

KISS BRANDING & DESIGN

we create
BUSINESS | BRANDS
for entrepreneurs

Kiss Branding and Design in Melbourne, Australia, set off into the land of Social Media and put the call out to all Superhero Women in Business, otherwise known as the #empowerwomenwithkissmovement!

The response they got was incredible. Women from all over the globe saw the smoke signals that only superhero's can see and compiled their stories, all with a common drive behind them... to share their unique story to all the land in hopes of Empowering other women who just may read their story and relate to it. It might be their story that helps a superhero-in-the-making get out of bed and keep going... striving towards their dreams and goals for the future.

entrepreneur of the week



My Virtual Assistant is honoured to be accepted as one of the Superhero Women in Business and be part of the #empowerwomenwithkissmovement!

(scroll down to read My Virtual Assistant's story)

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marion jackson



Working from home and having run a Virtual Assistant business for over nine years now, I am often contacted by people asking about becoming VA, so I thought I'd share part of my story with you.

To anyone who is thinking about starting a new business or is in their first year or so of working for themselves, I have certainly been there and I know exactly how you feel.

At the beginning you are full of enthusiasm, ideas and excitement. Your business cards are printed, your office is set up, your website is up and running and you're ready to get stuck in. Only one thing is missing: Clients.

I launched My Virtual Assistant in March 2009, but it took me a full year before I could honestly say I had a 'real' client.

My first 12 months was spent doing bits of work here and there – most which came from a few supportive friends and some ex-bosses. I worked harder in that first year than I had ever worked before. I spent heaps of time doing research and promoting my business anywhere and everywhere I could think of, and at one point I was so desperate to get things off the ground, that I seriously thought about hiring a Wonder Woman costume and marching into local businesses wearing my bright red cape, shouting 'YOU NEED ME!' Of course, there was no way in the world I would ever do that, but that's how I frustrated I felt.

After a serious talk with my partner, we agreed that things really weren't working how we expected and that it was probably time I started to look for a job back in the 'real world'. I was about to pack it all in when I got four phone calls in one day and three of those are still my clients today!

Turns out that all that research and work I did to get myself noticed in that first year, actually paid off and I even managed to establish myself amongst my peers. I attended a couple of business events and when I introduced myself, people would say that they had heard of me and that I had a really good reputation – which was absolutely crazy to me, because I was still finding my way and really only had a small handful of clients.

At the beginning of my adventure, I had pretty much no budget.

I knew how important it was to have a business website, but I couldn't afford the prices that website companies were asking. There was only one thing for it – I needed to teach myself how to build and maintain my own website, something I had zero experience of. A good friend in IT pointed me in the right direction, however I really had no idea what I was doing, knew nothing about coding and had never heard of a style sheet. After a large amount of trial and error (mostly error!) I managed to get a bunch of content onto my website. It was pretty much the worst website ever – nothing lined up and the general layout was pretty awful, but at least I was online. I made an extremely corny video of myself and it took me four whole days to get that video onto my website, and even when it was up and running, the sound wouldn't work! After all these years I still have that video on my website and in a love/hate sort of way I guess I'm rather fond of it because it reminds me how far I've come and it shows that I'm a real person. And you know what... that corny old video has actually brought in work for me over the years! Who knew?!

I lived with that dodgy website for quite a few months, then one day, whilst browsing on Twitter I stumbled across a post about template websites. After a bit of research on various website companies, I found one that gelled with me and immediately set about completely rebuilding my website. At last, everything lined up and sat nicely on the pages.

Not long after that, a lady in my networking group mentioned that she had been quoted around \$3,000 to have a website built. She was importing handbags and she was also told she would have to pay \$80 to add every new handbag onto the site and believe me, she had a lot of product.

As a start-up business owner, she simply couldn't afford that much money. I told her how I had recently built my own website and suggested she could have a go at building one for herself. Instead, she asked me if I could build it for her. I explained that she would be a 'guinea pig' because it wasn't something I usually did, and she said 'go for it!' Well, she absolutely loved what I came up with – and most of all, I loved doing it!

When I launched my business, I tried to be 'all things to all people'.

I read a lot of articles written by experienced Virtual Assistant's in the UK and the USA – they all said 'narrow down your services and be good at what you do.'

Of course, I thought I knew better and carried on aimlessly. Even though work had started to come in, I spent a lot of time doing internet research, compiling large databases and even doing CV's for people – all of which I found extremely uninspiring.

I've always enjoyed art and design, and if my seventh form art teacher hadn't told me I would never work in a creative industry because I was too much of a perfectionist, I would have probably gone down a design/ branding/ marketing route when I left school. Instead, I became a Travel Consultant and worked in the travel industry for a total of 16 years.

Working as a Virtual Assistant a few of my clients asked me to design brochures and flyers. I simply I loved doing this type of work because it allowed me get my creative juices flowing. But, something else was also happening... I was getting more and more requests for websites and this even started generating word-of-mouth business. The more website work I got, the more it started to take on a life of its own ... and I was loving every minute. Plus, the awesome feedback from my clients (take a look at the Testimonials on my website, if you have time) is something I would never have dreamed of.

So, am I doing what I set out to do...? Nope, not by a long shot! But what I am doing is way more interesting and fun!

At this point I have built over 70 websites and if you told me nine years ago that my primary focus would be creating websites for start-ups and small to medium sized businesses, I would have spat out my coffee!

What I am trying to say is, if you're starting out in your own business, put in the ground work, stay focused, do what makes you happy, stick with what you are good at, disregard anything your school teacher might have said to you, and who knows where you will end up!

This little story is dedicated to Josh, for pointing me in the right direction; to Maria, for being my first website guinea pig; to Jenny, for inspiring me to write this story; and to my partner, Roger, for believing in me, encouraging me and letting me have a go.

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