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News & Info from ...



Newsletter: Vol. 11, Issue 5 - October 2011

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WELCOME!

Welcome to our new subscribers!

Don't forget if you are thinking of sending gifts to your clients this holiday season you'll need to have your orders in by **11 November** - [let us know](#) if we can help in this regard.



I'm pleased to announce that eSOS is now offering clients **affordable dial-in dictation solutions**. While other services offer upload of your files, this is the first offering made available to Australian-based authors where you can dial-in your dictation to a cloud-based provider for the cost of a local call! See our story below for more info!

Thinking of outsourcing your work offshore? Check our article on things to consider before you do.

"The first sign of a nervous breakdown is when you start thinking your work is terribly important." - Milo Bloom

The summary of the A4VB AU Chapter Australian VA industry survey is now available for purchase and you'll find the link below - the full report is coming and I'll let you know when that's available.

We also share the story of a colleague who fell victim to a credit card scam - read her story with links out to further info, below.

On a personal note, I'm currently involved in an online petition trying to save the last colony of spotted-tailed quolls in our region that will be detrimentally affected by a proposed mega-resort. Please consider adding your voice to the [petition here](#).

BLOG

Don't forget to check the left side bar for updates at the blog and podcast!

Have a great couple of months!

What's been happening at the blog? Latest articles:

Virtually yours

Lyn PB

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- [Cloud Storage Explained](#)
- [Is Your Customer Service Letting You Down](#)
- [October 2011 Tax Forum](#)
- [Is Service Dead? Outsource or Insource ... Things to Consider](#)
- [Social Media Means Engagement](#)
- [Keep Your Business Viable](#)

Dial In Dictation - the Cloud Solution

Recently a client ran into trouble with his PC-based dictation software - I guess it'll happen that you can't dictate with PC-based software when your PC dies! He needed an alternative to tapes so I got on the case.

The problem is, in Australia no one offers dial-in dictation solutions! I couldn't believe it. I had spoken about 18 months ago to my efax provider about this but they sold their business shortly after to a US-based organisation and weren't interested in pursuing it.

Bottom line: if you're an author wanting dial-in dictation solutions in Australia you can't get it - you have to dial a US-number so in addition to the monthly cost of the service and total minutes costs, you have international call costs to boot.

Enter [Cloud Call](#)! Whilst US-based, Mark from the Cloud Call team worked with me for over two hours coming up with a workaround for Australian-based authors.

PODCAST

What's been happening at the Virtual Business Show podcast? Click the titles to be taken to the shows!

[Today's VA Magazine](#)
[Multi-VA Practices](#)
[Q and A with Ken Phillips](#)
[Sham Contracting](#)

Remember : You can subscribe to the show via RSS, iTunes, Zune, or download the podcast at the iTunes Store. You can also subscribe via email for email delivery of whenever a show is uploaded!

I'm now pleased to tell you that eSOS can offer you dial-in dictation services that will only cost you a local call (plus \$10/month for the service with no per/minute dictation costs*).

How does it work?

- You dial a local number eSOS provides you
- Following the prompts, you dictate
- The recording is uploaded to a secure FTP server
- eSOS receives email notification the file is available
- eSOS types up and returns your work in the usual way

Can't I just go direct to Cloud Call?

Yes, but you will then be dialing an international number. Toll free numbers in the US **do not work outside the US** - which means even if you receive and dial the toll-free number, you will receive a recorded message to the effect "The toll-free number you are dialing is not available from your country". Previously there has been no way around this ... until now!

With the system eSOS is providing you will only pay the cost of a local call.**

If you are interested in taking up this service please [contact us](#) - otherwise just know that it's there for you should you need it!

(*Price subject to change. **Plus \$10/month service fee; price subject to change. Call costs higher from mobile phones.)

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Outsource or Insource ... Things to Consider

From time to time the question arises on various Virtual Assistant (VA) lists around the world about what VAs should be calling themselves.

Basically, the problem appears to be that after the term 'virtual assistant' was hijacked by outsourcing companies from cheaper labour countries and emerging economies like China, the Philippines and India after the publication of Tim Ferris's *The 4 Hour Work Week*, and the apparently wanton bandying about of the term on freelancing sites like Elance and Guru.com, a kind of confusion seems to have descended amongst the ranks of potential clients so that when a professional VA answers the question "What do you do?" with "I'm a VA/virtual assistant", the client immediately thinks of these cheaper operators. This can lead to difficulties when the time comes to negotiate a contract with the client, who can be operating under the misconception that a virtual assistant equates to "cheap" and a lack of understanding about what a virtual assistant actually is.

My belief has always been that **education** is the key.

[Read more ...](#)

Local Quoll Population Under Threat

I normally wouldn't share this sort of thing in the newsletter but it is a serious issue and one close to my heart as it is affecting my region.

Development Company Joyful View Garden Real Estate proposes to develop over 2090 acres of land into a mix of permanent resident and resort-style accommodation for overseas visitors and residents of up to 4000 people. The environmental impact of the mini-city may push the Spotted-Tailed Quoll to extinction in this region. Research (*Meyer-Gleaves 2007*) shows this area to be the **last stronghold** of the species in south east Queensland.

When the matter, currently before the Federal Government, is opened for public comment, we propose to send the petition to the Federal Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities asking him to reject the proposed redevelopment on the basis of the likely extinction of this endangered animal. The Wildlife Preservation Society Queensland is backing the petition and will make the approach on our behalf.



I would ask you to please consider adding your name to the petition as the more signatures we can get the better - and if we can show the Minister this is an issue that has far-reaching, global



interest - ie it's not just a local issue - we feel more weight will be added to our voice.

You can find the [petition here](#). Please also feel free to share amongst your family, friends and colleagues. We also have a [Facebook page](#) where we are posting updates on progress as well as other interesting Quoll-related facts. Feel free to 'like' us there and share.

Credit Card Scam

A very well-respected colleague of mine recently retold in her newsletter how she was the victim of a credit card scam. Kathie Thomas has been practicing online since the birth of the internet in the early 1990s. You can read what happened to her at [her blog post here](#). If you regularly use affiliates to sell your products I'd recommend you read it.

In a nutshell, the affiliate processed a series of stolen credit cards via Kathie's shopping cart, unknown to her at the time, with the result being that she lost the product she posted out, not to mention the cost of postpaks, postage and merchants fees. She is still getting chargeback letters from the banks - even though she has written to everyone involved asking them to contact her to confirm if their order was genuine or not and an offer to refund their money.

Cafepress and Coles in Australia has also apparently suffered a similar scam.

Kathie said in her recent newsletter:

"I'm not covered by business insurance for this at all and the banks only protect the 'customer', although in this instance I'm also their customer. But I'm viewed as the 'merchant' and in their agreement I have to honour any chargebacks or refund requests, especially since I haven't sighted the credit cards used for the purchases. So I'm a lot of money out of pocket for something that wasn't my fault and someone has gotten away with doing the wrong thing."

Was there anything Kathie could have done to avoid this?

"Not a lot unfortunately. The Australian banks do not match up names and addresses to credit card numbers and even if they did, the majority of fake purchases done on my site still had the products being sent to the owners of the cards - although not in all cases. But in EVERY single case, the email address was not the owner's email address and there was no way I could know this. They'd set up fake addresses and went to a lot of trouble to pull this scam."

How can you ensure this doesn't happen to you?

Kathie's advice:

"Keep aware. If you start getting a lot of sales for a product that you don't normally sell much of, probably best to hold off sending the product till you can verify the purchase is genuine. I had actually emailed some of the purchasers to find out where they found out about my books and they pointed me to a site that was promoting it. I contacted this person and they told me they were promoting via Facebook and Twitter. However, I've since found out that the email responses were via fake addresses and I wasn't really hearing from the owners of the cards. The email address might be fake, as it was in my case and the confirmation you receive back may not be from the person it should be. This may mean writing a letter or making a phone call if that information is available as being the best course of action. I'm in the process of updating and changing forms on my site to try and get more information about the purchasers before I send products - a pain for both sides!"

Kathie has told me that the US police are now involved in her case because the affiliate who pulled off this scam is resident in the US but of Chinese descent. The NAB Fraud Department in Melbourne are also investigating.

You can see info at Kathie's [newsletter here](#).

A4VB Aussie Chapter Survey



The summary of the comprehensive Australian VA industry survey has been finalised, and the full report is going to be available shortly. You can imagine it's a HUGE job pulling it together!

If you'd like to see a copy of the summary results, you can purchase a copy for just US\$9.97 [from the store](#). Click the 'Get it Now' link.

Once the full report is finalised it will be available from the same link at a price of US\$39.97.

(Why US dollars? The Australian chapter conducted the survey on behalf of the parent body, The Alliance for Virtual Businesses which is located in the US.)

[Find us on the web](#)

Connect to us on the web:



[Cafe Press Store](#)



Okay - so just as a bit of fun we've [opened a store](#) at CafePress where you can purchase eSOS items! T-shirts, coffee mugs, coasters, bags and notebooks! If you like the support we give and want to spread the word, this is a unique way to do so!

If you want your own CafePress store [click here to set one up](#) - or we can do it for you. [Just ask.](#)

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