technology
St. Lawrence College

Business Administration Diploma
Advertising & Public Relations

Professional Development

Business Education Certificate
Bookkeeping Course & Financial Management
Simply Accounting for Windows 8.0 & 8.5
OSAP Financial Aid Office Seminar
Microsoft Office User Specialist Certified
Certified VUE Test Center Administrator

Renfrew, Ontario
Ottawa, Ontario
Ottawa, Ontario
Toronto, Ontario
Ottawa, Ontario
Ottawa, Ontario

Professional Abilities

Software:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Microsoft Office Suite | • Adobe Creative Suite | • Keyboarding: 102 WPM |
| • Windows & Mac OS | • Simply Accounting | • Microsoft Great Plains |
| • Business Vision (Acct) | • WordPerfect | • Transcription Software |

- Dreamweaver
- FTP Software
- Microsoft FrontPage

Web-Based Technologies:

- Merx (Public Tenders)
- Type Pad / Word Press
- 1ShoppingCart
- Constant Contact
- Aweber
- Authorize.net
- Get Response
- Skype
- Clickbank

Community Involvement

Leader of the Ottawa Valley Book Club	Renfrew, Ontario
Volunteer Work via the Ottawa Valley Book Club	Various Locations
Volunteer at the Bonnechere Manor Retirement Home	Renfrew, Ontario
Missionary on an Excursion to the Dominican Republic	Yamasa, DR
Cisco Systems Bluesfest Volunteer (Gold Circle)	Ottawa, Ontario
Coordinator of Ottawa Food Bank Fundraiser	Ottawa, Ontario

Professional Achievements

- Worked on a team with other sales professionals on a proposal that was successful in winning a substantial government contract
- Created Business Services, E.T.C. and turned it into a full-time venture within six months of inception

References

Readily available upon request

Step Two

The second step is to round up testimonials. These can be testimonials from either past or current clients, past or current employers or leaders of specific organizations you may be a member of.

Testimonials are important because they showcase the satisfaction levels of past and current clients. They also build trust and credibility with your potential clients. If you have a website, you should always showcase your testimonials on your site.

If you don't yet have a website but you have a lot of great testimonials, put together a one sheet that is called 'Read What Our Clients Say...' and include that with your professional profile.

If you find it odd to collect testimonials from previous or current employers, have them write up a reference letter instead and include parts of that either on your website or on your one-sheet.

You can see examples of testimonials here: <http://bsetc.ca/blog/bsetc-clients-who-we-serve/testimonials/>

Methods to Finding Clients

Finding clients can seem to be a fairly daunting task and it can feel like trying to find a needle in a haystack. However, it can be easy to find these clients IF you know where to look.

Not all of these methods will work for you and you might find that some work far better than others. Finding clients is about finding a rhythm and once you find a couple of good clients from one source, it's about consistency and outreach.

The other thing I want to stress again is that this list is not all-inclusive. You also need to combine these methods with the marketing methods you should be incorporating into your business as well. The thing in business is that not just one avenue will work. You need to be everywhere and reaching out to every possible avenue to really gain traction in this industry.

So, let us know look at ten of the ways that you can find clients.

1. Referrals

Referrals make up 90% of all of my new business. Referrals are a great way to gain new clients because they are fairly easy to get and so long as you are doing a great job, they will keep coming in!

What you should do, especially in the start-up phases of your business, is tell everyone you know that you are starting a business, tell them what you do, how you can help your target market and include information if you plan on offering a referral program.

A referral program can encourage people to spread the word about you and your services. Basically, a referral program works like this. Your friend, colleague, client, etc. tells someone about you and introduces you to him/her. Once that person becomes a client, you give the referrer a special bonus.

The special bonus can be whatever you choose but generally speaking, what works well, is a monetary bonus. I used to give referrers a \$50 bonus for new business but that might be too high for you in the beginning. Instead, start at \$20 or \$25 or even a \$10 Starbucks gift card. It can be anything and the more fun you make it, the more referrals you'll receive.

2. Traditional Marketing

Traditional marketing is a great tool to use to gain new business. The reason being that a lot of people are still using traditional marketing in their business plans. This could be something like a press release or it could be taking out an ad in the yellow pages.

The thing with traditional marketing is that you need to try things out and test it to see if it is working. Ask people, if they are new inquiries, where they heard about you and how they found out about your business. This way, you can measure the success of each campaign.

Traditional marketing should not be used as a stand alone effort and on a broader level, none of these should be. Use this in conjunction with other efforts to see maximum results.

3. Social Networking

Social networking does fall into our internet marketing category but it is an important tool to gaining new business. I'm hosting a free teleseminar on the subject tomorrow so for those of you who are interested in learning more, you can sign up at www.va-teleseminars.com.

If you are going to start with just one social networking site, get on Facebook.com. Facebook is wonderful because it has groups that you can join to network and market to. There are very specific groups like virtual assistant groups and there are broader groups that focus on targeted areas. If you join the groups that your target market belongs to, you just might find that these people ask you about your services.

If you do join, add me as a friend by searching for Erin Blaskie. Once you become a contact of mine, take a look at how I maximize my profile. I have a spot on there for list building and an area to showcase my blog posts right on my Facebook profile.

Other sites you can look at joining include Zaadz, Ryze, Naymz, Linked In, Squidoo, Stumble Upon, Technorati, Digg, etc. MySpace is another huge site that actually allows you to build mini business profiles to showcase your business on their site.

4. Apply to Work With a VA Firm

Virtual assistant firms are a wonderful way to grow your business, gain experience and get exposure to working with clients without putting yourself out there and without encountering a whole lot of risk.

VA sites are also a great place to learn new skills as a lot of the VAs who own these firms are willing to train their assistants on other things. Sometimes, the VA who owns the firm is willing to train their VAs free of charge as well!

Some of the VA firms I have heard about or used in the past are:

- My VA Site – www.bsetc.ca – we're always looking for new, great talent on our team.
- Team Double Click – <http://teamdouclick.com>
- Peggy Murrah & Associates – <http://www.peggymurrah.com>
- Multiple Streams Dream Team - <http://www.multiplestreamsteam.com/>
- Hot Pink Assistants - <http://www.hotpinkassistants.com/>
- VA Matchmaker – www.vamatchmaker.com

Just remember though, when you do work with these VA teams, treat it like you would any other professional experience. I have heard horror stories in the past about some VAs stealing business from their fellow VAs and I can't stress enough that (a) there is enough business for all of us and (b) you need to have a good network of VAs to build your business and grow as a business owner.

5. Website!

Your website will become one of the most important places to gain new clients. In the virtual world, your website is your online portfolio, it's your place to build trust and credibility and it's a place for you showcase your abilities and your personality before someone ever talks to you on the phone or in person.

Don't minimize the importance of your website either. Make sure to make the most of it and do your homework. Spend some time looking up popular keywords using a service such as WordTracker.com and incorporate those

into your site. Also, if you have a blog, make sure to blog regularly and blog about things that your ideal client may be searching for.

Also, make sure that your contact information is readily available on your website. I've seen too many websites where the contact information was either hard to find or not on the website at all! If you make it hard for people to contact you, then you won't see much activity from your site.

One great way to test your website as well is to create a special e-mail address that is used just for inquiries that come in through the website. For example, inquiries@yourdomain.com. This way, you can see how many requests come in that way as opposed to alternative methods.

6. Craigslist.org

This is a growing trend in finding business for your virtual assistance business. Check your local Craigslist for potential opportunities and check worldwide as well!

Once you get to the main page at Craigslist.org, you'll choose your state or province. Then, you'll see a whole column that is devoted to jobs and they have broken these jobs down by category.

When looking for opportunities, make sure that you are making your mark! Be unique and 100% professional. What works well is to respond to a posting with a nice letter that states who you are, why you have chosen to be a virtual assistant, a short blurb about virtual assistance or a link back to your website, your skill set and your contact information.

Avoid posting just a short description about yourself. Come across as a professional and avoid coming across as being desperate for clients. Instead, offer your services, how you can help them and treat it like any other potential client interaction.

One word of caution – watch for scams. They exist out there and if anyone is looking for money before you do work for them, chances are it is a scam. Steer clear and be sensible.

7. Online Bidding Sites

Sites such as Elance.com or Guru.com can be a good resource when you are first starting. However, with the infiltration of overseas providers, it has become more and more difficult to get clients at a decent rate.

That being said, try out these websites for one month. They will require that you setup a paid account but if you try it for one month, it will be well worth it to see whether or not you get any business from it.

I earned a couple thousand dollars from it but that was back when it first launched and it wasn't infiltrated with overseas providers.

Here are a few sample responses that I used at Elance.com and Guru.com to win projects. Keep in mind, these were used back in 2004 so the dollar amount is much different than it would be today (and I had just started my business and was trying to get any client I could!).

Bid Responses for Elance, Guru, etc.

Transcription (Audio)

Good day! Our company, Business Services, E.T.C., provides transcription to companies and business professional across Canada, the US and the UK. Our rate per audio hour is \$40.00 for one – two speakers. Our rate for additional speakers is \$45.00 per audio hour. We provide a turn around time of 24 hours per audio hour. We transcribe the audio into Microsoft Word (unless otherwise requested) and we complete all proofing before we submit the final documentation. Our experience with transcription includes transcribing teleseminars, teleclasses, live seminars, business meetings, telephone conversations, and more. We have experience with medical and legal terminology and we are very familiar with all business terms. We welcome your questions on our service and we invite you to visit our website as seen in our Elance profile. Our website also includes all feedback on our work and you can also check out the feedback here on Elance. Thank you for this opportunity to bid and good luck choosing a winning bidder!

Customer Support via E-mail

Good day! Our company, Business Services, E.T.C., provides customer support via e-mail for companies efficiently and cost-effectively. Our rate per hour for customer support is \$12 USD per hour. We provide a 24-hour (or less) response time on all e-mails through the weekday and a 36-hour (or less) response time on all e-mails during the weekend. We do our best to ensure we are always available to your customers. We are excellent at crafting pre-written responses if you do not have any to ensure rapid response rates and we can set up our e-mail accounts to handle any volume of e-mail. We currently provide e-mail customer support to three different companies for their online products. We take the time to learn your product so that we can better assist your customers. Please feel free to visit our website to learn more about us and feel free to review the feedback on our website and online here at Elance. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to let me know. Sincerely, Erin Lamarche-Blaskie for Business Services, E.T.C. Thank you for this opportunity to bid and good luck choosing a winning bidder!

General Administrative Assistance – Very Basic

Good day! Our company, Business Services, E.T.C., provides administrative support via e-mail for companies efficiently and cost-effectively. Our rate per hour for administrative support for a project of this scope is \$10 USD per hour. We work with you to ensure we have the same expectations on turn around time, deliverables and we are always open for communication. Please feel free to review our feedback here on Elance and please view our feedback on our website at bsetc.ca. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to let me know. Sincerely, Erin Lamarche-Blaskie for Business Services, E.T.C. Thank you for this opportunity to bid and good luck choosing a winning bidder!

General Administrative Assistance – Intermediate

Good day! Our company, Business Services, E.T.C., provides administrative support via e-mail for companies efficiently and cost-effectively. Our rate per hour for administrative support for a project of this scope is \$12 USD per hour. We work with you to ensure we have the same expectations on turn around time, deliverables and we are always open for communication. Please feel free to review our feedback here on Elance and please view our feedback on our website at bsetc.ca. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to let me know. Sincerely, Erin Lamarche-Blaskie for Business Services, E.T.C. Thank you for this opportunity to bid and good luck choosing a winning bidder!

General Administrative Assistance – Advanced

Good day! Our company, Business Services, E.T.C., provides administrative support via e-mail for companies efficiently and cost-effectively. Our rate per hour for administrative support for a project of this scope is \$15 USD per hour. We work with you to ensure we have the same expectations on turn around time, deliverables and we are always open for communication. Please feel free to review our feedback here on Elance and please view our feedback on our website at bsetc.ca. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to let me know. Sincerely, Erin Lamarche-Blaskie for Business Services, E.T.C. Thank you for this opportunity to bid and good luck choosing a winning bidder!

8. Networking

Get out there and network! Make sure to have business cards on hand all of the time and pass them out as needed to those who might be interested. This is a great way to spread the word about your business.

The best types of events to attend are locally based networking events. Our local town hosts a two to three day business convention where you can go and meet local business people. This is a great way to connect with your local audience.

9. Respond to RFPs

Many of the forums that exist for virtual assistants offer an area for clients looking to hire a VA to post an RFP or a Request for Proposal. What this means is that the client is looking for responses (proposals) for their requested project / on-going needs.

Here is a great checklist to make sure you are including everything in your RFP response.

http://www.morebusiness.com/templates_worksheets/checklists/d926540626.brc

Here are some of the sites that I have seen which post RFPs:

<http://www.virtualassistantnetworking.com/join.htm>

<http://www.mediamage.com/cvaforum/>

<http://www.iavoa.com/>

10. Visit Your Chamber of Commerce

Your Chamber of Commerce can be a very valuable resource for you. Not only can you find out about possible networking opportunities, they sometimes also offer free business consultations. These consultations can give you valuable advice on finding clients locally.

Be sure also to find out if they have a place that you can post an advertisement or at least pin up some business cards. The more places you can do this, the better.

The thing to remember about finding clients is that they can be anywhere so always be prepared. Have business cards on hand because you could find your first client in a hair salon, the golf course or the grocery store. I've actually met many of my clients while on an airplane so just be prepared.

Good luck!

About Erin Blaskie, The VA Coach – www.thevacoach.com



In 2004, I launched [my virtual assistance business](#). I was 21 years old and I was teaching business administration at a private college. I would leave my house at 6 am, drive 1.5 hours to work, work for 8 hours and drive 1.5 hours back home to get back at 6 pm. I had no time for my family, no time for myself and certainly no time to focus on my business.

When I began my business, I had no idea how to begin, how to attract clients, what I needed to do and who I needed to contact to make these things happen. With my hectic schedule, I was also working late into the night, trying to get it all to come together. Fortunately for me, I met some key players right away who helped set me straight on exactly what it was I needed to be doing to take my business to the next level.

When I launched my business, I set a goal of being completely self-employed within one year. Within six months, I quit my full-time job at the private college where I was working and I put all of my focus and energy into my VA business. Within one year from that date, I doubled my income and I began working with some of the top internet marketers.



The following year, I helped two companies sell their businesses and I began working on my business processes and methodologies that I wasn't using before and my income doubled again. I also began working with the crème de la crème. During that year, I traveled (all expenses paid of course) to North Carolina, Los Angeles, Las Vegas and the Bahamas. My client visits were frequent and a lot of fun!

This year, my business literally exploded.

I am now working with people like [Sheri McConnell](#), [Lorrie Morgan-Ferrero](#), [Viki Viertel](#), [Lisa Manyon](#), [Christina Merkley](#) and many, many other highly prolific individuals whom I love working for. I am also still working with the clients I worked with when I first began my business.

I've also been creating products and finding alternative ways to earn passive income. Working with the best entrepreneurs allows me to gain inside knowledge into the easiest and the fastest ways to earn money.



I took my very first personal vacation this year since beginning my business and my husband and I went to the Caribbean for a week of pleasure AND I still earned money while I was away! Does life really get any better than that?

My business has changed immensely and things got SO much easier once I figured it out. I figured out the best way to go from point A to point Z with little to no effort. That is why I want to coach other VAs. I want to help you get your business started and operational and I want to help you to earn the most money possible.

I want to be the person that I didn't have when I started my business... If I had someone like me, I would've made it to where I am much more quickly.

Thank you for stopping by. I wish you much success in beginning your virtual assistance business and I hope I can be a part of that...

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Erin Blaskie". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Erin Blaskie
The VA Coach