Executive Stress
OFFICE SUPPORT

Newsletter – April 2002

Welcome!

Well, Easter has come and gone already… I hope those of you who celebrate Easter had a peaceful season, and that those of you who don't were able to use the break to spend time with family and friends.

Hope the Easter bunny was good to you!

So, what's new this quarter? Well, ESOS turned 2 in February, and in March we took the show on the road, proving just how versatile being a VA can be!

A fellow VA revamped the ESOS website, we changed hosters and will shortly be changing the domain name from the current, really looooooong one, to the easier-to-remember, type and spell (!) www.execstress.com.

We continue our technology and security tips this newsletter.

The sad news is that Kate Gorce-Macham, who was featured in a previous edition, has decided to close the door on Virtual Business Australia and has shut shop from Monday 8 April. A sad day for the virtual assistant industry in Australia as Kate was a strong believer in an industry that is just a bit slow getting off the ground. We'll miss you Kate.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter! Till next quarter.

Virtually yours

Lyn P-B

Website News

I decided last month that the ESOS website needed some revamping. Previous sites were an example of my amateurish attempts at web design and whilst functional, weren't exactly what I was looking for. I needed a professional!

Enter **Janice Kalyniuk** of JK Professional Administration Services, a fellow VA and an expert web designer.

Janice took content I provided and created a site which looked precisely like what I had in mind. Cleaner, easier to navigate, with a much more professional and polished look. And she did it in a week! (By the way, Janice is based in WA so it was a coast-to-coast collaboration, proving yet again that location is no barrier!) Janice also looked after upload to my hoster and submission to 20 search engines.

Please have a look at the new site. Your feedback is welcome!

We also changed hosters this month, moving the site over to Weblinx.

Weblinx offers comprehensive Web hosting services. Debian Linux & Windows 2000 Server, powers Weblinx servers, which support the following services:

- PHP, ASP, SSL, MySQL, CGI
- MS Front Page 2000, 2002 Extensions
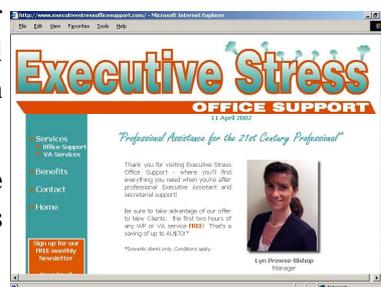- Perl 5
- Web Stats
- FTP
- 24/7 Customer Service
- Domain Registration
- Control Panel

With a range of hosting plans, Weblinx offers affordable domain hosting for businesses of all sizes. www.weblinx.com.au

A Screen Shot of the new ESOS site designed by JK Professional Administration Services

Technology/Security Tips

What is ...

NAT - Network Address Translation provides a way to hide the IP addresses of a private network from the internet while still allowing computers on that network to access the internet. Home users can use NAT to make one or more devices on a LAN appear as a single IP address to the outside internet - a method known as "masquerading". This allows for multiple computers in a home network to use a single cable modem or DSL connection without requiring the ISP to provide more than one IP address to the user.

Ports - Allow a computer to differentiate applications such as email data from web data. A port is simply a number associated with each application that uniquely identifies that application on that computer. Some common port numbers are 80 for web (HTTP), 25 for email (SMTP) and 53 for domain name services (DNS).

TCP & UPD Ports - TCP (Transmission Control Protocol) and UDP (User Datagram Protocol) are both protocols that use IP. Whereas IP allows two computers to talk to each other across the internet, TCP and UDP allow individual applications (also known as "services") on those computers to talk to each other.

A Firewall - Firewalls FAQ defines a firewall as "a system or group of systems that enforces an access control policy between two networks". In the context of home networks, a firewall typically takes one of two forms:

Software Firewall: specialised software running on an individual computer; or

Network Firewall: a dedicated device designed to protect one or more computers.

Both types of firewall allow the user to define access policies for inbound connections to the computers they are protecting. Many also provide the ability to control what services (ports) the protected computers are able to access on the internet (outbound access). Most firewalls intended for home use come with pre-configured security policies from which the user chooses, and some allow the user to customise these policies for their specific needs.

Antivirus Software (AVS) - AVS packages all look for patterns in the files or memory of your computer that indicate the possible presence of a known virus. AVS packages know what to look for through the use of virus profiles (sometimes called "signatures") provided by the vendor. It's been said here before, but bears repeating: **the effectiveness of AVS is dependent on having the latest virus definitions installed on your computer** so that it can look for recently discovered viruses. It is important to keep these profiles up to date. ∨

(From next newsletter we'll talk about security risks to home users.)

On the Road Again ...

In March, ESOS went "on the road" for two weeks, truly testing our contention that "location doesn't matter" when you are partnering with a Virtual Assistant.

Armed with laptop, mobile phone and an extra phone cable, I was able to service the needs of clients whilst travelling 2,500km around south-east Queensland and central and northern New South Wales - with no break in continuity of service and the same turn around time clients have come to expect.

Current technologies provided continuous access to email, whether from a hotel room or the middle of a 700 acre cattle property.

A 30 hour pre-paid Ozemail Internet account enabled me to access email accounts from any location for the cost of a local call.

With mobile telephone communications, including SMS messaging services, clients reported no difficulties contacting me during this two week period. "The same level of service was provided because I was kept informed by SMS of alternative communication arrangements", said Grant Murdoch of Murdoch Corporate Finance Pty Ltd.

Without exception, clients reported noticing no significant differences in the services provided during this period.

Peter Searson, Chairman of Wyatt Gallagher Bassett Pty Ltd, noted "This whole exercise took the concept of virtual assistant to another level. Who knows where your travelling VA will be next."

Australian/US Collaboration

When Greg Cole, Associate Director of the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, decided he needed an extra assistant, he resolved to look for a *Virtual Assistant*. But this VA needed to be different from the two assistants he already has - specifically, they needed to be located in Australia to take advantage of the time difference.

"As I spend a lot of my time out of hours responding to emails and writing proposals and reports," said Greg, "I needed a VA who would have the work completed after the end of my business day, ready for me next day to proofread and send out. It's truly a 24 hour operation."

Enter Lyn Prowse-Bishop, Manager of Executive Stress Office Support, who saw Greg's call for help via an email discussion group she belongs to.

"Working with a US-based client adds a whole new dimension to the VA work I do", said Lyn. "And it shows how truly global this industry can be."

Using digital technology, Greg dictates his documents and sends the audio file to Lyn via email or posts the file to an FTP server for download. Once received, Lyn transcribes the file, using Quikscribe digital transcription software, and emails the resulting document back to Greg. "In addition, I have an email account set up for Greg, so that from time to time I can respond directly to the emails he forwards me, with the Sender's address showing his details. This helps save him some more time."

In addition to document production and email response, Lyn also provides proofreading and copyediting services for any reports that Greg has already written, as well as some desktop publishing assistance.

You would think having an assistant so far away would prove difficult when a quick response to a query was required. Not so. Greg utilises email-to-mobile technology enabling Lyn to contact him whenever necessary.

"In fact, we used this quite recently when an audio file came down the line scrambled and I was unable to decode it," said Lyn. Emailing Greg's mobile that the file needed to be resent, "It was in my in-box within 2 minutes of my having sent the distress email!"

Greg also travels quite extensively to Russia and within the USA. "Of course, this makes no difference to our partnership," said Lyn. "Our locations are not important. I can complete the work no matter where Greg is in the world - nor where I am for that matter!"

"The arrangement is working out better than I expected," adds Greg. "It's just amazing! Almost too good to be true! I think it's going to improve our productivity 100%. Lyn's transcription of my work is just wonderful, and she clearly has no difficulty with my Tennessee accent. I am one grateful, happy customer!"∨

Grant adds, "I don't know how you did it. Everything went very smoothly and it was business as usual."

Of course, workflow was facilitated by the use of digital transcription technology, which enabled clients to continue to email their work for transcription, and me to transcribe it via Quikscribe transcription software I had pre-installed on the laptop!

So, next time you email your Virtual Assistant, you never know … she could be in her office, or on the beach - yet still able to service your business needs with the same efficiency and attention to detail you are used to!∨

"High quality service and speedy turnaround as always!!" - Annemarie Cross, AEC Office Services

New Clients

The following new clients benefited from partnering with Executive Stress Office Support and we welcome them all!

If you haven't discovered the benefits of partnering with a VA yet, give us a call and we'll answer all your questions.

¶ Stuart O'Neill - Guerrilla Real Estate (Proofreading/Copyediting/Shorthand Transcription)

¶ David Beard - Life & Business Planning (Coaching) (Document Preparation/Editing)

¶ South Bank Property Management (Byvan) (Tape transcription)

Happy Anniversary!

On 28th February 2002, we turned 2! The time has flown and in that time the business has gone from strength to strength.

The VA industry is still an emerging one in this country, but more and more business people are realising the benefits of partnering with a professional Virtual Assistant.

Some interesting stats for you:

<u>No. regular clients</u>: 15

<u>First client</u>: Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, 21 March 2000

<u>Demographics</u>:

2 clients in the USA - one on the west coast, one on the east.
9 in Brisbane and surrounds
1 Queensland south coast
1 Queensland north coast
1 northern NSW
1 Victoria

We're 2!

New clients taken on by year:

2000: 3   2001: 8   2002: 4

<u>Most requested services</u>:

- Transcription
- Copyediting/Proofreading

A bit of a graphical representation of income and expenses over the last two years is below. I want to thank our regular clients for their continued support and belief in not only me and my professionalism and skills, but also in the industry as a whole. **You** are the reason for such a great year in 2002!!

Thank you! ∨
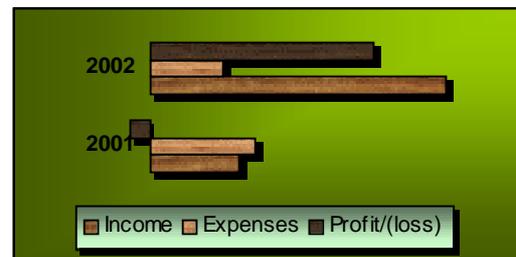
VAs in the News!

It's been a very big couple of months for VAs in the news ... unfortunately, again this has largely been in the US.

Renae Bolton of Cleveland, Ohio, is owner of Triple J Wordprocessing Co, and was profiled on Idea Café (www.businessownersideacafe.com). Providing virtual administrative assistant services, desktop publishing, and internet relationship marketing, Renae says her business helps people "live more peaceful lives". Renae works out of her dining room but she has enough business turnover that she outsources to other VAs.

Jivonne Gilliam of The SOHO Solution, was featured as "Biz-eWoman of the Month" by biz-eWomen.com of Atlanta.

Jackie Eastwick of Allison Lane Business Solutions was profiled in the Philadelphia Inquirer who ran an article on the VA industry as a whole. "I was doing a flyer for a friend...and thought if I could do it for her, I could charge other people for it," said Eastwick, who launched her business in April 1999 after working as an insurance underwriter for years. Kristin Taliaferro, a Dallas-based life and career coach, hired Eastwick a year ago. "I think [virtual assistants] are higher caliber," said Taliaferro, who used to have an in-the-flesh assistant. "They're really driven if they want to work from home. The other advantage is they're paid by the hour, so you don't get locked into a monthly or annual salary. Another advantage is, because they work from home, they're very, very organised. They have more of an edge; people who work for you [at an office] can get a bit lazy."

Teri Johnson, the sole proprietor of SonShine Office Solutions in Perkasie, was featured in the same article.

And Lyn Prowse-Bishop (yup, that's me!) along with other Australian SOHO and micro business owners, was quoted in a new book by Barbara Gabogrecan (MD of the Micro Business Network in Australia) - "How to Start a Business on your Kitchen Table". The book will be available in stores from the end of April. ∨

"Professional Assistance for the 21st Century Professional!"

Phone: +61-7-3379-8360
Fax: +61-7-3379-8360
Email: lyn@execstress.com

PO Box 1036
Oxley Qld 4075
Australia