



Core Competencies for Emerging VAs (Second Edition)

2004-2011

The “Core Competencies for Emerging VAs (Second Edition)” consists of five core elements, **Professional Skills, Personal Skills, People Skills, Education and Office Standards**. Each core element is broken down to include the essential ingredients originally provided by the 250 plus VAs and the additions of the 17 Virtual Assistant Training Organizations.

Professional Skills

The core element of Professional Skills contains numerous components, making this element the driving force of any Virtual Assistant business. Competent VAs possess the drive and determination to help their clients succeed; understand their ideal client and how their strengths can greatly improve the client's life and business; put their client first by being resourceful in finding appropriate solutions for the client, whether those solutions include the VA or not; and are a good fit for their client.

Collaboration is another important component in the Professional Skills category. It essentially means the VA possesses the ability to work as part of a team and to effectively contribute solutions, offer suggestions and make recommendations to problems the client may experience.

In any situation, Communication is a necessary Professional Skill. It includes excellent customer service, verbal, non verbal and written communication skills. Competent communicators have the ability to drive a discussion to a positive outcome and possess excellent listening skills. These essentials will assist a VA to stay in business for a long time.

Another trait of a competent and successful VA is the ability to accept and/or delegate any given task or assignment effectively and wisely.

Established Productivity is a competency that shows the quality of the VA's work and often includes client testimonials and/or having verifiable references to provide when asked.

Another core competency is Executive Presence: the ability to be and act professionally in all circumstances. This includes dressing professionally along with any materials that may be displayed for the public to view.

Having a Professional Attitude and Aptitude for business is critical for a VA's business success. VAs should have a basic understanding of business operation and budgeting. They should: know how to create a business and marketing plan; have a basic understanding of bookkeeping; have the ability to maintain accurate records; utilize contracts and agreements; and manage time effectively.

Competent VAs exhibit outstanding Professional Integrity. They adhere to a set of ethics binding on their conscience, and admit to and correct mistakes. They outsource or refer a client who requires services they lack the skills to provide and never knowingly procure another VA's client or subcontracted client. They never discuss subcontracted rates with a contractor's client. VAs respect the copyrights of colleagues and others' intellectual property. In essence they avoid plagiarism, software piracy, etc. Additionally the competent VA upholds strict client and colleague confidentiality.

Personal Skills

The core element of Personal Skills is the root of a VA business. A high level of proficiency in the services of their chosen niche, good organization skills, good spelling, grammar and punctuation skills and a basic understanding of web and computer technology are essential.

People Skills

People Skills, another core element, includes the ability to be articulate, respectful, tactful, confident and passionate.

Education

The core element of Education is broken down into two sections: Structured Education and Education of the Marketplace. A new VA should have five years of relevant work experience or have completed a recognized virtual assistant training program. They possess basic office skills, are proficient with software programs they use, and are proficient with email, the Internet and instant messaging (IM) programs. A competent and successful VA constantly pursues education for their professional development. Education of the Marketplace includes sharing their knowledge with the VA community and a willingness to educate the public.

Office Standards

The core element of Office Standards relates to the needs of any virtual office. The minimum office set up a VA needs to thrive includes a reliable computer, an Internet connection, a backup system, a phone, currently accepted and widely used business software programs or a program suite that their clients use, and a reliable antivirus software program.

The five Core Elements have been assembled with the global participation and feedback of over 250 VAs and 17 virtual assistant training organizations. It is not an exclusive list to starting a Virtual Assistant business. It is the combined expectations of what those VAs and organizations believe clients are looking for when searching for the perfect VA. Even if a VA does not have each of these “Core Competencies” they are still able to operate a VA business.

Bulleted list of Core Competencies, broken down by category:

Professional Skills:

Client Success:

Drive and determination to see their clients succeed

Understands their target market client and how their strengths can greatly improve the ideal client's life and business

Puts the client first by being very resourceful in finding appropriate solutions for the client, whether those solutions include the VA or not

Good fit for their client

Collaboration:

Ability to work as part of a team

Can effectively contribute solutions/suggestions/make recommendations to arising problems

Communication:

Excellent customer service skills

Excellent verbal, non-verbal and written communication skills with the ability to drive a discussion to a positive outcome

Excellent listening skills

Delegation:

The ability to accept and delegate effectively and wisely

Established Productivity:

Quality of the work

Testimonials

Verifiable References

Executive Presence:

The ability to be professional (both in person and virtually)

Professional Attitude and Aptitude

A basic understanding of business operation

Budgeting

Creating a business plan

Creating a marketing plan

Basic understanding of bookkeeping/ability to maintain accurate records

Contracts and agreements

Time management

Professional Integrity:

Abide by a set of ethics binding on your conscience

Communicates well with clients, subcontractors and project managers

Willingness to admit and correct mistakes

Outsource or pass on a client/clients who require services you lack the skills to provide

Never knowingly take another VA's client or subcontracted client

Never discuss subcontracted rates with contractor's client

Respect copyright of colleagues

Be respectful of others' intellectual property (i.e. plagiarism, software piracy, etc.)

Uphold strict client and colleague confidentiality

Personal Skills:

Competent with Skill Set:

High level of proficiency of the services in their chosen niche

Good organization skills

Good spelling, grammar and punctuation skills

Understanding of basic web and computer technology

People Skills:

Articulate

Respectful

Tactful

Confident

Passionate

Education:

Structured:

Five years of relevant work experience or completion of a recognized virtual assistant training program

Basic office skills

Continuing education for professional development

Proficient with software programs used

Proficient with email, Internet and instant messaging (IM)

Education of Marketplace:

Willing to share their knowledge with the VA community

Office Standards:

Basics:

A reliable computer

Internet connection

Phone

Currently accepted and widely used business software programs/suite

Antivirus software