



Editor's Note

Well, here we are, 2006, a brand New Year, bringing with it all the hopes and expectations of success for our businesses and for the CVAC.

I want to thank all our contributors to the newsletter. We appreciate all your time and efforts.

I hope you find this issue of the newsletter inspiring and helpful in growing your business. ❖

Caroline Jarzabek – [CMJ Virtual Office Manager](#)

Founders Note

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

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

We hope that everyone's New Year is starting off on a good note! We wish you all a prosperous year!

As self-employed entrepreneurs, many of us have a challenge of obtaining adequate medical benefits that won't break our budgets. Large companies generally offer benefits to their employees but, as small business owners, we don't have the advantage of better rates for higher numbers of subscribers.

CVAC wants our members to feel that their families are protected, should the need arise, without having to pay out large monthly fees. So, we are in the works of researching several companies that offer medical benefits (among others) to organizations such as ours and our members.

We hope to be able to offer our members such benefits in the near future.

And, as always, we are in need of volunteers to help get these types (and other) initiatives to offer our members.

If you can spare a little bit of time, we would truly appreciate it. See page 3 for more information on volunteering.

Till next time... we wish you continued success!! ❖

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 [Editor's Note](#)
- 1 [Founders Note](#)
- 1 [Membership Renewals](#)
- 2 [Proper Telephone Etiquette](#)
- 2 [Calendar Sharing](#)
- 3 [Volunteer Benefits](#)
- 3 [Excel Tidbit](#)
- 4 [Woman, Disability and Language](#)
- 4 [New Year Survival Kit](#)
- 5 [Curmudgeon's Corner](#)
- 5 [E-Bay Woes](#)
- 6 [Background Noise](#)
- 6 [Welcome New CVAC Members](#)
- 7 [VA Questions and Answer Time](#)

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Remember that your membership with CVAC has a yearly renewal. If you are unsure of your renewal date, please contact info@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! ❖

Proper Telephone Etiquette

By
Michelle Medd
Administrative Essentials
www.administrativeessentials.com

Doing business virtually means that you do business over the telephone and proper telephone etiquette is very important. When clients and prospective clients are treated courteously, they respond more pleasantly and with greater respect.

Telephone etiquette not only smoothes your relationship with clients; it also helps you become the best you can be as a professional. It also makes your business more interesting and enjoyable. It's important that you keep the caller's point of view and needs foremost in mind, especially when you're under pressure. When you do, your business will become more stimulating and rewarding than when you are unable to see past your own pressures and concerns.

Below are key skills of telephone etiquette for different situations. Print it out and keep a copy of in your office to refer to it frequently. It will help you remember why these skills are important – especially from the caller's view point.

Answering Calls

- 1. Identify yourself and your business.** Most callers contact you not knowing if yours is the right business for their needs. By identifying yourself and your business clearly, you're reassuring that the caller has dialed the correct number. More importantly, you build their confidence that they have contacted a professional, proficient business.
- 2. Be prepared.** You must know your products and/or services. You must have the information that your callers expect you to have. By having the information that callers expect you to have, you show that you are competent and ready to satisfy their needs. It also shows callers that you value their time. You should also know other names and numbers of businesses who may help out when you lack the information or services they need. Being prepared also means keeping a pen and notepad handy at all times because this saves the caller from waiting.
- 3. Keep written records.** You should take notes of all important facts that the caller gives you. This way you can repeat anything back to the caller if needed and prevents future confusion, misunderstandings or costly errors.
- 4. Use the caller's name.** You should use the caller's name frequently, so listen for the correct pronunciation. You should also be sensitive to whether the caller prefers to be addressed formally or informally. By using the caller's name, you show that your full attention is on this call and this caller's unique needs.

- 5. Speak with enthusiasm.** Your voice should be enthusiastic, pleasant, and personable, yet businesslike. You should try to come across naturally and professionally. Since callers can't see you, your voice alone must make them feel welcome. A warm, welcoming tone can draw the caller in and make the entire transaction smoother and more enjoyable. Your enthusiasm also helps build the caller's confidence in your businesses competence.

Handling Problems

- 1. Give the caller your full attention.** You must shut out whatever pressures or distractions you may be facing to give the caller your full attention. You must be careful never to give the caller the impression that their call is interrupting something more important. Your full attention puts callers in the spotlight and makes them feel special, unique, and important.
- 2. Listen carefully.** One of the most tangible ways you can show callers they have your full attention is by listening carefully. By listening carefully, you can detect what callers are saying as well as what they mean. Paying them this respect makes it easier for them to give you the respect you want. Listening is one of the best ways you can both give and get respect.
- 3. Repeat in the caller's words.** By repeating the problem back using words as close to the caller's own, shows that you truly grasp the problem and implications from the caller's point of view. This puts that at ease. In contrast, irate callers often remain frustrated, even abusive; when they get no signals that the person on the other end really grasps their problem, what it means to them, and what they want.
- 4. Ask questions.** Once you have heard the caller's stated problem or need, gently ask probing questions to deepen your understanding. By asking questions, you elicit additional information about the caller's stated problem or need. This information can help you achieve a more accurate and thorough grasp of what is needed to remedy the situation.
- 5. Promise specific action.** When you promise action, you should avoid vague or noncommittal words. You should be as specific as you can, without promising something you may not be able to deliver. A caller with a problem wants only one thing; ACTION. By promising what you can, will build the caller's confidence in you.
- 6. Confirm agreements.** Confirming agreements is a form of feedback, similar to repeating back the caller's problem. Over the phone, these signals are absent. This is why callers rely on you to give regular feedback during the call. It also puts them at ease when you confirm all instructions and agreements
- 7. Follow up.** Remember to follow up, especially if you've promised action, and make sure you carry it out. This is what will satisfy the caller and reassure them that their problem has been handled efficiently. ❖

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!

Mentoring Committee
Teleclass Committee
Public Relations Committee
Event and Planning Committee
Newsletter Committee ❖

EXCEL TIDBIT

By
Donna Harwood
The Office Tutor
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I keep reading these great little tidbits that will help solve some of those pain-in-the-neck issues with Excel. Microsoft does some things well, and some not so well; like assuming things for you. You may not have had a reason to use this now, but you may in the future as it will give you a little more flexibility in how the title or heading looks in a cell.

Fit a multi-line heading into one cell.

Someone wants a two-line title in one cell. Let's use "Previous Year" as the example of the title. Go to the cell you wish to enter this title in. Type in the word Previous, then hold down Alt while hitting Enter and type the word Year. The Alt+Enter combination adds a line feed character in the cell exactly where you specify.

*This Alt+Enter combination automatically turns on the Wrap Text option for the cell, however, by doing it this way you can control **exactly** where you want the text to "break" to the second line.*

Donna is a Microsoft Certified Office Specialist in Outlook, Access, PowerPoint, Word and Excel version 2002. ❖

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

GTA VA BREAKFAST – 3RD SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH

PERKINS FAMILY RESTAURANT (HOLIDAY INN)

600 DIXON ROAD (DIXON & MARTIN GROVE) 416-240-9741
10:00AM

DURHAM CVAC LUNCHEONS - 4TH THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH.

THIS MONTH IT IS BEING HELD ON THURSDAY, FEB. 23RD
KELSEY'S IN PICKERING (BROCK RD. & 401) ❖

Woman, Disability and Language

By
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My name is Almira Omerovic, I have a disability, English is my second language and I won't give up.

I am a person with a disability and with this short story I wish to show how people with disabilities can be strong and successful.

I was born a normal child in Sarajevo, Bosnia. When I was 18 months old, I contracted Meningitis and since that time my left side has been paralyzed. I was very lucky to have parents who helped me and were supportive. They taught me that I must get an education, so I finished Economic University and received a Bachelor in Economics Degree. During my study, I had 10 surgeries to improve my physical situation. I studied in my hospital bed on my break from classes at University.

We had a relatively normal life but everything changed in 1991 when the war started on the Balkan. We left Bosnia with a Macedonian convoy. We traveled through Serbia to Hungary from whence we were flown to Canada.

In Canada we faced different problems. First of all, I didn't know any English, so I spent 18 months learning the English language. I also took Computer basic courses. After 3.5 years of job searching without any luck, and going from program to program I decided to apply for self employment. With this program I am establishing my Virtual business.

People may ask why I chose to become a Virtual Assistant, if I don't speak fluent English. I decided to be a Virtual Assistant because I have other qualities and talents which small businesses and individual clients can benefit by.

I am not going to give up and will give everything to succeed. Perhaps my path will be full of obstacles but I am ready to pass them and do what I believe that I am able.

My wish is also to write a book about my life which will hopefully help people with disabilities, parents with disabled children, immigrants, woman and people without hope and faith. I want my book to help people to see what is important in life. Also, it is very important that people believe in themselves and not lose their heads when something goes wrong. People must believe that everything that happens is for some reason. I believe that for some reason I started my business and I will succeed.

AFTER THE RAIN THE SUNSHINE IS COMING.
I believe that my time is coming. ❖

NEW YEAR SURVIVAL KIT

With the hectic pace we are required to live life at these days, we sometimes forget about what's important. Now that we are well into the New Year, I wish to give you all a little gift; it's a Daily Survival Kit to help you through the remainder of 2006.

Toothpick – to remind you to pick the good qualities in everyone, including yourself.

Rubber Band – to remind you to be flexible. Things might not always go the way you want, but it can be worked out.

Band-Aid – to remind you to heal hurt feelings, either yours or someone else's.

Eraser – to remind you everyone makes mistakes. That's okay, we learn by our errors.

Candy Kiss – to remind you everyone needs a hug or a compliment everyday.

Mint – to remind you that you are worth a mint to your family.

Bubble Gum – to remind you to stick with it and you can accomplish anything.

Pencil – to remind you to list your blessings everyday.

Tea Bag – to remind you to take time to relax daily and go over that list of God's blessings.

Author – Unknown. ❖

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 brings 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> ❖

CURMUDGEON'S CORNER

By
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As a general rule, commas are used when you would normally pause for breath when speaking. Commas are easy to use because most of the rules are common sense.

Here are a few guidelines to help you decide whether or not to use a comma:

Use a comma to separate elements in a list.

- Before you leave the house you need your cell phone, laptop, and car keys.

Use a comma between two or more adjectives that precede a noun.

- Yesterday I sat through a long, boring presentation.

Use a comma to separate independent clauses that are joined by a coordinating conjunction such as and, but, or, nor, for, so, or yet.

- I left early, but I got caught in traffic.

Use a comma to separate an introductory clause from the rest of the sentence.

- When I am working, I sometimes forget to eat.
- Beneath my sofa, there are dust bunnies bigger than my head.
- Unless you back up your files, you are courting disaster.

Use a comma to separate short introductory elements such as yes, no, well, why, still, or now from the rest of the sentence.

- Well, how did that get there?

Use a comma with an introductory expression followed by a pause.

- I drink tea, not coffee.
- I asked for a refund, not a replacement.

Use a pair of commas with a direct address, a transitional expression, or a parenthetical phrase when it interrupts a sentence.

- In my opinion, Mr. Smith, you should consider hiring a bookkeeper.
- I used to spend, on a good day, two hours in the car.

The most common error with a comma is overuse. If you read a sentence out loud, and the pauses sound natural, you probably have it right. ❖

E-BAY WOES

By
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www.clickawayva.com

Recently on the CVAC, there were some postings and discussions about purchases from E-Bay. Apparently, there was a client or a friend of a VA that had purchased a software program through E-Bay and they had trouble installing it. It turned out that the software was probably pirated and it did not have a valid key code.

I actually went the E-Bay route to purchase Adobe Professional 7.0. I was so impressed by the prices and was taken in hook line and sinker. I paid for the software and waited for the shipment to arrive. I even went as far as buying a book from Chapters on how to use the software to its full potential. I was so excited; I bragged to my husband about what a great buy it was and like most women when we get a bargain, was so proud of myself for being such a great and discerning shopper.

Three weeks went by and everyday I waited in anticipation of the arrival of my new purchase. I started to get this knot in my stomach and tried to contact the buyer. No response. I contacted E-Bay who put me in touch with Pay Pal and they launched an investigation. Pay Pal contacted me a few days later and told me that the seller had closed their account and that they now had no way of tracking them. I was out the money and didn't even get a pirated copy of the software.

My lesson, if it looks too good to be true, it probably is. The main point is if you are looking to purchase software on E-Bay, make sure that the software comes in the original box and has not been opened and make sure there is a valid key code. Check into the credentials of the person you are intending to buy from. How long have they been selling on line, what do other buyers have to say about them. If there is any negative feedback – investigate it as far as you can. If there are more than two or three negative feedbacks listed in a short period of time, I would seriously question whether or not I would want to deal with that person.

There are a lot of decent and honest people doing business on E-Bay and I would do business with them again in a heartbeat.

I have learned a very valuable and costly lesson and now, like any smart business person, I now do my homework.

There is an old adage that says "Buyer Beware" and I'll add my two cents and say "Buyer Be Smart". ❖

Background Noise

By
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I got a call the other day from a prospective client. I was impressed by his professional manner and his organized presentation. We had been discussing business for a few minutes when suddenly in the background I heard a crash, and the wailing of a small child. The man became flustered, but tried to continue with the call, though the crying increased in volume and intensity. Finally I interrupted him and asked if he preferred to deal with the other issue and call me back when it was convenient. He apologized, and hung up. Later he called back, very embarrassed, and still apologetic.

The fact that he was working from his home was not an issue for me, but apparently it was a big issue for him. I assume that he, like any professional, has a separate workspace, and has made arrangements so that he would not normally be interrupted by small children, but this was an emergency, and it was reasonable to expect him to drop what he was doing and attend to it.

If a co-worker in an office building had fallen down the stairs or caught her hand in a file cabinet, you would expect him to get off the phone and help. If he received a call at work about a sick or injured child, it would be acceptable for him to take a few minutes, or a few hours, to make sure everything was okay. His professionalism would not be questioned.

Many Virtual Assistants work from home offices, and to the unenlightened, this fact alone is enough to compromise our professionalism. Add a barking dog or a crying child or, in my case, a talkative parrot in the background and you may feel like nobody will ever take you seriously.

The workplace is changing, and our definition of professionalism needs to evolve with it. The home office is not just for the self employed; many large corporations now encourage telecommuting. My husband is a Project Manager with a large organization. He works full time from his home office, as do many of his associates. They are hardworking, dedicated professionals, highly respected in their field.

Most of them spend 3 or more hours per day in teleconference. The occasional household background noise is unavoidable, but it seldom keeps them from getting the job done.

For those of us that have been going to extremes to disguise the fact that we are working from home offices, it's time to lighten up. Your reputation is built on the quality of your work, and your excellent client service. Obviously you must take steps to ensure that your family and pets don't invade your office and distract you while you work, and you must be able to handle distractions in a professional manner.

Despite all your precautions, Murphy's Law guarantees that one day you will be on the phone and your teenagers will have a noisy argument, or the doorbell will ring, or someone will pull the cat's tail. When chaos erupts, it is important to end the call or put the caller on hold immediately. Do not involve your clients or associates in your personal life by including a detailed explanation in your apology. Simply apologize, end the call, deal with the crisis, and then call back. Apologize again, and get back to business. (And make sure you take steps to ensure that whatever happened doesn't happen again. Maybe tonight would be a good night for a family meeting.)

It may surprise you to know that the most annoying distractions reported by people who do a lot of business on the phone have nothing to do with family or household noises, and occur in central offices as much as in home offices. What noises have the most impact on how you are perceived as a professional? When you use your keyboard, rustle papers, or, heaven forbid, sip coffee while on the phone, it comes across loud and clear on the other end. So the most important piece of advice I can offer is this:

Use the mute button when you are not talking. ❖

I am the New Year.

I am an unspoiled page in your book of time.

I am your next chance at the art of living.

I am your opportunity to practice what you have learned about life during the past twelve months. All that you sought and didn't find is hidden in me, waiting for you to search it out with more determination.

All the good that you tried for and didn't achieve is mine to grant when you have fewer conflicting desires.

All that you dreamed but didn't dare to do, all that you hoped but did not will, all the faith that you claimed but did not have – these slumber lightly, waiting to be awakened by the touch of a strong purpose.

Author Unknown. ❖

Warm Welcome to New CVAC Full Members:

- Eileen Simone
- Jenny Megale
- Denise Hill
- Barbara Pashak
- Caroll Uschner
- Kathleen Wilson
- Laura Cyr
- Amy Leigh Crawford
- Marci Brown
- Gerald Teigrob
- Deborah Packwood
- Savita Baksh
- Jeri-Lynn Woods
- Sandra Knott
- Bisi Adepo-Basi

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 ❖

Do you have a suggestion or maybe an article that you would like to see appear in the next issue?

E-mail us: caroline@clickawayva.com

Nature gave us one tongue and two ears so we could hear twice as much as we speak ... Epictetus ❖

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 and broadcast the details of your event to the members. We'd love to post a picture of the event too! ❖

VA QUESTION AND ANSWER TIME



Q: Does anyone know how to sync Yahoo Calendar with Outlook? Or, alternatively, does anyone know of a free calendar like the one offered by Yahoo that can be sync'd to Outlook?

A: You should use Plaxo. Plaxo is a free download that helps keep all your contacts up to date, but it also gives you a user name and password that allows you to connect to your existing outlook calendar, task and notes. All you have to do when you use the online calendar is click on a sync button that will make all the new updates.

Q: I have recently learned that it is a fairly simple trick to "print" an html page to .pdf with Adobe. However, whenever I try to do this, my FrontPage 2003 basically crashes. So I don't get to the part where I can even distill the file (apparently this also needs to be done to make the process complete). Anyone been successful with this before? I wish to take my HTML online newsletter and offer a printer friendly .pdf version posted to my site.

A: Open Adobe Acrobat - click on Open as Adobe PDF. Make sure all files are selected in the Objects of type box at the bottom. Navigate to the HTML page you want to turn into PDF and click Open. It will take a few minutes and then voila - the HTML is now PDF. Click on File - Save As and that's it.

Q: My client needs a header on every page except the first page, and footer on every page, including the first page. Header and footer seem to be treated as an entity - if you turn one off, you turn them both off. I am stumped. Does anyone know any tricks that I am missing?

A: File >Page Setup - Headers and Footers> Different First Page Okay, so now you have the first page with a blank header and you enter the text for the first page footer. Then you scroll down to page #2, view the headers and footers, enter your text for both the 2nd page header and footer and you should see that the information from page 2 has been carried forward to all following pages from that point onward. In other words, on pages 3, 4, 5, etc. if you are inserting page numbers, they should still work properly in sequence. It's only the typed "text" information that will copy identically from the second page header and footer to the subsequent pages.

Q: Has anyone used a remote access program such as gotomypc.com and downloaded software to a client's computer remotely? Did it work well? Were there any problems? Anything that you would recommend?

A: I haven't had a need to use any remote access programs but am now considering it with one client. Have used multiple programs, such as WinVnc/tightvnc/realvnc (all free to download), RemoteWorkplace.net, and other virtual programs as well. One possible problem - you might have to reboot the computer remotely if you're downloading, some programs would allow you to do this from the start menu, some wouldn't - would also need the remote control software to start automatically when rebooted. If you run "shutdown -l" from the command line you can restart remotely as well. You might want to consider I'm InTouch available at a great price through the CVAC.

Q: I don't recall ever talking about electronic signature before....so those of you who have this service, can you tell me where I can find info on this (Google's has too many), if you need software/hardware, can you find some free ones?????

A: I don't know if this is what you are referring to, but I use Plaxo for my Outlook signature. The basic account is free and it syncs with your Outlook (2003) address book to update information on contacts, etc.

Q: An acquaintance of mine was asking me the other day about available options for toll-free numbers. He works from his home office (in Ontario) and would like to add a toll-free number (or separate line?) for his business. What services do people here have experience with, and which ones would you recommend, or not recommend?

A: toll-free number through Rogers (which used to be Sprint). It costs me \$4.95 per month plus \$0.10 per minute for each incoming call. It rings through on my regular phone line. I can't tell if the call is toll-free or on the regular line but I'm sure you could get a distinct ring for it. Telus offers a toll-free service. There is a set up fee of approx \$50. It's not a line in itself but call forwards to a number of the subscribers choice. Your acquaintance could use, if it's available in toll-free format, his same home office number, prefixed by 1-800 or 1-888 etc. The only other cost is .09 cents/minute for calls he receives from callers dialing his toll-free number. I would think Bell Canada offers a similar service and of course there are others which you could find via a Google search. In some cases the LD or set up fee may be less.

VA Questions and Answer Time is brought to you by Hilary Feindel of Feindel Company www.feindelcompany.ca ❖

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