



Editor's Note

Caroline Jarzabek

[CMJ Virtual Office Manager](#)

I want to thank Karen Bowman of [West Coast Way](#) for her help in compiling this issue of the Newsletter and for her contribution of a follow up article on successfully partnering with a Real Estate client.

There are a lot of exciting things coming up for CVAC & VAs in the very near future, one of which is the OIVAC International Convention.

I wish CVAC and all its members continued success, and I hope that you find this issue informative and helpful in growing your business.

Caroline. ❖

Founders Note

Elayne Whitfield, CCVA, MVA, PREVA
[Executive Assistance](#)

Janice Byer, CCVA, MVA
[Docu-Type Administrative and Web Design Services](#)

Well CVAC's 5th Anniversary has come and gone and we'd like to thank everyone who participated – it was a great success!!

During the month of March we had 18 new members who took advantage of the special price to join us. We welcome them and wish them great success in their VA businesses.

On the 19th we celebrated across Canada with luncheons (and 1 dinner). There were get-togethers in Hamilton, Oakville, Newmarket, Vancouver and Victoria and pictures may be seen on the [CVAC website](#).

There were prizes offered by both CVAC and some great sponsors. We would like to thank both Tawnya Sutherland and Amanda Marks for their generous donations. Here are the results of the draw:

Cindy Capobianco from Capo-Tech Services won The VBSS System Template CD-ROM (Valued at \$225)

Jacque Manore from Workload Solution Services won the Logo Design Package (Valued at \$349.00)

Jane Cosh from Jane Cosh Solutions won the CVAC Gift pack (\$75 value)

Jeanine Foisy-Gogal won the \$50.00 Gift card for Staples

Ruth Sleeman from Sleeman Administrative Solutions won the \$50.00 Gift card for The Body Shop

We held 4 open chats and had a great turnout. Over the course of the month we learned a lot and the discussions just got better and better. We had such a great response to these that we've decided to hold them on a monthly basis. Please watch the list for details.

All in all it was a great month and we thank everyone who participated. We've had some great feedback from our members and it feels better than ever to be a part of this great group of Virtual Assistants. We're looking forward to seeing what the next 5 years hold for us.

Janice D. Byer, CCVA, MVA
Elayne Whitfield-Parr, CCVA, MVA
Founders of CVAC - www.cvac.ca
Connecting Canadian VAs with the world... virtually! ❖

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“How to Survive on Mac & Cheese When Starting as a VA” or “Have Carbs, Will Travel! ©”

I had the great fortune to be able to attend one of the online networking events sponsored through the CVAC today and despite the technical glitches and spattered speech patterns, it was simply wonderful to ‘see’ (and sporadically hear!) my other fellow VA’s.

I see their names on posts asking multitudes of complicated questions and they all sound so stunningly professional and capable that quite frankly, at times I’m awestruck! While I definitely enjoy belonging to this wonderful group of talented gals (and guys) some days I swear y’all are speaking another language or in some sort of highly secretive code that only rocket scientists or persons from another galaxy far, far away can decipher.

I’m a wordsmith... period. I do not know how to do anything more technical than to reset the bloody clock on my computer and microwave after a power outage. “Bits and Bytes” are some sort of couch potato snack that’s consumed while salivating over the hunks who parade their stuff on “Desperate Housewives.” I do know how to download files – I do it all the time actually and hit ‘run’ instead of save. This has caused all sorts of fun as invariably at some point I’ll have to uninstall the program I downloaded from www.whatsupdoc.com because it’s causing my email address to be sent to a colony of pigmy’s in Bora Bora who are now filling up my inbox with offers to sell me shares in the their lucrative vanilla bean processing companies. (Does the phrase “Hey mon, dis deal is good!” sound familiar to any of you?)

Anyhow, I digress as per usual.

The real point (and there is one coming – be patient people!) is this – “How to Survive on Mac & Cheese While Starting Your VA Business”. Many more qualified VA’s can supply you with all the wonderful and necessary tools to successfully complete the start-up phase of your business. I’m here to provide the ‘meat and potatoes’ of how to survive your first year... and stay reasonably sane.

So, here’s my 2.5 cents worth of advice, including HST, PST, GST, and any other freaking tax that can possibly be levied by our government, on how to maintain your double digit figure (Size 12 is nice!) when starting your VA biz.

1. Clip coupons. Any coupons! Even if you’ve never dined on baked Spam with a honey-mustard glaze, save that .75 cent coupon. Rip, tear, snip and scissor cut ALL coupons and attach them to your fridge with a motivational magnet that says something like “Don’t eat a T-bone – save a cow!” It will make dining on that Spam so much more pleasant. Also, save any/all coupons for more than 1.00 off anything! You never know who you might be able to barter those coupons with to get one you might actually be able to use. Personally, I’ve found the Gillette men’s shaving cream to be absolutely wonderful, in particular the gel formula. Be a tad wary though as you may have to fight to use it, especially if you have someone from the male species living in your house. This applies to their razors as well. Word of caution: Make sure that your bathroom door locks from the **inside** before using these 2 products. Much safer this way.

2. Walk. As in walk to the grocery store with your bag of coupons safely stowed in your tote-sized purse. Walking

A Warm Welcome to our new CVAC Full Members:

- Carrie Anderson
- Dionne Aniton
- Cheryl Barnes
- Diane Carr
- Heather Chernofsky
- Marilyn Cox
- Faye Hobman
- Sandra Joslin
- Kate Kerans
- Laura Kulgawetz
- Laurie Matechuk
- Jennifer Nalleweg
- Beth Nixon
- Linda Pedley
- Theresa Prescott
- Carole Reece
- Cynthia Richard
- Cheryl Richardson
- Lyndsay Wregget

Welcome to all of the new partial members, we hope to see you become a full member soon so that you can take advantage of the ever-growing RFPs that are coming in ❖

will save on that precious liquid gold called gasoline. When you’re in the start-up phase of your business, you’re going to want to conserve as much gas as possible (with the exception of that caused by eating the baked Spam), to be able to go see potential clients. Just think of how much money you’ll save by walking to the store and dragging home 6 grocery bags filled with tomato soup, Spam and good ol’ mac and cheese dinners! Better yet, walking will help you walk off those mega calories consumed from the aforementioned carbs. After all, you’re now a VA and most likely are sitting in your computer chair (oh - get the ‘slightly used’ ones at your local Salvation Army and use duct tape to fix that broken armrest – you’re not going to need two anyhow plus wheels aren’t really that big a deal), so you’ll likely be starting to see signs of that dreaded condition of “BS” i.e. Butt Spreading.

3. Get a VA Buddy. Go through the list of qualified VA’s on CVAC and find one who’s willing to listen to you whine, complain, cry and lament about anything and everything via email and MSN messenger. Try and find one that possibly has a sense of humor because **they’re** going to need it when dealing with you. This is a very necessary step as having someone else to commiserate with over the lack of clients beating down your door to avail themselves of your stupendous services, helps keep you reasonably sane. Check to see if they also offer motivational tapes, cd’s etc. or were formerly on their high school cheer leading squad.

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Volunteer Benefits

Do you have the time, talent and ability?

BE A VOLUNTEER!

Volunteering is a rewarding experience. Being able to help others, a sense of belonging and helping to create a successful association are only some of the reasons people volunteer.

10 GREAT REASONS TO GIVE YOUR TIME AND TALENT

1. Show clients and competitors that **YOU** are an "expert" in your field and lend credibility to your business!
2. Give back to the community that is giving you a "head start"
3. Sense of accomplishment and pride in what VA's are all about!
4. Volunteering looks good in a portfolio or on a resume
5. It gets your name **VISIBLE**
6. Volunteering = **SHARING YOUR VA SPIRIT**
7. Make new friends and business connections
8. Learn new skills or keep your skills updated
9. Promote the **CVAC** and help grow the Association
10. It opens doors to a world of possibilities

To learn more or to lend us your time, contact:
Tanya Beaudoin tanya@officeondemand.ca

COMMITTEE POSITIONS AVAILABLE!

Blog Committee
Web Committee
Mentoring Committee
Teleclass Chair & Committee
Public Relations Committee
Event and Planning Committee
Advertising/Sponsorship Committee ❖

FEATURED CVAC MEMBER AND

VOLUNTEER ~



Co-Founder and Executive Director CVAC
Janice Byer,
[Docutype Administrative & Web Design](#)

Co-Founder and Executive Director CVAC
Elayne Whitfield,
[Executive Assistance Business Solutions](#)

Board Secretary:
Lisa Ivaldi,
[Forestview Business Services](#)

Member Liaison Committee:
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[Double You Business Services](#)
Jane Cosh,
[Jane Cosh Solutions](#)

Director of Web Content:
Caley Walsh,
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Internet Marketing:
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[Office On Demand](#)

Teleclass Committee:
Diane Savoy,
[E-Virtual Assistant.com](#)
Maria Thompson,
[Office Help To Go](#)

Marketing Committee:
Jennifer Jacura,
[My Office Worker](#) ❖



JOIN CVAC

BECOME A MEMBER

CVAC is by Canadian VAs, for Canadian VAs. Members of CVAC are in a variety of stages of running their Virtual Assistance businesses in Canada. Some have just started, while others have been at it for some time. By being in these different stages, we can share the do's and don'ts of running your business. Veteran VAs have "been there and done that" so they can enlighten others as to what works and what doesn't. New VAs have a fresh perspective and bring new ideas to the group.

Whether you are already established in the VA industry, just opened your virtual business, or are in the research process of setting up your own VA practice and are seeking guidance, CVAC is for you!

Read more about the benefits of joining CVAC at <http://www.cvac.ca/member.php> ❖

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Newmarket Lunch

1st Wednesday of every month

The Buttery – North East Corner of Davis Drive
and Yonge Street.

17565 Yonge Street, Newmarket – 905-836-0300
12:00 p.m. Noon.

GTA VA Breakfast

3rd Saturday of every month

Perkins Family Restaurant (Holiday Inn)
Dixon and Martingrove

600 Dixon Road – 416-240-9741

Durham CVAC Luncheon

4th Thursday of every month

Kelsey's – Brock Road and 401
In Pickering.

**Please let us know of any events in your
area ❖**

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You're going to want one that will keep your spirits high (instead of you having to rely on spirits to get high), and generally offer words of wisdom... or not. Be very choosy here. If they keep answering your email messages telling you that they've now filed a complaint of IM Stalking, I highly suggest you stop talking to them immediately. Perhaps a change of email accounts would be a good move here also.

4. Laugh More – Worry Less®. This is the biggie folks! If throughout your first year of building your business, you can sit back and have just one gut-clenching, tear-wrenching belly laugh a day, you'll make it! If you lose a potential client – tough – it's their loss, not yours. If you gain a client – way to go! As the old saying goes, "Don't sweat the small stuff and don't pet the sweaty stuff" or something like that. Believe in yourself and what you do. You are the best thing since sliced bread (even if you're one sandwich short of a picnic as in my case), and with sheer determination, willpower and blackmail, you WILL get that first client – guaranteed! Make sure to ask for testimonials and post them on your website, blog, carve them on a log, and staple brag sheets on the "Articles for Sale" announcement board at your local supermarket. Hey, they know who you are, right? You've only been walking there three times a week for 5 months now, lugging that folding shopping cart behind you and fumbling through your coupon clutch at the cashier's wicket, causing everyone behind you to start muttering under their breath about the 'idiot' at the front of the line. They'll most likely be glad to give you a glowing recommendation...if you'll just go shop somewhere else.

I do hope that these 4 tips help assist you if you're suffering from the first year VA business blues. If not, oh well, I tried. Please do not email me to be your VA buddy as I've had to change my ISP, my email account names and MSN Messenger names five times already. Huh. Some people just have NO sense of humor! ☺

With hoots of laughter!

*Marlene Oulton,
Write Choice Virtual Assistants,
www.WriteChoiceVA.com
Marlene@WriteChoiceVA.com ❖*

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Remember that your membership with CVAC has a yearly renewal. If you are unsure of your renewal date, please contact founders@cvac.ca You can renew your membership at <http://www.cvac.ca/renewal.php> We will send out several reminders and if we fail to get a response, our system will eliminate your email address from the full member's announcement list (where the RFPs are sent), disable your password for the member's only area of the website, and delete your contact information from the member directory.

**DON'T FORGET TO RENEW
YOUR MEMBERSHIP! ❖**

CVAC SHOP – Support CVAC and the VA industry with these cool, high-quality products sporting the CVAC logo. You will be amazed how many people will ask you, “What is the Canadian Virtual Assistant Connection?”, or “What is a Virtual Assistant?” and then you can tell them the benefits of working with a VA, such as yourself.

Visit <http://www.cafepress.com/cvacshop> to get your t-shirt, hat, mousepad and more! ❖

CVAC is proud to have acquired special rates for benefit plans for our members. As a full member of CVAC, you can now get health insurance and more at wonderful rates for full members at <http://www.cvac.ca> and go to the full members’ page. ❖

Don’t want the expense of a fax machine? CVAC and MyFax have teamed up to offer an Email-based fax service for our members. Click here for more information <http://www.myfax.com/affiliates/index.asp?aff=4860&bid=3> ❖

CVAC now has an exclusive arrangement with I’m InTouch to offer their remote access solution to our members at a discounted price and extended length of usage. Read more and download your 30-day trial version at <http://www.cvac.ca/imintouch.php> ❖

CVAC Mentoring Program - The CVAC Mentoring Program is a full-member benefit and it is meant to assist both newcomers and existing VA’s in their search for sustainable self-employment, by matching them with mentors who have greater professional experience. If you would like to be matched up with a mentor or can offer your help as a mentor, please visit <http://www.cvac.ca/mentoring.php> ❖

For more exciting benefits, offers and E-books go to the full members’ page at <http://www.cvac.ca>.

Not a full member yet? Why not join now and take advantage of all these exciting benefits! ❖

Reaching for the Impossible



“Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they’ve been given than to explore the power they have to change it.

“Impossible is not a fact. It’s an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It’s a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing.”

David Beckham ❖

WEBINARS

We are still seeking a dedicated person who can lend some time to be the Chairperson for the Webinar Committee.

Please apply to:

Tanya Beaudoin
tanya@officeondemand.ca

Serious enquiries only please! ❖

CVAC Is Looking For Your Feedback

- **What is the CVAC Website missing?**
- **What types of resources would you like to see on the website to help you build your business?**
- **Any other comments or feedback?**

Please e-mail founders@CVAC.ca with your ideas and comments. ❖

Successful Partnerships – “How Do They Do It?”

Most Virtual Assistant's (VA) have an interesting story which led them to embark on this innovative, exciting and challenging career. The same can be said for those think-outside-of-the-box clients who choose virtual assistance over traditional business models. For the uninitiated, the fundamentals of how this unique relationship successfully works in practice can be a mystery. The story of what leads individuals down this path is only the beginning of the bigger picture of how a successful partnership is born.

Personal choices and a yearning for freedom breathed life into the idea of creating my own VA business. After the birth of our first child in 2002 and nearly 20 years spent working for employers in the private and public sectors my husband and I decided I would stay at home to raise our kids. My VA business provides the freedom we need to maintain my family as top priority. The recent arrival of our second child merely underscores the correctness of this choice.

My clients understand and respect my priorities. For the most part, they too are mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers. The dedication, reliability and commitment that I give my family are a basic part of my personality. Therefore, my clients can also expect to get 110% from me when my time is theirs. As a VA, I not only market my expertise, but I also have to sell myself. Clients are looking for a reliable and trustworthy one-on-one relationship to provide the services they need.

Barry's story began when he decided to shift career focus from co-owner of Century21 Mountainview Realty Ltd. to providing full time real estate services to his clients. "I have always thoroughly enjoyed the Real Estate business and wanted to get back to listing and selling homes. Working with more people and doing less administrative work was my first priority," says Barry.

Barry's participation in the interview for the previous article provided him with insight into how a VA would be a perfect fit. After working with me over the past few months, Barry now adds, "I knew I would need some form of assistant to help me recharge my real estate career. A Professional Virtual Assistant seemed the best approach because I could have an assistant work for me when I needed them versus having a full or part time employee available on their schedule. Karen completes urgent tasks as soon as possible and then works on other tasks when she has available time".

"Karen is also a big part of the marketing team of the Arrow Lakeside Resort & Marina on the pristine Arrow Lake. We are marketing 59 waterfront condos situated right on the crystal clean waters of the Arrow Lake. Full ownership, fractional ownership, rental pool, and boat pool are some interesting options at this exciting resort property. I look forward to completing the sales of Phase One and then marketing Phase Two with Karen's help."

My particular business model offers an extremely flexible schedule. Clients provide ongoing as well as project-based tasks and assign a required time and date of completion. I commit to meeting or beating that timeline. However, when I schedule my time is ultimately my choice. With an infant in the house, it's not unusual for me to be alert and active throughout the night. My clients are just as likely find their work getting completed during the middle of the night as any other time of the day. This approach works best for me and at the same time,

benefits my clients greatly as I am ultimately available to each client for more hours.

Working with realtors can be particularly challenging as they too don't adhere to a "normal" schedule. Our partnership succeeds because they can count on my flexible approach to provide services outside of regular working hours. Real Estate is an industry where impressing clients with superior service quality is crucial to continued success. Barry is able to approach his business with confidence that he can e-mail me details for a listing after a late night listing meeting and know that it's entirely likely the client will see their listing up and running before the next morning.

In my previous article, Barry expressed concern over how a virtual relationship would work in practice; he now has this to say. "Karen has the ability to work late at night or early mornings to make sure that new listings are online in a very short period of time which makes me look professional and prompt. I don't have to worry about an employee leaving at 5:00PM and not seeing them again until 9:00AM. A Realtor's schedule is all hours of the day and a Virtual Assistant can be there at those odd hours to help out."

There are consistent tasks related to listings, closings and other administrative duties that must take place on specific days throughout the process. I think Barry would agree that the biggest challenge is perfecting efficient processes and procedures to ensure that I'm receiving all necessary information to complete these tasks. However, as we perfect each process, with the click of a mouse Barry can apply a plan that automatically generates tasks he knows I'll handle. This ability to delegate administrative duties to me in lieu of continually contacting me with each item keeps Barry's focus firmly on his clients.

Barry has this final thought for the mid to high producing Realtor to consider. "A busy Realtor will have many listings and closings. Karen gets all the listings online and follows through the transaction to make sure it completes on time and hassle free. That gives me more time to spend with clients, listing and selling homes."

Virtual Assistance is an adventure and a journey. Whether you're the VA providing these cutting edge services or the forward-thinking client looking for a new and more efficient way to do business, when you meet, the story has only begun. As the VA and their client begin a new relationship, the *How, When, What* and *Where* are just details along the path to a successful partnership. If you've decided on Virtual Assistance, you've already figured out the *Why*.

*by Karen Bowman, Professional Virtual Assistant &
Owner, West Coast Way Consulting
www.westcoastway.com*

and

*Barry Brown, Realtor, Century21 Mountainview
Realty Ltd. www.barrybrown.ca ❖*

Podcast & Blog Hopping Tour Kicks Off 2007 OIVAC

Who would think spending 45 days hopping from one blog and podcast to another would serve as a popular kickoff for an international convention? I didn't, and I'm the podcast and blog hopper! However, a lot of virtual assistants (VAs) are jumping on this rollercoaster ride, traveling from country to country, to help promote the virtual assisting industry and our upcoming Online International Virtual Assistants Convention – and you're invited to hop this express too!

All star lineups

The tour began April 1st, from the OIVAC blog and has traveled thousands of miles promoting the convention scheduled for Thursday, May 17-Saturday, May 19, 2007, from a desktop computer near you. With an [all star lineup of featured presenters](#) and expert virtual assistants, this 2nd annual event is something VAs do not want to miss.

Featured presenters include:

- Paul & Sarah Edwards – pioneering work-from-home advocates and entrepreneurs
- Donna Messer – international networker and “connections” extraordinaire
- Michael Russer – Mr. Internet and world renowned VA and outsourcing advocate
- Robert Middleton – Action Plan Marketing professional online marketing guru
- Doris Helge – negotiation, persuasion and influencer
- Gillian Hodge- Gabrielson – health and fitness expert
- Robyn Henderson – internationally renowned networking skills developer
- Rodney Payne – transcription software expert

And this list doesn't include expert VA presenters, such as: Janice Byer, Marylou Ashton, Jeannine Clontz, Diana Ennen, and so many more – in fact, we've scheduled 27 exciting and informative seminars to choose from.

And there is more!

Let's not stop with the seminars! One of the most exciting events of this weekend convergence is the virtual assistant industry celebration: International Virtual Assistants Day; celebrated annually the third Friday of May. On this day we celebrate **DEEDS**: **D**edication, **E**xperience, **E**xpertise and **D**etermination to **S**ucceed of professionals providing administrative and other business support services, virtually. The ceremony begins at 5:30 p.m. DST (NY). This free and open-to-the-public event's agenda includes honoring individuals nominated for the prestigious Thomas Leonard Virtual Assistant of Distinction Award and Janet Jordan Achievement Award. Winners will be announced during this celebration and will receive prizes donated by industry supporters. It is the “fun event” of the weekend and everyone is invited to attend. Note: Seating will be limited, so join the party early!

Oops, can't forget the [exhibit halls](#) – that's right, just like a brick and mortar convention, we are hosting a fully-automated exhibitor hall where visitors can browse and talk to vendors. So please, don't forget your headset/mic. Naturally, the rooms are text-chat enabled, but since we are familiar with VOIP technology, let's give it a try. Admittance to the exhibitor halls is also free and open to the public.

Networking opportunities, too

Okay, what did I miss? I've covered fantastic speakers, awards, give-a-ways, exhibitions – ah, networking. More fun! That's right, we've scheduled international networking activities and event sponsor showcases throughout the three (3) day event – so stop by and interact with your internationally-situated comrades. Find out what's happening in the UK, Australia, US, China, Scotland, and many other countries represented by our versatile industry.

Price is not an issue

Now to the magic question – what does it cost to attend a 3-day, flexibly-scheduled convention, online, from the comforts of home (just start your desktop or laptop computer), you don't have to dress for, worry about travel expenses or hotel accommodations, childcare, missing important calls and business, can meet and greet friends from around the globe, network galore, and win prizes –

- Attend 1 seminar - \$ 25
- Attend 3 seminars - \$ 60
- Attend 5 seminars - \$100
- All seminars - \$350 (plus receive complete set of audio recordings)
- Exhibitor Booths - \$89 (VA industry)
- Exhibitor Booths - \$149 (non-VA industry)

That's it? Yes. And, if you [register for a seminar](#) and can't attend – or it's scheduled at an inconvenient time, the seminars will be recorded and available for listening and viewing through May 31st. That's right. You can even view your selections over the next 10 days, 24/7. How great is that?

Registrations closes May 15

Registrations close May 15, 2007 at 12 midnight, DST (NY). This means, you **MUST** register by midnight, or you will not be able to participate in any of the seminars. So plan ahead, pick your preferences now – and register by May 15th! Seating is limited.

That's it! And, to think this all started with a [podcast and blog hopping tour](#). Anyway, if you are not participating in the tour, you're missing out on being eligible for some great prizes.

See you at the convention!

Sharon Williams
The 24 Hour Secretary
OIVAC Chairperson
info@oivac.com ❖

"The difference between great people and everyone else is that great people create their lives actively, while everyone else is created by their lives, passively waiting to see where life takes them next. The difference between the two is the difference between living fully and just existing."

Michael E. Gerber ❖

VA QUESTION AND ANSWER TIME



Q. Good morning, I have a client who wants me to design a chart showing staff hierarchy (similar to a family tree) with boxes and arrows. If anyone has done this before, what program do you recommend to do this easily? I've found the boxes and arrows move around too much when using Word. Thanks!

A. PowerPoint works well for this. It's also possible to use Excel, but not as flexible for organization charts.

Q. I'm working in a 20 page Word document. The first three pages should not have page numbers. Page numbering should start on Page 4. Right now there is a Section Break at the end of Page 1 and 3 and at the top of Page 4. I've been playing around with the document but I can't get the page numbering to just start on Page 4. I either get no pages numbered or all pages numbered or sometimes, just for variety, Page 2 has a number 2 on it and then the numbering starts again at 1 on Page 4. Any suggestions would be appreciated.

A. First of all make sure that you have your Format Marks box checked off in Options. You can solve a lot of mysteries by seeing where and how the formatting has been done. You should be able to go into Page 3 and at the end place a Page Break. On the top of Page 4 go to View, Header and Footer and a little window will pop up. Hit a little button about mid way across the top which is the Format Page # button. A Page Number Format window will pop up. Under Page numbering click Start at: and then indicate page 4 in the box. Hopefully that will solve your problem...

Q. I am just starting out in my VA business and need some assistance from you with regards to advertising and getting the word out about my business. I've joined two major networking groups in my city but they break during the summer. I'm on a tight budget so any inexpensive suggestions for advertising you might have would be much appreciated.

A. There are many ways to promote your business inexpensively. One suggestion, if you haven't already one this, is to put some materials advertising your business in local hotels where business people tend to stay.

Here are a few marketing methods I have found particularly useful: **Online Networking Groups/Forums:**

In addition to joining VA groups, look for forums that serve your target market whether they are real estate agents, coaches, online store owners, etc In order to be memorable, post regularly and offer your input/advice when appropriate, especially when responding to posts that may be related to your expertise. I recommend these ones: **Ryze network** (<http://www.ryze.com>) **Linked In** (<http://www.Linkedin.com>) **Connecting Her** (<http://www.ConnectingHer.com>) **Chamber of Commerce**

Most chambers of commerce have directories listing members by business sector on their websites. When I started my VA business I wrote to members of my local chamber of commerce (within my target market) telling them about my services and the advantages of working with me. I also included an introductory offer. Of 15 letters sent out, I got out 5 calls enquiring about my services and 1 ongoing client that keeps me very busy. When I put into consideration the cost of postage and stationery, the amount of work I get from the client in question is well worth it. **Tag line** I always use tag lines when posting messages in forums or message boards. Experts will argue that your tag line should convey a specific message. Mine is vague yet it arouses curiosity. I have had people contact me asking how I help small business owners succeed on their own terms. **Other VAs** I contacted other VAs listed under secretarial services in my local phone directory and offered to take on their overflow work. While I did not get any projects by this means, I received some invaluable tips and advice.

Q. Quick question, I have had a client for about 2 years who I still charge my original rate. What's the best way to inform him I'm raising my hourly rate

A. I would definitely let him know before you increase it. I think a note on the new invoice and then it is his decision whether he wants to continue your business relationship.

Question and Answer time is brought to you by Caroline Jarzabek of [CMJ Virtual Office Manager](#) ❖

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