



Editor's Note

Welcome to the winter issue of CVAC's Newsletter!

It's hard to believe that Christmas is almost upon us. This year seems to have flown by. With Christmas fast approaching, many people's thoughts also turn to holidays and we hope you enjoy our holiday issue.

From CVAC to your home office, we wish you a very Merry Christmas season together with a prosperous New Year full of family, friends, health and success in your businesses.

Special thanks to [Tammy Lorette](#) and [Hilary Feindel](#) for helping us put this newsletter together. Enjoy!



Tawnya Sutherland, CVAC, CIMBS
[Mediamage Business Solutions](#)

Founder's Note

Happy Holidays from CVAC

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

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



As 2004 comes to a close, we both want to thank you all for helping get the word out about CVAC. Our membership has grown by over 100 new members this past year.

A special thank you goes out to all those who volunteer for CVAC. Without you, we wouldn't be growing like we are. Be sure to read about our Feature Member who is also one of our special volunteers... [Tammy Lorette](#)

We also want to wish you all a wonderful holiday season. We hope that you take some time to enjoy being with your loved ones and savouring all that this joyous time of year brings.

Most of all, we want to wish you all your most successful year ever in 2005!

Happy Holidays!

Janice & Elayne

Christmas Gift Giving on a Budget

By Janice D. Byer, MVA
Docu-Type Administrative & Web Design Services

For many entrepreneurs, our clients are not only our source of income, some are also our friends. We appreciate them for far more than how much work we do for them. We should show our appreciation throughout the year to these valued people but especially during the holiday season.

Yup, it's that time of year. Time to think about how to best display your thanks to your valued clients and contacts for being a part of your business and its success. Not all entrepreneurs can afford big gifts, especially in the start-up phase.

There are certain things that you can give to your clients that you could make yourself. Not only can this be a way of showing your appreciation, it is also a way to give your personal touch to the gift. And when you add that personal touch, your clients will be reassured of your exceptional customer service, thoughtfulness, and why you are, or soon will be, successful!

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When you provide personal gifts you also gain a sense of fulfillment. It is very heart-warming to know the appreciation that will be felt by your clients for your special efforts. The following are just a few ideas of homemade gifts that are both economical and personal:

Coasters - You know all those CDs you get in the mail, newspapers and magazine? Hang onto them and create coasters from them. You can get CD labels at office supply stores on which you can print a design, picture, or info about your business; foam or cork backing at craft supply stores; and lacquer finish (that will withstand heat) at home repair or paint stores.

Bookmarks - Pick up some cover stock paper at your local business supply store and design a bookmark. You can print a full sheet of them on the cover stock. You will then have to cut them or you may be able to get perforated cards in the shape of bookmarks. Again, anything can be put on here, including just lines with the heading "Notes from This Book". For an added touch, buy some tassels and punch a hole in the top of the cards to put the tassel in to.

Calendars - Everyone needs calendars, especially busy entrepreneurs. The following are just a couple of relatively easy calendars that you can create and they make the perfect gift.

Pocket Calendars - You don't need a laminating machine to whip together a few business card calendars, perfect for carrying in a wallet. Most business supply stores carry self-laminating sheets. You simply put together a small calendar with your desktop publishing software, cut them the size of your business card and glue them on the back, arrange them on the laminating sheets and cut them to size.

Wall Calendars - Again, your desktop publishing software can be used to design each month and print them on separate sheets of paper. As an added touch, allow room to list inspirational sayings, put in a word search puzzle, or a light comic strip (being careful not to go against any copyrights). Then put each month into a sheet protector remembering to set them up like a normal wall, flip calendar. Slide a binder clip over the top ends and punch a whole in the center of the other end and your calendar is ready to be hung up. And don't forget to send a dry erase marker so your client can write down their appointments.

Magnetic Calendars - You have a couple of choices here. You can put your business card or enlightening phrases on a magnetic sheet and attach them to a tear-off calendar. Or, you can use pre-cut business card size magnetic sheets to make a card holder, note page holder, or small calendar. Actually, with the larger magnetic sheets, you can let your imagination run wild.

Gift Certificates - Design a gift certificate to provide your clients with one of the services you have to offer. If your client generally has web design services from you, offer them one of your administrative services so they can see the variety of help that you can provide them. Or, how about offering your client free ad space in your newsletter or a banner ad on your website. One thing to

remember is to put different time frames on each certificate. The last thing you need is to have everyone redeem his or her gift certificates at the same time.

Key Chains - Here's where your self-laminating skills will come in handy again. Design small key chain cards, putting your company information on one side. On the other side, put your client's information; a scenic picture; calendar; or marketing tips. You can include just about anything that would appeal to your clients. You will have to pick up some key rings (be sure to check yard sales, dollar stores, and craft supply stores) and then simply laminate the cards, punch a hole in one end and slip the key ring in that whole. Here's a tip. Be sure to cut the laminate sheet far enough around the card so that water will not get in. You may even want to punch the whole in the card first and then punch a smaller whole in the laminate so there is some sealing there.

Another idea, if your budget will allow, check with your local dollar store or craft supply store to see if they have key chains that will allow you to insert your own message. Less work but could be more costly.

You get the idea. Let your imagination create something both personal and professional. Each of these ideas will take time to do so be sure to start in plenty of time to create them and then send them to your clients. One thing about these ideas is that your budget will thank you.

Take a look around your office right now. What can you use to make a special gift?

Janice Byer is a certified Master Virtual Assistant and owner of Docu-Type Administrative & Web Design Services (<http://www.docutype.net>), specializing in website design and virtual office assistance to help small businesses become successful and stay successful!

**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> ❖

Signature Files - A Free Online Marketing Tool!

By Tawnya Sutherland, CIMS, CCVA
www.mediamage.com

Signature files are one of the most valuable (free) and powerful marketing strategies online yet so few ever use them. So many times I've received emails from businesses that just reply with:

Sincerely,
Joe Blow

How do I contact this person by phone right now? Or how can I investigate him a bit more by possibly looking at his website for more information? I can't and that irritates me!

This is a free opportunity to market yourself so ALWAYS have a signature on all your online correspondence!

Here is my current signature that I put at the bottom of every email I send:

Tawnya Sutherland, CIMBS, CCVA
Certified Internet Marketing & Business Strategist
www.mediamage.com
604-809-7972

At a bare minimum it should contain:

- Your name/company name
- Your contact details – phone number, email address, your website address Marketing tag line or a special announcement, product on sale, etc.

Signature files should be used on all email correspondence. Don't forget to also use them on any e-lists (Yahoo groups, etc.) forums, newsgroups and bulletin boards you may belong to. Since signature files are typically at the end of your emails or posts, it is not considered spammy.

Signature files at the bottom of correspondence entice users to easily click on the link to read more about you. This is your chance to send these curious lookers towards your website or better yet, specifically towards a product you want to promote on your website.

As for guidelines, a signature file should not be more than 6 lines in emails. As for other areas like forums, check with their posting guidelines for line length before you add your signature. Remember to always include your URL typed in full i.e.) www.mediamage.com since not all email programs support html and your user may have to copy and past it into their browsers so give them that option.

Feel free to spice up the text too with different characters (ASCII text) [VIEW EXAMPLES](#) to enhance your personal message. It doesn't hurt to be original at times to entice your user to visit your website or call you.

Promote yourself online and drive traffic to your website with an email signature file Don't be seen without one! Let me rephrase that ... Be seen AND noticed with a signature file!

Tawnya Sutherland is a qualified Virtual Assistant and Certified Internet Marketing Specialist of Mediamage Business Solutions (<http://www.mediamage.com>). She also runs a supportive networking forum for Virtual Assistants. Visit the VANF Virtual Assistant Networking Forum at: (<http://www.vanetworking.com>)



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NEWMARKET LUNCH – 1ST WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH

THE BUTTERY

NORTH EAST CORNER OF DAVIS DR. AND YONGE ST.

17565 YONGE ST., NEWMARKET, ON 905-836-0300

12:00 NOON

MEMBERS: LISA MARTYNUK, DIANNE MOON, MARION TRIPP,

SUSAN JESSOP, DEANNA SMYTHE, TERRI DONAVAN, ELAYNE

WHITFIELD

GTA VA BREAKFAST – 3RD SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH

PERKINS FAMILY RESTAURANT (HOLIDAY INN)

600 DIXON ROAD (DIXON & MARTIN GROVE) 416-240-9741

10:00AM

BARRIE LUNCH - 4TH THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH.

KELSY'S RESTAURANT ON BAYFIELD, BARRIE

12:00 NOON ❖

Spam: Not my idea of a lunch meat anymore – Part 2

By Janice D. Byer, CCVA, MVA
Docu-Type Administrative & Web Services

In the first installment in our series on Spam, we took a look at some of the ways the spammers get a hold of your email address. In this part, we will look at some of the ways we can help reduce the instances of spam.

How can WE try to curb the influx of spam?

No matter how hard we try, there really isn't a sunny prediction regarding spam and spammers. For most, we only see it getting worse but hopefully those brains that provide us with great programs to produce things can also come up with miracle solutions to decrease or eliminate the spam that is overwhelming our Inboxes, and our lives.

Support government initiative:

I know... another 'task force' set up to 'research the issue and the possibilities'. But, anything is better than nothing.

In the United States, most states have their own individual laws regarding spam. They range in wording and the extent of the enforcement but most center around trying to reduce the instances of spam or at least make it easier for anti-spam software to pick up on the fact that an email is indeed spam.

For instance, in the state of Colorado, the Colorado Junk Email Law, which was enacted in June 2000, states that unsolicited commercial email must contain a 'label' (i.e. ADV). By including this, spam programs and email programs have something that will help make it easier to identify the email as spam. It also states that the sender must include their email address and that there must be an opt-out option and it must be honoured.

However, the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 may pre-empt each state's laws.

For more information on the laws in each state, I found a great little website that lists the laws in full. I am assuming that this information is correct, it sure is interesting anyway. The website is located at <http://www.spamlaws.com>. You can also read about the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 at <http://www.spamlaws.com/federal/108s877.html>.

More recently, Industry Canada announced the development of an Anti-Spam Initiative or Task Force, if you will, for Canada. Lucienne Robillard, Minister of Industry, made the announcement in Ottawa, Ontario on May 11, 2004.

The Spam Task Force will be involved in a 6-point action plan involving specific initiatives by government and the private sector. It will bring together experts and key stakeholders representing businesses and consumers. Results from their collaboration will help in determining what actions need to be taken in order to achieve the goal of drastically reducing or even eliminating spam.

There are current anti-fraud provisions in the Canadian Criminal Code, the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act and the Competition Act that can be used against spammers but the task force will look for



FEATURED CVAC MEMBER Tammy Lorette

Tammy is the owner of [Virtually Yours](#) which was opened recently in January of 2004. So far, Tammy is doing great and loving every minute as a new entrepreneur. Tammy went back to school in 1999 to take all the computer and business courses that she could. After receiving her Computer Support Specialist diploma and her A+ certification, she worked for a local Computer and Business College as the Administrator.

While working through all of these changes she managed to look after 4 children ranging from age 9 up to 15. Starting a business from home was the best decision to make for such a busy family. Her home office was built with the best equipment she could afford and built into a quiet area of her home which is also able to accommodate clients or family.

About a year before starting Virtually Yours Tammy began researching the world of virtual assistance. Signing up for newsletters and compiling information from websites; the information she compiled became increasingly overwhelming. One special VA named Cheryl Spencer of [Virtual Attaché](#) stepped up to offer her assistance. She took Tammy under her wing and in the process became her mentor. Cheryl and Tammy still work together and support each other through business and personal communications.

Tammy's strategy over the past year has been to network with everyone and anyone. She belongs to as many groups as she can keep up with. She is an active member of her local [Chamber of Commerce](#), [Mr. Bob's network](#) and WINGS. She also resides on the board for the local Business Centre to discuss planning of events and functions. Through these memberships and the various networking occasions that they host she has made some wonderful personal and business connections.

What is the best membership that she has become apart of? CVAC of course! As a member of CVAC, she volunteers for two separate entities. Tammy volunteers for this newsletter and has just recently joined the PR committee. Through CVAC, she has met many wonderful and supportive VA's. Tammy has made many business relationships and credits a lot of her success to this group.

Volunteering has been the most positive and rewarding part of her business this year. She highly recommends it. Even for just an hour a week, there are many agencies and organizations that would appreciate it. Recently one of the volunteer organizations that she was part of from January offered her a contract position to assist in their marketing. Just goes to show you that volunteering really pays off.

Tammy specializes in helping businesses to thrive by creating time, print material, marketing and strategies to succeed. She has created packages for her clients which include cover letters, brochures, gift certificates and business cards. She creates articles, publications and bios that get clients noticed. She also works with her clients by educating them with various software applications to make working virtually much easier for her and the client.

Tammy is constantly working to improve herself through education and the most up to date software. She is always willing to take on any project even if she has to go the extra mile for it. This strengthens her qualifications and enhances the services that she offers. Email Tammy, start networking or visit Tammy at www.virtually-yours.ca today!!

added solutions that will help continue the thriving path that the Canadian Internet marketplace is following. They are committed to addressing the spam issue in an effective and comprehensive fashion and are not ruling out new public policies, regulations or even legislation if it they feel it is clearly necessary.

For more information on the Canadian Spam Task Force, visit the <http://www.ic.gc.ca> or do a search on Google and you will be given tons of links to articles and news stories relating to the initiative.

For information on spam laws in other countries, visit <http://www.spamlaws.com> or do a search for spam laws or anti spam (and then indicate your country) in a search engine and you should receive numerous sites that you can visit.

Use spam filters:

Most of us now have anti-virus programs on our computers. If you don't, you are just inviting trouble to happen. Viruses are everywhere and you need to have a program and keep the virus definitions up to date.

We even have firewalls and security programs but that doesn't stop spam from making its way into out Inboxes. The newer security programs now also include anti-spam features. You can also buy anti-spam programs that work directly in your email program to help filter spam into folders that make it easier to avoid and delete them.

I recently upgraded to Norton Security 2004 which includes the anti-spam feature. It adds a Spam folder in my Outlook and sends what it detects as spam to that folder and labels the subject line with [NortonAntiSpam]. You can then scan through the folder and unflag any that the program may have picked up by mistake and with one click of a button, it will empty the folder into the Deleted Items folder.

Updating your spam definitions is easy to do by simply clicking on your Live Update button, the same as you do to update your virus definitions. You can get a copy of Norton Security at <http://www.symantec.com>.

I also have an anti-spam program called Mailshell. This program is similar to the feature in Norton Security in the fact that it establishes a folder for the spam in my Outlook. However, it seems to take longer for emails to be scanned when they are coming in; you have to Select All in the folder before it can be emptied; and you have to download a new version of the software in order to update the spam it can catch. However, it does a great job of catching spam when it is up to date. You can find out more at <http://www.mailshell.com>.

You can also contact your hosting company and ask them to turn on the anti-spam filter on your account. You may even be able to turn it on yourself or adjust the settings through your administration panel of your account. If it is already turned on, ask your host to 'turn it up a notch' but not too far otherwise it may start sending legitimate email to the Trash.

In our next installment in our series on Spam, we will look at more ways to help reduce spam and what we need to do in the future. If you would like to read the whole series, please visit <http://www.docutype.net/press.htm>.

Janice Byer, owner of Docu-Type Administrative & Web Services (<http://www.docutype.net>) provides professional, creative and affordable virtual office assistance, small business website design, and website hosting. She is a Certified Canadian Virtual Assistant (CCVA), Master Virtual Assistant (MVA) and co-founder of the Canadian Virtual Assistant Connection (www.CVAC.ca). She is also the author of Surfin' the Net - Docu-Type's Virtual Collection of Links, (<http://www.docutype.net/SurfinTheNet/linksebook.htm>) which is filled with the secrets of her success. Visit her website for more information.

VA QUESTION AND ANSWER TIME

- Q:** I have a potential client that would like me to send out 750 emails on her behalf to her client list in the next couple of days. Can anyone tell me if there are any rules about how many you can send? I was told that you can only do so many before you get spam, do you know the number per hour?
- A:** I have been using www.enflyer.com with one of my clients - he has a distribution of 1200 people and only about 2% bounce and/or not received. They also provide a listing of who clicked on which links in your newsletter, who read it, who didn't, and who forwarded it. Also check out www.constantcontact.ca
- Q:** In order to have a "client login" on a website do I need a PHP script? What exactly is PHP? Do I have to create it myself or can I find the script somewhere? Where can I find a good PHP tutorial?
- A:** The ability to have a client login is offered as part of your hosting. First create a new directory within your website where the pages that need a client login will be stored. Login to your WebOS and click on Security and then website security. Select the new directory and click next. Then you just enable security for that directory and enter your client's usernames and passwords.
- Q:** I need the name of a free file sharing site, where a client can upload a file that's too big to email and I can download it. Any reputable ones you'd recommend?
- A:** Take a look at <http://www.sendthisfile.com> ❖

For more on Questions and Answers, Please visit the archives at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CVACconnection>.

Holiday Slow Times Should Not Mean Lost Productivity

By Janice D. Byer, CCVA, MVA
Docu-Type Administrative & Web Services

The joyous season that most of us look forward to is just around the corner. Time for family get-togethers, holiday parties and, with any luck, a few days off. However, it is also the time of year that if you are running a business that doesn't sell products or services that make great gifts or that compliment holiday events, you may experience a bit of a slow time, especially during December. You can look forward to the rush that often comes in January when everyone gets back into the swing but what can you do during the lull of the holiday season and the time that leads up to it?

1. Online Holiday Shopping: No matter how hard you try, you can't ignore the desire to shop and the easiest way is online (in my opinion). However, remember that if you leave it too late, you will be limited to shopping from websites of retailers that are within 2 or 3 days shipping distance.

2. Spruce up your Website: If you've been longing to make changes, add some additions, or try something new, now is the time. Your web designer, who also runs a business that may be a little slower at this time of year, would be more than happy to help you out.

3. Build up your Resources: Many small business owners have areas on their websites offering resources for their visitors or a newsletter with helpful information. If you are one of them, now is the time to search for information and links to offer. Build up your arsenal for future editions of your newsletter or your website.

4. Exchange Links: While you are building that list of resources (above), why not see if the originators of them want to exchange links with you. It is a win, win situation for everyone.

5. Submit your website to search engines & directories: If you have a web designer, he/she may have already submitted your site to the top search engines but that

doesn't mean that you can't do some of the work as well. Do a search online for directories that target your market or that list businesses similar to yours and submit your site as well. Be sure to check to see if your site is already there before submitting.

6. Write your next newsletter: If you publish a print or online newsletter, or if it has been your long desire to get one off the ground, now is the time to get started. Those resources you were collecting in #3 above would make great content. And if you need articles, feel free to use any of ours at <http://www.docutype.net/press.htm>

7. Create new marketing material: There are countless means of marketing your business that you may have already tried. Why not freshen them up a bit and try them again? There are probably numerous others that you have wanted to try. Now is the time to give it a whirl. Design a new banner, draft up a new article... whatever you have been wanting to try or change.

8. Offer Christmas products or services: I know... sounds odd since we are talking about what to do if you don't have Christmas products or services. However, why not consider offering some for next year? As you surf around, there may be something that catches your eye and you would like to offer it. For instance, we offer three services... Christmas Cards (portion of the proceeds goes to the Children's Wish Foundation), Gift Certificates for our services, and Santa Letters. They may not be much but it helps to give us a little more to do during the usual slow holiday times.

9. Have some "ME" Time: Although some of the above mentioned ideas will help fill some time and keep your business bringing in new clients, why not use some of that open time during the holiday season just for you. Watch that movie that you have been dying to see; go for a long walk; soak in the tub; or just read a good book.

The prime retail season may be slower for businesses that don't thrive on this time of year but that doesn't mean it can't be a productive time. Now is the time to catch up on things that you may not necessarily get a chance to address when business picks up in the New Year.

Janice Byer, owner of Docu-Type Administrative & Web Services (<http://www.docutype.net>) provides professional, creative and affordable virtual office assistance, small business website design, and website hosting.



Have a suggestion for our newsletter?

Nature gave us one tongue and two ears so we could hear twice as much as we speak ... Epictetus
Email us at info@cvac.ca ❖

CVAC EVENT NOTICE

Please let us know of any get-togethers or CVAC member events that are taking place in your area. We will list you on our event calendar, broadcast the details of your event to the members and we'd love to post a picture of the event too!

CVAC will contribute financially to local networking or trade show events. [Contact us](#) for more information. ❖

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