

THE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL ASSISTANTS CONVENTION

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Chat with VA Industry Leader

Kathy Goughenour



Host, Sharon Williams
The 24 Hour Secretary

Chat with a VA Industry Leader Podcast Series

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Chat with a VA Industry Leader Podcast Series Kathy Goughenour Interview

Williams: Hi everyone, and welcome to the Chat with a VA Industry Leader. Today's interview is sponsored by the Online International Virtual Assistants' Convention, at OIVAC.com, and [The 24 Hour Secretary](http://The24HourSecretary.com). We will discuss ways to increase a VA's knowledge, skills, abilities, and enterprise in running a successful business, and other important topics from our inspiring VA experts. Check out OIVAC for upcoming convention details.

The title of today's interview is Inspiring VA Experts' Tips, Tricks, and Secrets. Kathy Goughenour reveals how every virtual assistant can increase their knowledge, skills, abilities, and expertise in running a successful virtual assistant business.

My name is Sharon Williams. And today, I'm talking with a VA expert, Kathy Goughenour, about the tips, tricks, and secrets every virtual assistant needs to shortcut their way to success and get greater results faster. So today, let's welcome Kathy.

Kathy is a well-known VA expert and has graciously consented to this interview to share with us all the cool tips that she can (inaudible) your results and help you increase your knowledge, skills, and abilities.

So Kathy, thank you again for joining us on this live interview. Let's just jump right in.

Goughenour: Sharon, thank you so much for having me on here today, I really appreciate it.

Williams: Well, first of all, thanks for joining us today, helping out with this great idea of talking to virtual assistant experts to get a feel for what's going on in the industry from your perspective. So, tell me a little bit about yourself in terms of your background, your education, and your experiences.

Goughenour: I started my VA business way back in 2001. And I started out as a real estate virtual assistant.

Williams: Oh, okay. So, I'm assuming you're not working as a real estate virtual assistant now or are you?

Goughenour: No, I am not. So, what happened was I built my real estate VA business into a six-figure business. I had 70 clients...

Williams: Oh.

Gougenhour: And I had built a team of five VA subcontractors. And I was working seven days a week, 14 hour days, and I am not exaggerating. And, you know, if there was a mistake to be made as a new VA, I made it. And one of the big ones was working way too many hours and burning myself out. So, when the real estate bubble burst and the market tanked, I lost about three quarters of my client list in thirty days, because they just dumped their real estate business.

Williams: Oh, wow.

Gougenhour: Yeah. And so, what I did—at the time, I had just finished developing my expert VA training program. So, I thought well, I'm going to put this to the test. I'm going to see if I can follow my own advice, and recreate a brand new area of specialization and get clients. So, I took my own training, and in thirty days, I had identified a new target market, a new niche, which was helping professional speakers. And I did marketing for professional speakers, is what I did. And I had ten clients in thirty days.

Williams: Wow. What's the name of this program again?

Gougenhour: My training program is called ExpertVATraining.com.

Williams: Okay. Okay. I know there's a lot of VA's who may be interested in that program.

Gougenhour: Yeah. And, you know, I put it to the test, and that was eight years ago! And for the next six years, I worked as a VA for professional speakers, while I was building my expert VA training and coaching business. And almost two years ago, I let my last client go. Well, I really do have one client, but I only do a little tiny bit of work for him every month, so I don't really count that. So now I'm just a trainer and coach for VA's. Just. I have lots and lots of VA's as students and graduates. And I love helping women build their businesses.

Williams: Well, that's fantastic. Let me just back up a little bit. When you transitioned to the trainer, did you have any formal training or educational training behind that as a foundation?

Gougenhour: Yes, I absolutely did. In fact, one of the things that I believe in more than just about anything else, is taking the fast and easy route to success. And I think the way to do that is to find someone who has accomplished what I want to accomplish, and work with that person as my trainer and coach. And then, you know, they may have made all the mistakes and I learn from them. So, I took a lot of online training to learn how to do all of those things.

Williams: Okay. So, is that one recommendation you would give to VA's who are, not only just entering the industry, but maybe considering transitioning to another area of specialty?

Gougenhour: Yeah, absolutely. If you want to struggle, take forever to achieve your goals, and not have very much fun doing it, do it on your own. But if you want to go really fast and have a lot of fun, and not make a bunch of mistakes, hire a trainer and coach who has been there, done that, and can teach you how.

Williams: Well, you know, that leads me to another question, something that quite frankly, perturbs me quite a bit sometimes, because there are VA's or people who have worked in the industry, and they have failed. And they say, okay, well, I was a VA for a few years. It didn't work out for me for whatever reason. But I'm now going to become a trainer without actual training experience or taking on courses.

To me, they're actually becoming trainers as another way to make a quick buck. And they put out their page, you know, they say they're a VA; they get a couple other VA's to take their course; and all of a sudden, even if the VA is failing in their business, all of a sudden they say that they're professional trained virtual assistants. But they don't succeed. And to me, the failure is on the trainer, because the trainer has not equipped the individual VA, and in a lot of instances, they're not equipped themselves.

I hear from you that you took the path, you took the necessary training so that you could learn the field that you wanted to learn from experts in the field. So how do you identify who is an expert versus someone that's just throwing out a shingle?

Gougenhour: Yeah, so Sharon, I totally feel your pain, and I have seen way too many of those kind of coaches and trainers also. So, let me just give how I handle this in my own training program. First of all, I don't allow anybody to sign up for my training program unless I have personally spoken with them, because I want to know that I can help them; that they are at the level already where I can guide them through to be a success. And there are many, many people I talk to who I do not offer to take my training program, for that reason.

Williams: Okay.

Gougenhour: Because they must, yeah, they must be able to be a success. The other thing that I do, and you know, anybody who thinks about signing up for a training program should ask for this. Okay. I offer to introduce a potential student to other students that have graduated from my program or that are currently in my program, so they can talk one on one with them, and find out what it's really like to take my training program, not from me, but from actual students. And in fact, I even let the potential student choose who they want to talk with. Because, you know, have you ever asked for testimonials and you think, hmm, are they only giving me the good ones, where are the bad ones?

Williams: Absolutely.

Gougenhour: Yeah. So, I have an expert VA directory, and you get to be in my expert VA directory only if you have taken my training and you have your website up. And you are, you know, working as a virtual assistant. And you can find that directory at ExpertVATraining.com, and then click on find a VA. I have the potential students go there, read over the bios, and then tell me who they'd like to be introduced to so they can talk with them about what it's really like to take my training. And that's what I would recommend for anybody who's thinking about taking training. Talk to the past students, and find out what it was really like.

Williams: Okay. Well, that's enough on background. Let's get to some real fun stuff.

Gougenhour: Oh, yea.

Williams: What is a tip that you wish someone had shared with you when you first started out?

Gougenhour: I wish they would have shared with me that you'll never earn as much money as a generalist as you will as a specialist.

Williams: Now, why is that tip so valuable? And there are a lot of generalist VA's out there. So I don't know—

Gougenhour: I know that.

Williams: Does that sound discouraging to them, or is that an incentive to specialize?

Gougenhour: That's an incentive to specialize. And, Sharon, I know I'm speaking to the choir here when I tell you this, but there are many, many reasons why this is important. One is, you cannot market to everyone successfully. When you market to everyone, you market to no one.

Williams: Correct.

Gougenhour: And when you specialize, yeah, when you specialize, you only market to those people that you are a specialist for. So, one of the VA's that has graduated from my program, her name is Lorraine Castle, she specializes as a Christian author virtual assistant. Now, did she know to specialize as that right off the bat? No. She narrowed her area of specialization further, and further, and further as she trained and coached with me. But you have to make a choice up front, even if it's not what you end up doing.

Like for example, I started as a real estate VA, and then became a speaker VA. But unless you make that choice—and I can give you a tip on how to choose that—but unless you make a choice and jump in there with both feet and become a specialist, you will never earn as much money per hour as you want, per project as you want, and you

will never become known as someone that everybody can refer you to. If you're a generalist, nobody is going to refer anyone to you. If you're a specialist, like for example, Lorraine, right away, everybody who meets her knows if you are a Christian author or know a Christian author, refer them to Lorraine, that's who she helps.

Williams: Okay. Now, you mentioned you could give us another tip. So, you know I'm going to pounce on that. Tell us this other tip.

Gougenhour: So, the best way to put this tip into action is to research exactly what you want to do and who you want to do it for to determine if it's a niche that's profitable.

Okay. And let me give you an example. When I was researching to come up with my new area of specialization after my real estate VA business went down the tubes, I thought I love reading and I love authors, and I love reading fiction. So maybe I could become a fiction author VA. I did my research, and what I discovered was that fiction author VA's have no money. They're broke, and they're not going to ever probably make money from their books, so they can never afford to pay me.

So, then I thought, okay. During my research, I ran across business book authors. And I thought, okay, do they make money. And what I discovered was that a really big part of writing a business book usually is to market your own business. They're not really doing it to make money, they're doing it to market whatever business they have. And what I discovered was that professional speakers specifically really need a book published in order to get highly paid speaking gigs. Viola, I have new target market.

Williams: So, do you, or did you, and do you recommend for the VA's in your training, that they create a client persona form that answers questions about who their ideal client is; why it is the ideal client; the demographic information about them, etc.?

Gougenhour: Oh, absolutely. In fact, in addition to doing online research, part of what they have to do—each of my lessons has an action item, so they actually have to go do these things before they complete that lesson—and they have to do both online research about their target market, they need to join Facebook groups where their target market is and learn things about them, and they also have to interview some of them.

Williams: Oh, okay. So, then they conduct online research, offline research—

Gougenhour: Yeah.

Williams: Join different groups—

Gougenhour: And then—

Williams: And I think it's really an extra bonus tip that I think you're sharing is for them to actually interview members of those groups so that they can get some insight into the things they're looking for and how the VA can assist them.

Gougenhour: Right. Sharon, that's exactly right. And, you know, you approach that interview simply with I'm a student learning to how to be a VA. This is an assignment that I have to learn more about my target market, would you do a fifteen minute interview with me? And what's interesting is a lot of times, they'll end up with their first client by doing that.

Williams: Oh, well, that's a good tip too. Don't forget. Put your pitch in if you want to at the end of the interview, or leave it hanging so that the client can consider. You may say something like well, you know, I'm going to send you a copy of the interview that if you want to use it, you can. And that's your opening to get back in touch with that person you interviewed to see if they have a need for your services.

Gougenhour: Uh-huh. Yep. And I do have a tool that I'd like to share with you—

Williams: Absolutely.

Gougenhour: If you don't mind. Okay. And I have nicknamed myself the niche whisperer. Now, I know that doesn't just roll off your tongue, but I am very, very good at having a conversation with a VA and helping them identify their top three niches to research. Okay. And I do that through my free *More Clients, More Profits Breakthrough* session. And they can apply for one of those sessions at my website, ExpertVATraining.com, and at the top just click on the free strategy session button.

Williams: Okay. So hopefully, if our VA's did not get all of that down, we will have links with the podcast that you'll be able to click through to get to the various sites that she's referring to and recommending. Now, I know you just gave us a nice tip, as a matter of fact, you've shared several tips, and we appreciate that. But let's move a little further. Please identify a cool trick that you discovered that would really help the VA's in our audience.

Gougenhour: Okay. So, I have so many of these things, I had to pick just one. And this is one—

Williams: Well, no. I'll let you do two. If you have that many, you can do two.

Gougenhour: Well, the next one we're going to call a secret, because you said oh, yeah, I want you to have a trick and a secret. So, we'll call the next one a secret. But this is a trick. And honestly, this is my number one way to get clients. And there's many, many ways you can get clients, but this is my number one way to get clients the fastest. Okay?

Williams: Okay.

Gougenhour: And it is not to focus on getting one client at a time. Which for some reason, you know, sometimes we have that in our mind, I've got to contact one person, get them. No, no, no. Instead, I want you to focus on building relationships with other business owners who have the same target market as you have, but who provide different services than you do. And then you can refer clients to each other. So, let me give you a specific example.

Williams: Okay.

Gougenhour: Yeah. As a real estate VA, I specialized in writing web content for agents. Okay. And I built relationships with website developers who developed websites specifically for real estate agents. So, when an agent contacted me for help building a website, I referred them to the website developer. And when the website developers got agents who needed content written, they referred those agents to me. So instead of talking with someone and building a relationship and getting one client, I built a relationship with website developers who could send me hundreds of clients.

Williams: So, it's like a reciprocal relationship?

Gougenhour: Sure. But don't keep track. Okay. That's one of the—be giving, be open. Give first. Don't expect stuff. Don't keep track. Don't say well, I sent them two clients and they didn't send me any. Right?

Williams: Uh-huh.

Gougenhour: That's a way to get the universe to say, oh, you're just a stingy little girl. We're not going to send you anybody because you aren't generous. And have an abundance mindset. So be generous, be giving, build that relationship, and then it will go back and forth both ways. And you will be very, very happy.

Williams: Well, you know, that reminds me when I first started my business back, oh, God, 1990. Gee whiz. That's unbelievable. I was a member of several chambers of commerce. And one of the roles that I played was an ambassador. So, we were responsible for setting up the new member meetings. And as part of that role, I would always have recommendations of members of the chamber to give to the new member so that they could connect and network with each other, and hopefully, you know, get business from each other. And that helped me grow my business, because I was the connector, and I always connected people to each other. And they in turn would get back in touch with me for the services that I offered. So, I fully understand, you know, what you're describing, because I experienced it and put it into my game play way back in 1990.

Gougenhour: Yeah. Isn't it a brilliant way to get clients? And to me, it's the best way to get that steady stream of clients coming into you.

Williams: Okay. So, if that doesn't work for someone, what other suggestion would you give? Not a secret, but just another trick that they can apply. Because maybe some people are not as outgoing; they call themselves introverts, even though if they're running a business, I'm not sure how you can be an introvert and want to make money. But they call themselves introverts. So, what's another way or another trick that you can offer them to get them into the flow of making money continuously?

Gougenhour: So, they need to figure out—and this is one of the things I do, exactly what you're talking about, Sharon. You know, I first share this tip and exactly how to do this, how to research, how to reach out, how to build those relationships. And if they are just so opposed to that that they won't even try it, then we move on to other ways of marketing your business, because there are many ways to market your business. And what I recommend doing at that point then, is deciding, okay, what do I enjoy doing. Do I enjoy being on Facebook; do I enjoy Twitter; do I enjoy blogging; do I enjoy interviewing like you're doing. What do I like to do? And then you do that to get your clients.

So, for example, with you, you like to interview. You could interview your target market. You know, if your target market was real estate agents, interview real estate agents, learn more about them. Every time you talk with them, ask them if they know somebody that they could refer to you.

Let's say you're a writer. Guest blog. Research and find those blogs where your target market hangs out, and offer to guest blog for them. And then at the end of your blog post, you put a link to your site. That's a good way to do it behind the scenes.

If you specialize, like for example, if you're specializing in Facebook, for example, then you need to be marketing on Facebook. Because I can tell you right now that when people hear that you're a Facebook specialist, they're going to go look at your Facebook account, and you better be using it.

So, there are several different ways to get clients coming in, and it needs to be based on where you're specializing and where your comfort zone lies.

Williams: Okay. Now, let's get to the secrets. Tell us a secret that VA's need to know when it comes to developing their business, or any other secret you'd like to share.

Gougenhour: Okay. Sharon, you know, you shared with me just before we started this that you are upfront about everything, you know, you don't pull any punches. And this is where I'm not going to pull any punches with VA's, because this is something I see that they are doing that is really, really costing them a lot of money, a lot of time, and not benefiting them. And I call this the mentality of if I built it, they will come. And here's what VA's are doing. They are chasing the hot skills. They believe that if they just learn whatever the hottest skill is, then clients will find and hire them. And it does not happen. So, then what they do is they purchase the next training that they think is going to be

the hot skill that they need, and they learn it, and nobody hires them. And you can see where I'm going with this—

Williams: Yes.

Gougenhour: So, they'll learn InfusionSoft, they'll learn Click Funnels, and on, and on, and on. And they've wasted literally tens of thousands of dollars learning skills and they never get clients. So instead, they need to start with how to get clients. They need to learn how to get clients, how to onboard clients, and how to work as a professional proactive virtual assistant. And after they learn that, they can specialize in anything they ever want to, because they know how to get clients no matter what area that they specialize in.

So if like me they start out in real estate, something happens with that target market—well, let's say for example they started out in—gosh, what was the name of that social media that's gone by, MySpace. Let's say they specialized in MySpace. MySpace is gone. Now what will they do? If they know how to get clients, they just choose the next thing they want to specialize in, and they'll have all the clients they want pouring in.

Williams: So, say for example, and there are quite a few VA's who do this currently. They lost their job or they're at home with the kids and they decide okay, I want to work from home for whatever reason. They hear the term virtual assistant, they visit some websites, and you know, see that there are quite a few there. And they say oh, I can do that, or I can do that. Using them as an example, what happens when they step out, they don't have the training, they don't answer any of the important questions to decide, number one, if they have the entrepreneurial spirit to run a business and be successful at it. How do you motivate them to learn those basics that you just described?

Gougenhour: When they talk with me, how I motivate them, Sharon, is not difficult at all. I tell them the facts and figures of what I've experienced over the last eight years of teaching women how to start their VA business. I share with them the women who have come to me, and said oh, you know what, this would be nice training to take, but I don't really need any training, I can do this on my own. And then, within the next three years—I watch them, you know, and I tell them, I say, you know, email me, let me know how things are going, let me know what area you specialize in, you know, send me a link to your website. Because you know, I love to network with VA's. And I'll hear from them a little bit here and there, and then I see that they're gone. Because they didn't have anybody to support them; they didn't have that training; they didn't have that knowledge. And if they don't shut their business down within the next one to three years, they come back and say, you know what, I wish I would have taken your training three years ago. Here I am, please help me. I'm still only charging \$20.00 an hour and I have one client.

Williams: I hope everyone heard that. It's very important. So, you know, I think—

Gougenhour: It's true. You've seen it too, haven't you, Sharon?

Williams: Oh, absolutely, absolutely.

Gougenhour: And you know, Sharon, yeah, the other thing I tell them is I don't care if you don't take my training. There are other training programs out there. In fact, if I'm not the right one for you, and you'd like me to refer you to somebody else, I'm happy to do so.

Williams: Uh-huh.

Gougenhour: Because I have affiliate, you know, I have affiliate programs with lots of others, and I know them and I can tell you who would be a good match for you. But please take training, because I don't want you coming back in three years like so many have and saying I'm charging \$20.00 an hour and I have one client or two clients.

Williams: So, you know, to me, that's a description of a challenge that VA's face today. New VA's as well as those who have been in the industry for a while. When the skills that they learned or the field that they felt they could specialize in either evaporated or slowed down and it's not providing enough income for them to meet their needs or live the lifestyle that they want. So, describe another big challenge that VA's face right now, besides the fact that they may need to transition from one speciality to another.

Gougenhour: Okay. So, the biggest challenge, and I'll be interested to see if you agree with me on this. But the biggest challenge that I see VA's facing right now is knowing how to position themselves as what I call a professional VA. And let me tell you what I consider a professional VA. That's a VA who is charging \$45.00 and up or something equivalent with a package. They know how to get clients; they know how to onboard clients; they know how to help clients through the process of working with a VA. They are proactive, they do not sit back and wait for their clients to tell them what to do, because they are an expert in their area and they already know what to do.

Okay. So, they are not positioning themselves in that way. Instead, they're feeling like nobody's going to pay my rate; I need to lower my rate, there's nobody out there who's going to pay this. And they either lower their rate; they give up; they feel down about it. And I can tell you for a fact, because I am living it right now, that there are tons, and I don't even know how many, thousands, probably hundreds of thousands, probably millions of entrepreneurs out there looking for professional VA's of this caliber. Can I give you a specific reason of how I know this?

Williams: Well, before you do, what if a person says they're a professional VA, and they meet the criteria that you just mentioned, but the client for whatever reason, does not want to pay the \$40.00, \$45.00, \$60.00, \$100.00, based on the skill sets that the VA is asking for? With all that professionalism, that expertise, that training, the online courses they've taken, etc. But the clients don't want to pay what the VA is asking.

Gougenhour: Okay. So, there's two different scenarios there. One, is a client that really is a penny pincher, and is never going to get it. Okay. They're never going to grasp the big picture on why a professional VA is worth the money. That person is not your ideal client. You move on and be grateful that you did not take them on, because they would have been nothing but a pain. And you know the kind I'm talking about.

Williams: I'm shaking my head up and down.

Gougenhour: Yeah.

Williams: You don't see me, but I am shaking my head.

Gougenhour: Right. The other who says that is someone who just doesn't know yet, the value that you bring. And that's what I'm talking about in that the professional VA's must learn how to position themselves, so that they talk about how they can help their client grow their business and earn more. And in fact, I would use the term that you as a VA are a profit center for that entrepreneur. Okay. They love that term, profit center. I can be a profit center for you. I can help you earn more money. I am not an expense. And I would be happy to talk with you about how I can be that profit center for you.

Williams: Well, you know, that's actually what a VA can insert in their conversations. I hope you VA's that are listening take note of that. Use that language or that theme and put it in your own words. But that's the type of information you can share with whatever potential client you're talking with.

Gougenhour: Yeah. Absolutely.

Williams: Okay. Boy—

Gougenhour: And don't be afraid to do it, you know. If you are a professional VA, you deserve that kind of money.

Williams: Well, I agree. And just in taking it a step further, once you breakdown your expenses and wanting to make a decent salary, or what would be a decent salary, \$45.00, \$50.00 is not much income, because—

Gougenhour: That's right, Sharon.

Williams: Because you have all of these deductions that you are responsible for yourself; all the expenses you are responsible for yourself. So, to the VA's that are listening, I suggest that you do not allow the person that you're interviewing to see you in their mind as an employee, because—

Gougenhour: Right.

Williams: You're not an employee, and you do not want them to either start with that mindset or put that mindset on you. Treat yourself as a fellow partner and entrepreneur in the relationship, and then they will better understand why you're asking for, not even asking for, demanding that this is the rate, whatever the rate is, that you require to provide the professional services that you're going to render.

Gougenhour: And, Sharon, you know what happens a lot of times when you do that, when you're very professional, you know, you present it in that light, and that client might right then say no. And they'll come back to you in a month, a quarter, six months, and beg you to take them on as a client.

Williams: Absolutely. So—

Gougenhour: I've had it happen many, many times.

Williams: We've talked about challenges. Let's switch that around. Where are the big opportunities that many VA's might be missing?

Gougenhour: So, I am always on the lookout for this. This is something that I love doing, and it's part of being a niche whisperer, is seeing what the big needs are out there. And, of course, I get a lot of entrepreneurs coming to me asking for my help in matchmaking them with a VA. In fact, I have a free VA matchmaking service that I provide to entrepreneurs. So, I can tell you from that experience that the biggest void I see right now for VA's to fill is working as a Facebook Ads specialist.

Williams: Oh, okay.

Gougenhour: I cannot, yeah, I cannot find VA's for this area of specialization. And it is extremely high paying. If you get really good at that, you can easily earn \$1,000.00 month.

Williams: Well, that's fantastic to know.

Gougenhour: With one client. With one client. With one client. I need to say it, with one client.

Williams: That's great to know, because while Facebook itself, I mean, every month you hear something new coming out about Facebook, or a change coming about Facebook. So, if that is your area of expertise, or you have that particular interest, then it's time to get onboard with that. And based on what Kathy is saying, that's identifying a specialty within a specialty. The main specialty is Facebook, but moving down further and making a tighter niche would be the Facebook advertising. So just related back to everything that Kathy has said so far today, that's identifying a niche, paring it down to the specific area that may be of interest, and where you can generate the most income, and viola, you've already set yourself up as a professional VA. Of course, get the training that you need, get the experience that you need, and then you move from there.

Gougenhour: Yep. Exactly.

Williams: Okay. What tools or resources would you recommend VA's use, and why? And to the VA's, whichever ones she mentions in this conversation, we will enter the links for this podcast.

Gougenhour: So, I'm not going to give you any, as you can imagine, I'm not going to give you any skills that I think they should learn, because that's not where I think they should start. I think they should start by figuring out their niche. And so, I'm just going to offer my free breakthrough session again. If anybody wants to sign up for that, go to <http://ExpertVATraining.com/free-strategy-session>.

I also have something that you can download for free on my site. It's a marketing checklist, so that's at <http://www.ExpertVATraining.com/marketing-checklist>. And what that is, I can tell you, everybody loves this checklist. I mean, not even VA's have downloaded it and emailed me and said love this checklist. Because basically what it does it goes through all the different things that you can do to market your business, and it has them grouped. So, you may be thinking—like you asked me, Sharon, what could I do if I don't want to do the networking? Well this gives you a list of all of them. Don't do all of them. Do not do all of them. You'll be spinning your wheels. Chose the top two and focus on those for the next ninety days—

Williams: Uh-huh.

Gougenhour: And then you can move on from there if you want to.

Williams: Okay.

Gougenhour: And then, can I give you one more? This is somebody else's.

Williams: Absolutely.

Gougenhour: And it's free also. So, I'm giving you all free stuff, because I totally believe that you can start and build your VA business without buying a whole bunch of fancy stuff. Like you don't need Infusion Soft right off the bat. You don't even need a (inaudible) right off the bat. You know, use things that are free to get your business going, and then grow as needed. One of the questions that you had asked me was how to get un-stuck.

Williams: Uh-huh.

Gougenhour: And I have the best resource for how to get un-stuck on anything you're stuck on. Okay. And this is a workbook by a brilliant marketer named Robert Middleton—

Williams: Oh, I know Robert.

Gougenhour: Yeah, don't you love him?

Williams: Oh, yes, definitely. I'm very familiar with him and his work. So, I highly recommend Robert Middleton to everyone that's listening to this course.

Gougenhour: Yeah. And you can download his program called The Unstuck Process. And it is literally at <http://www.TheUnstuckProcess.com>. You will get on his email list, but he sends out very, very few emails to that list. It's primarily just—literally there's a workbook, there's an audio, there's an e-book, all for free. And if you follow that Unstuck Process, and it will take you about 15 minutes to go through it, it will change your life.

Williams: Well, I'm not particularly familiar with that workbook, but I am familiar with Robert's work. I have enrolled in several of his courses before. Robert was even a speaker at the convention one year. So, I thoroughly endorse whatever it is that's offering and providing, especially when it's free.

Gougenhour: Yeah. He's very, very good at what he does. And, Sharon, he's a lot like you and me, in that he's just really straightforward, no BS, just, you know, facts, figures, here it is. And he came up with the Unstuck Process because, you know, he's a brilliant marketer, and he teaches marketing very well. But people weren't implementing what he was teaching them. And so, he developed this Unstuck Process to help people be able to implement what he taught.

Williams: Okay. Well, make sure you include that link, and the other links that you provide.

Gougenhour: Okay. Will do.

Williams: We've talked about tools and resources that you recommend. A lot of times, tools have become outdated and obsolete. So, share with us a few that you believe are outdated and obsolete.

Gougenhour: So, you know, I couldn't think of any specific tools that I wanted to share that are obsolete. You know, I'm not a techy person.

Williams: Okay.

Gougenhour: (Overlapping conversation) VA for fifteen years and you're not techy? I am not techy. So, I've never like stayed on top of whatever the hottest tech things are. So I don't have anything like that to share, but what I'd like to share is what I think is on the way out for VA's.

Williams: Okay.

Gougenhour: Okay. And you're going to hear a theme here that I have going throughout this. But what's on the way out is low priced VA's. And that is because the entrepreneurs are becoming very savvy on VA's, how VA's really work, and they are not being fooled any longer by low priced VA's who are charging, you know, anywhere from \$5.00 if they're overseas, to \$20.00 here, because they have been burned time and time again by those low priced VA's who, like you mentioned, they haven't been trained, they don't really know what they're doing, and it ends up costing the entrepreneur in the long run. They're not saving money, it's costing them money. And so, they have become more savvy, and they are learning not to hire those low priced VA's. So, that's what's on the way out, and I am very excited about that being on the way out.

Williams: And I think it's great also. I remember years ago when—oh, what's his name?—Tim Ferris wrote the Four Hour Work Week—

Gougenhour: Yes.

Williams: And he promoted—

Gougenhour: Yes.

Williams: What I will call cheap VA's.

Gougenhour: Yeah. Exactly.

Williams: And I just think it was a popular book, but I think many of the people that purchased it and believed in that philosophy changed—

Gougenhour: Uh-huh.

Williams: After they found that they were getting cheap, but not good. So sometimes, you know, people have to experience, unfortunately, the cheap to recognize and appreciate the value of the professional. And that's what happened—

Gougenhour: That's exactly right.

Williams: As a result of that book, I think.

Gougenhour: Sharon, I totally agree with you. That gave entrepreneurs a really different view than what is reality about what they could get, and how VA's really work. And thankfully, now that many, many entrepreneurs have tried it and they are sharing with other entrepreneurs the horror stories that they experienced of going that route, the entrepreneurs are realizing that's not the way to go.

Williams: Okay. Great. Now, do you have any tips for time management when it comes to running the VA business?

Gougenhour: So, my number one tip for that is to do what I call calendar blocking. Okay. And basically, that's taking your Google calendar, that's what I prefer to use, you can use it with whatever electronic calendar you use, I prefer Google calendar. You actually block your time off to indicate what you're going to be doing during that time.

So for example, I have this time blocked off to do my presentation with you. I had another hour blocked off earlier today to prepare for this presentation. Okay. And I color code them differently. I color code any time I'm going to be actually speaking with someone, so a meeting that I'm having, is in one color. And tasks that I have to do for myself are in another color. Anything that's urgent that I absolutely have to do is in red. And anything that I'm working on that is going to make me money is in green.

Williams: Oh, good color.

Gougenhour: Yeah. So, you can color code it the way that works for you, but time block your calendar even for those things that you have to do. Even if it's exercise, like I have exercise on my schedule. So, exercise, eat lunch, block it out so that you know exactly what you're doing when. And I do it a week in advance, you know, to make sure that I have everything scheduled in. And I take a look at it at the end of each week. So, Friday afternoon, I have time blocked off to review my calendar for next week to make sure that everything's set, to see if there's anything I need to do to prepare for the following week. And then, of course, at the end of every day, I look at the next day to see what I have going on. And it is so easy, because then you don't have to guess, well, what should I be doing now. You know. And when a client comes to you and says hey, I've got this project that I need you to do, I need it done by Friday at this time, you can look at your calendar at a glance and see if you have any time that you can get that project done.

Williams: Uh-huh.

Gougenhour: And then you can tell them, sorry, I can't get it done by Friday, but I'm looking at my calendar and it looks like I could have it done for you on Tuesday at noon, would that work.

Williams: Okay. So, we've actually covered quite a wide range of topics. So, this is a question that based on what you're saying I think I already know the answer, but I'm going to ask it anyway. Do you think it's easier or harder for a new VA starting out today? And tell me why you have that opinion.

Gougenhour: Well, I think it's much easier. Because, Sharon, when you and I started out, we didn't have VA trainers and coaches. You know, we had to figure it out on our own. And now there are professional VA's and coaches like you and me, and many others, who can teach you. We've been there, we've done it, we can show you how to do it without making a bunch of mistakes. So, that's one reason it's easier. And

another is people know who VA's are and they are learning faster and faster every day the true value of a VA. So, for those two reasons, it's much easier.

Williams: Okay. And I definitely agree with you. So, we're going to be winding down, just a few more questions. And first, I want to thank you for all the insightful information you have provided. But is there a particular story or a case study or an example that you want to share just to sum up everything we've been talking about?

Gougenhour: I would love to. And I have so many VA success stories that I could tell you several of them that are just fun and heart wrenching. But I want to tell you about the first student that I helped, and her name is Mary Hanley. She was working as a real estate VA, and she was charging \$25.00 an hour, and this was eight years ago. One of the agents Mary was working with hired me at \$75.00 an hour to do some of the work that Mary had been doing at \$25.00 an hour. And when Mary heard this, she picked up the phone that same day and called me. And I mean, she just came right out and said I want you to teach me what you're doing to get \$75.00 an hour. And she signed up for my training program, and I taught her what to do. And you know what Mary hadn't yet learned how to do was what I've been talking about, she hadn't learned how to get clients. Okay. That's why she didn't know to get \$75.00 an hour for the same thing that I was doing and she was doing at \$25.00 an hour. But Mary signed up for my training program, and today she's earning \$125.00 an hour as a social media specialist.

She still does work for realtors too. She does social media for them and some web design for them, but at her much higher hourly rate. She won't even talk to anybody anymore who's going to penny pinch. And Mary has also taken my training on how to coach virtual assistants, and I'm very proud to say that she is now one of my expert VA coaches, who coaches new virtual assistants on how to start and grow their business.

Williams: Oh, okay. That's a great success story.

Gougenhour: I know. And Mary's just awesome. You know, it's so wonderful, Sharon, to be in this industry where you start working with somebody and just watch them grow and blossom into amazing entrepreneurs.

Williams: All righty. Well, I know we covered a lot of tips, and tricks, and secrets, etc. So, is there anything else you would just like to share, another tip or trick or secret or anything else?

Gougenhour: Yeah. What I want to share is, you know, a lot of times people think of being a virtual assistant as being a secretary. And they think, oh, it's just a secretary. Not that there's anything wrong with being a secretary, I think secretaries are amazing. But secretaries are employees. And a virtual assistant is a business owner. And becoming a virtual assistant is one step, in fact it's step one, in my opinion, to becoming anything else you ever wanted to do as an entrepreneur. Because when you learn how to get clients and how to market a business online, which is what you learn how to do when you're building your VA business, you can then go on to build any other kind of

business you ever want to build, and earn as much money as you ever want to earn. The sky is truly the limit.

Williams: Maybe that should be our theme, the sky is truly the limit.

Gougenhour: I love that, because it is. You know, Sharon, one of things that I realized after becoming a VA is that, you know, there's many, many beautiful things about being a VA. It has very low overhead, you get to do it from home, and on, and on, and on. But one thing I didn't realize was that you learn so much from working with your clients, and you discover what they really need. And then you can build a business to give them what they need. For example, when I was a real estate VA, I discovered that realtors really needed low cost blog posts. So, I built a company called LeadBoosterClub.com. It's no longer available, so you don't need to give that link. But I built that company, it was a membership site for agents, and I sold basically PLR, you know, blog posts. I wrote twenty blog posts a month, sold those same blog posts to any realtor that wanted to buy it. I built that up over four years, and then I sold the business at a profit.

Williams: Oh, okay.

Gougenhour: So, that's just an example of what you can do as a VA when you work with somebody, get to know what they need, and then create it.

Williams: That's the bottom line. Even if, and I know I'm going to sound contradictory, but if you're not successful in your VA business per se, you can still create content or software or whatever is in your specialty that people will want. And if you're not good at being a VA, you may be good at marketing whatever your product or service is.

Gougenhour: That's right. And, you know, Sharon, for me, I'm not one that has these amazingly creative ideas. I don't come up with like the new Twitter or anything like that. It's just not how my mind works. And, you know, you always hear create something that people need, create something brand new to fill that gap. Well, I didn't know how to figure out what that was. But when you're a VA, you learn what that is whether you want to or not—

Williams: Right.

Gougenhour: From working with your clients every day.

Williams: Absolutely. So, last thing. No, next to the last thing. Is there anything that I haven't asked that you would like to share with the audience?

Gougenhour: There absolutely is not. You were very, very thorough. This has been so much fun.

Williams: Okay. Well, thank you. And the last question, just to do a little recap, give us your name, give us your website, tell us a little bit about your training program so that our listeners can be very familiar with you and what you're about, who you are.

Gougenhour: Okay. So, my name is Kathy Gougenhour. And we all know Gougenhour is very, very difficult. So, Kathy G. is what I go by a lot, because my last name is so difficult. But it's Kathy Gougenhour. My website is www.ExpertVATrainig.com. And you can go there, click on the top left where there's a little button that says free strategy session and apply for your breakthrough session with me, during which we can talk about anything that you need to talk about, whatever your challenges are. Whether it's choosing a niche, or how to raise your prices, or even what prices to set. I'll help you, for free, do that. And unlike a lot of free sessions, mine isn't just selling, selling, selling. You get a lot of value from it. If at the end of that session I feel like I could help you further, I may offer you to participate in my training. If I don't feel like I can help you further, but there's somebody else that I think could help you better, I'll offer to refer you to them. And if not, I'll just wish you the best, and hopefully you will have gotten a lot out of the session.

So that's about me and my breakthrough session. The training itself, again, there's no link to go sign up for, because I do require that you have one of those breakthrough sessions with me first, to make sure you're a good fit; to see if I can help you personally; and then if I feel I can, I'll tell you more about the training program. It is all encompassing from the very beginning of how to set up your business, all the way through to how to build a six figure business, if that's what you want to do.

Williams: Okay. Well, thank you, Kathy, for a great interview. I'm sure all the VA's in our audience have gotten a ton of value from the tips, tricks, and secrets from inspiring VA experts that you shared. This was some real insider stuff. So, thank you very much for sharing with us so graciously.

And thank you, all the virtual assistants in our audience, for joining us for this amazing presentation. I'm Sharon Williams. Thank you for joining us on the Chat with a VA Industry Leader. I'd like to invite you to check out the Online International Virtual Assistants' Convention at OIV as in victory, AC.com (www.OIVAC.com) for convention updates. Thanks a lot, and have a fantastic day.