

What does it take?
by Barbara Best
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I had never been an entrepreneur before; I had always gone out to work and in more recent years, I was a corporate person in a management position.

Then one day, the inevitable layoff. The short version of this story is that as it turns out, it was the best thing they could have done for me. Shortly after the layoff, and after some soul-searching, I decided that I wasn't going to be laid off ever again; I was going to own a business and be a Virtual Assistant. Sounds simple, doesn't it? I was scared of that unknown, but was also daring myself to do it at the same time.

I can remember how excited I was when I went down to the Provincial Courthouse to register my business. I had all my marketing material done, domain name chosen, services identified, I learned what networking was, and by jove, I was going to make this work!

And I did make it work. Sure, there were bumps along the way here and there, a lot of successes and opportunities to learn, but I consistently reached my goal of 50% or more revenue growth every year.

In a few months, I'll be renewing that business license, a mere 5 years later. It's gone by in a blink. What did it take to get from then to now? Commitment and perseverance. You can read all of those business books, all the motivational books, take questionnaires and do tons of research, but in my opinion, it comes down to those two things, plain and simple. Of course, you can add on to this by including things like the Law of Attraction, having faith, support of family and friends, etc which are all very important components. If you want to grow your practice as a successful micro-business, it's all about commitment and perseverance.

You may have times of doubt, where you ask yourself why you're doing it. You may want to quit because you think it's too difficult, or you're having a bad day. In my experience, if you're that passionate about what you're doing and are willing to give it your all, keep your eye on the ball, and don't give up, you'll do it.

So much for the philosophical stuff; now let's look at the practical side. If you want to make this business work for you, you've got to have a financial safety net, first and foremost. Any seasoned VA will tell you that you're at the mercy of your clients when it comes to getting paid. Do research and find out what skills that you have are needed by the marketplace. Also, you need to have professionals on board: lawyer, accountant, bookkeeping, web person and graphic person to name a few. You may think all this is expensive. It doesn't have to be. Make sure that you have current office provisions; things like high speed Internet access, laptop or PC, office supplies and the like. You need to also build and leverage relationships. This usually comes in the form of networking, social or face to face. I wanted my clients to be here where I am, so I jumped in and started networking my first year, even though I'd never done it before. I continued to network that first year extensively and by the time a year and half had gone by, my practice was full. Today, I do more speaking than networking, and all of our clients come by referral. It's the perseverance and relationship building in the early years that usually provides success as the years roll by. I could now start taking it easy and relax a little, but I still push on, still thinking up ways to get us 'out there'. I do that by trying different things; if something doesn't work, I don't do it again I try something else and see what happens. I may not be doing client work all the time, but I'm almost always thinking about the business and what's next.

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