



Marion Jackson, My Virtual Assistant – Howick Venus

What inspired you to start your business?

Back when I worked from nine to five as an Executive Assistant in the 'real world' my boss would often comment to me, saying "Marion, I reckon we could do this stuff from home!" We figured that both of us could work remotely and just catch up for a couple of hours each week so he could sign off on the projects I was working on. And as much as we both quite fancied the idea, that's as far as it went.

It wasn't until my boss left the company and I resigned from my job not long afterwards, that I started thinking a bit harder about the conversations we used to have. The more I thought about it, the more I was sure that a lot of the things I did in the office actually could be done 'virtually' from home (apart from doing the filing and making the coffee, that is!)

Tell us about your business?

My Virtual Assistant was launched on 13 March 2009.

Initially I tried to be 'all things to all people'. I was very much a 'newbie' and was extremely excited to be given any little piece of work that came my way. Oh, how things have changed!

Catering for a wide range of clients, specialist work includes building websites and ongoing website management, along with creating newsletters which ties in nicely with the website work.

What do you love about running your business?

What's not to love? I absolutely enjoy the creative side of building a website and I am honoured to work with truly fabulous people from all sorts of amazing businesses, which means I am exposed to the huge variety of new products and services they offer – I learn something new every day!

It's such a pleasure to be able to create affordable websites for start-ups and small to mid-sized businesses who don't have a website, think they can't afford a website, have a website that is out of date, or have a website that's just plain ugly!

Oh, And of course, the icing on the cake is, it only takes me 10 seconds to commute to my office!

What have been some of your biggest challenges?

Nine years ago I'd never heard of a 'Virtual Assistant' and it wasn't until I started doing some research that I stumbled across the term 'Virtual Assistant' (VA). I discovered that, whilst very popular in the USA, UK and even Australia, Virtual Assistants were pretty much unheard of in New Zealand, and in fact, back then there weren't very many Virtual Assistants in this country at all. So, one of my biggest challenges was not only trying to find new clients, it was also trying to educate a prospective client as to what a Virtual Assistant is, what we do and why that client might need one!

As the years have gone by, more and more people understand what a Virtual Assistant is and as a consequence, VA's have become one of the top technological breakthroughs to occur in the business world, as well as being a widely accepted means of business support.

Do you have a favourite quote?

Yes, it's actually my own quote:

'When you encounter an unexpected challenge, you have the choice to stay positive and understand that a setback is simply a test in the process of the kind of person you are and where you are headed.'

Who inspires you, and why?

I am always inspired when I hear what others have done to overcome adversity, like starting a new business or recovering from some sort of personal misfortune.

I do whatever it takes to see the positive side of everything and hearing successful stories from others spurs me on!

What growth have you experienced being in Venus?

I feel that people who are willing to actively participate in a networking group are usually people who are really keen to 'go for it' when it comes to business.

And of course, the people you hang around with and talk to can greatly influence who you are. So, being surrounded by a wonderful bunch of positive, uplifting ladies helps me to grow and thrive, not only as a business owner, but as a person.

Whether it's you giving referrals to me or me helping you in some way, or whether its supporting each other in becoming more confident, or maybe even forming a lasting friendship, being part of a dynamic networking group like Venus provides a fantastic opportunity to make long-lasting business connections, and really opens doors when it comes to connecting with influential people that you wouldn't necessarily be in exposed to in the outside world.

Women are redefining success and growing businesses on their terms: What does success look like to you?

I strongly believe in working to the highest standard of excellence as much as I can. This involves keeping up-to-date with new developments, focusing on client care, including attention, planning, delivering and following up, and maintaining client confidentiality at all times.

I also believe in being open and honest with my clients, because I want them to enjoy a positive experience when they work with me. I am dedicated to forming a working partnership with my clients and genuinely want to help them grow their business.

If my clients are successful then I am successful.

What's your favourite pastime when you are not working?

Boating, boating, boating! Oh, and did I mention boating?!

My partner and I enjoy many fabulous trips away on our boat, in and around the Hauraki Gulf, over to the Coromandel, Great Barrier Island and up to the Bay of Islands. We escape away for a weekend (or longer) whenever we can. After all, there's nothing nicer than being out on the water with good friends, on one of those balmy Auckland evenings, sipping a buttery Chardonnay and watching the sun go down...

I also love going to the theatre and anything to do with interior design. 😊

Marion Jackson

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