Being a VA vs. Running a VA Business

BEFORE YOU START An honest look at what you're taking on

READ THIS FIRST

This is a short reality check, adapted from The Business of Virtual Assistance. It isn't here to talk you into starting a VA business. It's here to make sure you know what you're actually signing up for — because the gap between “doing VA work” and “running a VA business” is exactly where new owners lose money and attract the wrong clients.

A BUSINESS, NOT A JOB

“Remote” tells you where the work happens. It tells you nothing about who the worker is. A remote employee and a remote VA can sit at the same desk doing similar-looking tasks — the relationship around the tasks is what's completely different.

A REMOTE JOB	YOUR OWN VA BUSINESS
You work for an employer.	You provide services to clients.
They control the schedule, methods, and tools.	You run the delivery and respect the client's systems.
They pay wages through payroll.	You invoice under agreed terms and handle your own taxes.
They carry the business risk.	You own the marketing, pricing, and contracts.
They define the job.	The client defines the result; you run everything around it.

A client can set deadlines, outcomes, and quality standards without being your boss. But the more a client controls exactly when and how every task is done — rather than the result — the more the arrangement drifts toward employment, which is a legal question, not just a feeling.

WHAT YOU TAKE ON AS THE OWNER

The flexibility is real. So is the rest of the job. Running the business means owning all of this yourself:

- Defining the service, the scope, and what's excluded — before agreeing to work.
- Quoting the work, using a written agreement, and requesting payment before you start.
- Your own taxes: self-employment tax, quarterly estimates, and no employer to withhold them.
- Bookkeeping, software, marketing, and follow-up — the parts no one advertises.
- Protecting client information, keeping records, and declining work outside your scope or skill.

One rule sits under all of it: capability before claims. Don't sell a service you can't yet describe, practice, and deliver — a client shouldn't become your experiment.

WHAT IT IS NOT

It is not a remote job you apply for. It is not casual task work — being willing to help is not the same as running a business. It is not a get-paid-fast shortcut, and it is not a "do anything online" offer. A task is something you can do; a service is a defined offer that names the task, the client problem, the outcome, the boundaries, and how it's delivered.

THE MINDSET SHIFT

This is the real change. A job seeker asks, "Where do I apply, and what hours will they give me?" An owner asks, "What service can I offer, to whom, at what scope, and for what price?" A client is not a boss. Screening a poor-fit client is itself a business skill.

WATCH FOR — JOB-IN-DISGUISE AND SCAMS

> Look closer before saying yes to fixed employee-style hours, control of every step instead of the result, all-tools-supplied with ongoing supervision, expected exclusive availability, or "contractor" on paper and "staff" in practice. And the scam signs the FTC warns about: don't pay to receive a client, don't deposit a stranger's check and wire money back, and don't start work without scope, an agreement, and a payment process.

THE HONEST BOTTOM LINE

A VA business can be a real, flexible, worthwhile thing to build. It is also real work with real responsibilities, built deliberately before the first paying client — not a job you fall into. If that's what you want to build, The Business of Virtual Assistance walks the whole path in order, and its companion workbook and templates are free.

LEARN MORE *Module 1, What a Virtual Assistant Business Is*

GET THE FULL BOOK

The Business of Virtual Assistance: How to Start, Structure, and Run Your Own Virtual Assistant Business walks the entire journey in depth — the reasoning, decisions, examples, safeguards, and systems behind starting and running a VA business. No course, no coaching, no catch: buy the book once and you own the entire system.

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