



**Thomas Leonard International Virtual Assistant of Distinction
Award Submission**

Name: Janice D. Byer

Company Name: Docu-Type Administrative & Web Design Services
Docu-Type Web Design & Hosting
Equine Web Design

Location: Orangeville, Ontario, Canada

Website: <http://www.docutype.net>
<http://www.docutype.org>
<http://www.equinewebdesign.ca>
<http://www.docutype.org/blog>

Email: jbyer@docutype.net

Phone: 519-941-9523

Years in Business: 13+ years (start date: September 1998)

Certifications: MVA (Master Virtual Assistant)
CCVA (Certified Canadian Virtual Assistant)

VA Organizations:

CVAC (Canadian Virtual Assistant Connection)

I am a co-founder and Executive Director of CVAC, founded in 2001. Along with my partner, who is based in Barrie, Ontario, I contribute a fair amount of time to the association and its members. We are always working on ways to offer more to VAs to help them build their businesses (ie. special offers, discounts, resources, webinars, templates, ebooks, mentoring, email discussion list, etc.). We also share with our members any outside sources that will help them and pass on any courses that they may benefit from. Our Request for Proposal system has helped many of our members obtain contracts and new clients.

VANetworking.com

I have to admit that with everything I do for CVAC, I don't get a lot of time to contribute to other VA organizations but I am a member of VANetworking.com and provide input on their bulletin board when I can. We have also partnered together with them in the past on a few initiatives and they currently offer our book (more details below) as part of their VA training course.

Past Organizations: (some are no longer operating) Expert Coach at Virtual Assistance U; International Association of Virtual Office Assistants (IAVOA); Virtual Professionals; Virtual Business Group; etc.

Other Organizations:

Women Designers Group – offer insight and brainstorm with other designers through their email discussion list.

Also, I have contributed to a variety of VA and small business organizations over the years by offering my assistance where needed; writing articles; and sharing my knowledge through webinars and chat sessions.

Others: Canadian Entrepreneurial Women (CEW); Digital Women; etc.

Volunteer Positions:

My biggest volunteer position includes the various things I do for CVAC which takes up most of my allotted time for volunteering. However, when asked, I also step up and volunteer to help other organizations and individuals, both in the Virtual Assistant industry and outside, with projects here or there but I don't currently have a regular, steady volunteer position. I have done a lot of volunteering in the 13 years in business and held a variety of positions, including working on the OIVAC Steering Committee for 3 years.

Primary Services:

Administrative Services –

- Virtual Office Management
- General & Enhanced Word Processing
- Desktop Publishing
- PowerPoint Presentations
- Manuscripts

Web Related Services –

- Web Design (targeting small business, especially in the equine industry)
- Search Engine Optimization
- Web Hosting
- Flash Animation
- Animated Banners
- Photography

Percentage of business that is virtual:

100% of my business is virtual. I may go to a client's location for a meeting or clean up their personal computers but other than that, everything I do is done virtually.

Estimated number of clients:

I have approximately 30 clients that I do occasional projects for and about 10 that I provide services to on a regular basis.

Typical Client:

I don't have a "typical client" except that they are all small business owners/entrepreneurs (I don't have any corporate). Some are very successful businesses that have gross revenues in the millions but they are all businesses with a single owner who started from nothing.

A few years ago I streamlined some of my services to accommodate those in the horse industry so I guess you could say that a majority of my "typical clients" these days have or are around horses and need assistance running their equine businesses both online and off.

Positive impact on clients:

When working with my clients, I focus on helping them keep their businesses running smoothly. For many of them, they would never get letters typed or marketing material designed or their website developed and updated if they didn't have my help. I handle all of that for them so they can concentrate on "running" their businesses and generating revenue. As a result, I have helped my clients relieve some of their stress which has a positive impact on how they run their businesses and how they are portrayed by their clients and thus their businesses grow and so does their profits.

Before becoming a VA:

After graduating from college with a Micro-Computer Management degree, I worked in administrative positions in the office of a temporary employment company (I was in charge of the payroll, etc. for all of their temporary clients) and then in the automotive aftermarket industry (I worked with this company for many years... I started as the receptionist and then worked with the purchasing department, accounting department and the marketing department).

From there I became the office manager for my father's lawn care business which we moved to our property allowing me to work from home. I did everything to keep his business running smoothly, including dispatching the drivers; typing up quotations and other correspondence; designing marketing material; customer service; invoicing; payroll management and more.

My entire career has been in the administrative field so transitioning to the virtual industry seemed like the next logical step... with the help of modern technology.

Prior to starting my business, I took the Self-Employment Assistance program offered by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). This program was extremely helpful for me during the start-up phase and I still remember the instructors' advice and utilize it when possible.

Challenges:

The challenges I have had to overcome while building my business have changed along with the expansion of my business.

My first challenge was trying to make potential clients understand the benefits of working with a Virtual Assistant. 13 years ago the term VA usually meant a war veteran... it was not a term many people associated with an administrative assistant (in fact, some were still calling people with our skills secretaries). So, not only was I trying to build my client base, I was also working at getting the word out about the VA industry which made for some long days and a lot of work ☺

Running any business has its challenges... what is the best marketing strategy; how to spend money that will help grow the business; how to get help; etc. etc. My business is no different. There were hurdles that I have had to overcome here and there but they were all learning experiences and gave me the knowledge I needed to share my tips and help them overcome the same issues.

Right now, my biggest challenge is finding enough hours in the day. However, as a VA, I know the benefits of outsourcing and I have a number of VAs I can count on to take on projects that I need help with. Sub-contracting not only helps me to get some help with my own overflow, it also helps up-and-coming VAs to add to their experience and portfolio.

Keeping professional services up-to-date:

I don't have an issue with providing professional services. My clients will attest that I am always professional and treat them, and those they deal with, with the utmost of respect.

Keeping those services up-to-date can be a challenge however. I have found that taking refresher courses, attending webinars, downloading tutorials and books; and just plain "Googling" helps me to keep my skills current and my software up-to-date.

Advice for new VAs:

My advice to new VAs is to specialize. Don't try to offer too many services that you may have a problem performing. For many who are first starting out, the idea that the more you offer, the more business will come in. That, in fact, is not always true. You need to keep your service specialties to a minimum. Specialize in a certain service or two, not 10. Then market those specialties. You can still offer the other services but focus your marketing efforts on the services that will bring in the most clients and take advantage of your best skills.

Any other information:

I have spent the last 13 years not only trying to build my business but also trying to build the recognition of the Virtual Assistant industry and help other VAs become established and successful. It has become one of my passions... nothing feels better than to see a VA who has taken something from what I have suggested and made it a success.

The following are some of the other highlights of my career that have been just because I want to help other VAs become successful:

- Co-Authored “How to Build a Successful Virtual Assistant Business” (www.va-book.com). Our book is now the course material for the VA training course at Red Deer College (Alberta, Canada). We also give it away for prizes, etc. at events, such as OIVAC.
- Authored business building ebooks (www.docutype.net/business_ebooks.htm)
- Authored hundreds of articles relating to building a small business which I offer to websites and organizations who need helpful content. I also have some of them listed in my “Small Business & Web Design” blog at (www.docutype.org/blog).
- Mentored dozens of up-and-coming VAs and continually help those that email or call needing info on how to get started, etc.
- Offered free webinars on subjects that are helpful to VAs and other small business professionals.
- Volunteered with OIVAC for 3 years including offering a webinar each year; moderating other webinars; and chairing the IVAD committee.
- And, as mentioned earlier, I co-founded (2001) and operate CVAC.ca which is a resource for VAs. We offer everything from Links to Webinars to our successful Request for Proposal system.

I have also been honored to be the recipient of a number of awards during the past 13+ years. The following are the two awards that mean the most to me as they came at a point in my business when I most needed to hear, “You’re doing a great job, Janice!” They are part of the reason I figured out that what I was doing was successful and actually helping others to someday feel the same pride. They are:

- Winner of the Pinnacle Awards for Business Women of Distinction’s “Most Successful Start-Up”, 2000
- Winner “Home-Based Business of the Year”, 2000