

**Chat with a Virtual Assistant Industry Leader**  
**Susan Mershon**  
**March 2017**

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 OIV as in victory, AC.com (OIVAC.com) and The 24 Hour Secretary. We'll discuss ways to increase a VA's knowledge, skills, abilities, and expertise in running a successful business, as well as other important topics for inspired VA experts. Check out OIVAC.com for convention updates and more information.

The title of today's interview is Inspiring VA Experts' Tips, Tricks, and Secrets, with our guest, Ms. Susan Mershon, who will reveal 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 Susan about tips and secrets every virtual assistant needs to shortcut their way to success and get great results faster. So hi, Susan, welcome to the show.

Mershon: Hi, Sharon, thank you so much. I'm so happy to be here.

Williams: Well, I'm glad to have you, and I look forward to our conversation.

Mershon: Me too.

Williams: Let's start off with your giving us a little bit about your background, your experience, education, why you became a VA, etc.

Mershon: Okay. So, I'll give you the condensed version.

Williams: Okay.

Mershon: So back in 2009, I had an unexpected blessing, my son was born. And at the time, I was in the corporate rat race for well over 20 years. I'm for the IT industry, my entire career was really IT based. And long story short, when I came back from maternity leave, I wasn't treated the same way as I was before I left. So just to kind of give you an idea what I did, I was an IT project manager, managed multi-million-dollar software development programs that were international. And I was really more of a program manager, which means I managed multiple projects. Anyways, all of those had been, obviously, reassigned so I could enjoy my maternity leave. When I came back, they weren't giving me the same caliber of projects, they were very small. And I could never get an answer as to why, because nothing changed, right, I just had a baby. Turns out, I guess, they thought that since I had an infant at home, I wasn't as valuable or as reliable as I was before. So that, bluntly, pissed me off. And I decided that I'd had enough of, you know, working for somebody else. And as you know, for those of you who are either still employed or have been employed in the past, you're really at their beck and call. Your life is really built around your job, and not your family. And sometimes, people have to make the choice between family or job. And, you know, I was just like, I'm not going to have that anymore. And so, with my skill set being a project manager, I set out to find something I could do from home. And granted, I could be a project manager from home, but I didn't want to work for anybody anymore. I wanted to say, you know, how much I made, what I did, when I did

it, from where. You know, all the freedom things that come with having your own business. And I stumbled upon the VA industry, and I thought hey, they manage tasks all day; well, guess what project managers do. It was an easy fit for me. And so I just made a decision that that's what I was going to do. And I had no idea what I was doing, zero, zilch. I have no business experience; I don't have a college degree. As I mentioned, I was always in IT. You know, I was always in a business, but really had no business knowledge or business sense. But I had the determination and the will to figure it out. And that's basically what I did. So I went back to work after my maternity leave, the first of August. By the end of August, I had launched my VA business. It was that fast.

Williams: Wow.

Mershon: Yeah. Determination. And so, you know, it took me about 14 months after I started my business to be able to leave my corporate job behind. And basically, like I said, I just had the will to get it done. And I kind of figured things out by a lot of trial and error, what worked and what didn't. My saving grace, again, is because I understood task management, project management, and I had been a consultant, I understood how to work with clients, and I understood how to do, you know, task and project management. So for that it was an easy transition, everything else was difficult about running a business and how much to charge, and all of that kind of stuff. So that's kind of, believe it or not, the condensed version of my story.

Williams: But had you thought about maybe, for those skills that you lacked in the business sense, maybe getting a coach or entering one of the various training programs that are available?

Mershon: Well, nine or eight years ago, there really wasn't much around. I didn't understand coaching. I didn't understand—and I did buy some training, and just to be bluntly honest, it was crap. It didn't teach me anything that I hadn't already figured out. Like I said, by the time I got my business off and running, I had some coach clients that really made a difference. So, I was lucky enough to land some business coach clients that really kind of helped shape my destiny, if you will.

Williams: Okay. So, leading from that, was that an obstacle for you not having that background? And if it was, or if it wasn't, what would you consider to have been an obstacle?

Mershon: I guess you could say it was an obstacle, but obstacles don't deter me. I just figure out how to go over, under, around, or move it. And that's basically what I did. I'm the kind of person that likes a challenge, and that's what I looked at it as. But don't get me wrong, it wasn't easy, it was difficult. But I wanted it more than anything else, so I was going to make it happen. Does that make sense?

Williams: I know you mentioned you had some coach clients early in your practice. Did you provide techy type services for them or general admin services?

Mershon: I was never an admin. I was never your typical VA, I was always a techy. Because I used to be a programmer, and I used to teach technology in a stand-up environment. Technology is something that's very easy for me. So, I never did, no offense, I hated being admin type stuff. So for me, I went directly into the techy side of things, and that's really all I did.

Williams: Okay. So, tell us something personal that we don't know about you already.

Mershon: Something personal about me. I used to be into horses, and when I was in high school, I was a rodeo queen.

Williams: Wow. So, wait a minute. What is a rodeo queen? Because I just want to make sure I understand what it is.

Mershon: Well, it's basically just a title. It's somebody who rides horses in the western style, and you basically go and you open up, excuse me, any kind of western events. It's kind of like a scaled down version of, you know, a beauty pageant, but it's not a beauty pageant, it's more about riding horses and horsemanship. Does that make sense?

Williams: Yes, but did you actually participate in any of the contests?

Mershon: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I used to barrel race and goat tie, and pole bend. I used to do all those things.

Williams: Okay. That's pretty interesting. So now, let's just move on into the various questions.

Mershon: Okay.

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

Mershon: Don't take every client that has a wallet. In other words, don't take a client because they have money. It's not always the best idea.

Williams: Well, what if you're in a situation where say you lost your job, you're transitioning, and you actually need that income?

Mershon: Well, my point is this. If you're talking to somebody, you know, you're doing an interview, and it's a two-way interview, they interview you and you interview them. And the hair on the back of your neck stands up and every pore in your body is screaming don't work with this person, then my advice would be no, because there's always somebody else waiting to work with you. So, you can't get into like a poverty mindset to think that this is the only that you're ever going to get, because that's not how it works. That would be my advice.

Williams: Okay. So just trying to sum this up, if you have the ability to turn down work, and you get that vibe and those hairs standing up on your back, it's better to turn it down and be open to someone else versus-

Mershon: Yeah.

Williams: Taking on those jobs.

Mershon: Yes. Because it really is your body's way or however you want to think of it, it's really a sign that it's not a good fit. Because at the end of the day, working as a virtual assistant in any capacity is relationship based. And a lot of times you run into people that they're

wonderful, but it's just not a good working relationship. And that's usually a sign to say no. Because there's always somebody behind them that's a better fit for you.

Williams: Hmm.

Mershon: And if you take them, then you don't have space for that better client. And then you've got to end up firing them, which is a whole other set of headaches.

Williams: Oh, absolutely. I agree. Now, let's share a cool trick that you figured out or discovered that would really help VA's in our audience.

Mershon: You want a techy tip, or a business tip or do you have a preference?

Williams: I would like a techy tip and a business tip since you threw it out there.

Mershon: Okay. So, I'll go with the business tip. The best advice I can give new VA's is have your systems in place before you take on a client. What I mean by that is, you know, know how much you need to charge, and know what skills you're offering. And also have a contract, you don't work without a contract. If a client won't sign a contract, it's a red flag, because a contract is nothing more, or actually is more, but it's basically protection for both parties. So, have your systems in place, even if it's not fully built, at least have the minimum systems in place, right. Have a way to get paid; you know, have a way to communicate with your client; have your contract; know how much you're going to charge; and what you're offering. So that would be my business tip. A techy tip would be -- have a task management system. That should be one of the first tools in your arsenal as a VA for your own business, because you need to track task, clients, deadlines. Excell doesn't work. It will work for a while, but when you start to have more clients, you're going to get overwhelmed. So, find a task management system that works for you. You can Google task management. There are tons of them out there. A lot of them have free versions. My advice to you is find one that works for you. Sure, you can ask for referrals, but if you try to use a tool someone referred because they referred it and you don't like it, you won't use it. So, excuse me, test drive a few, find one and use it, because it will make a world of difference in your business as it gets busier. Because you will have multiple deadlines and multiple tasks, and you need to stay on top of those so nothing falls through the cracks.

Williams: Okay. Well, that actually leads me to something I forgot to ask. That is the name of your company and its URL.

Mershon: No worries. My company's name is The Techie Mentor. And that's techie with T-E-C-H-I-E, Mentor, M-E-N-T-O-R, and that's the URL, TheTechieMentor.com.

Williams: Let me just say at this point, audience, don't forget the word "the". Because my company name is The 24 Hour Secretary, and a lot of times people forget to put the word "the" in front of it, and that's very important.

Mershon: Yep. And I will add to that is that I actually own both URL's, so if you forget the "the", it will still land on the same place.

Williams: Okay. Great. So, you provide technical support services to different clients now?

Mershon: I do a combination of things now. So, I don't have so much a VA business, it's more of a consulting business. My primary business now is training virtual assistants, both in the business side and the business world, if you will; and then the technical side. So, for those of you who are just entering the VA industry, you are going to notice the skills are different than probably what you are used to seeing in a corporate environment. And so, I teach those skills, as well as how to build and run your business. I do consulting, but my consulting nowadays is more project management based. Still under the VA umbrella, though.

Williams: Okay. So, I'm just curious for my own information.

Mershon: Uh-huh.

Williams: Do you focus on a particular niche of businesses or a particular niche of skills?

Mershon: Actually, it's really more around skills. I'm a certified trainer with Team Work, which is a task management system. Most of my consulting is on Team Work as well as the project management that needs to be in place to support it. So, it's a variety of businesses. It can be small businesses, it can be Fortune 500 companies.

Williams: Okay. So if there's any VA out there that wants to transition their clients to Team Work, then maybe you should contact Susan so that she can educate you and potentially train your clients.

Mershon: Yes. Thank you.

Williams: Okay. Do you have a secret that every VA needs to know when it comes to developing their business?

Mershon: Yeah. Believe in yourself.

Williams: Repeat that just so they'll hear it again.

Mershon: Believe in yourself. I am nobody special. I don't have an MBA. I don't even have a college degree. If I can do it, so can you.

Williams: I think that's fantastic. Everybody write that down. Put it up on your vision board or whatever you use as a motivator.

Mershon: Right. Exactly.

Williams: Okay. Now, I'm going to move on to a totally different area. Where do you see the biggest challenges facing the industry or VA's right now?

Mershon: I would say the biggest challenge—and I guess I can do this from two different directions. So, the biggest challenge in the industry I think is so many people, VA's in particular, get caught up in wondering how they can compete with people who charge \$3.00 an hour. Um, and basically, my advice to them is it's not the same market. You're not competing with people who are looking for \$3.00 to \$4.00 an hour. Most of us are looking for professionals who want a partner or a collaborator, not somebody to just create a logo. And I'm not slamming that, I'm

just saying that most people get hung up on dollars and cents, and you have to look past that. Because my clients that I worked with when I was a full-time VA were always looking for somebody to be part of their business, not somebody who was just going to do a project here or there. And so, I know that's a challenge and a constant concern I get from my audience, if you will. I would say another challenge for the industry as a whole—

Williams: Before you go on—

Mershon: Yeah.

Williams: Is that a mindset problem or is that an education problem? Meaning, the VA's don't really know how to promote their business and their skills.

Mershon: Yeah, it's both. Right? Because if you're comparing yourself to others, then it's not a good situation, you should never compare yourself to somebody else. But it's also a mindset thing, right. It's also getting over your fear and promoting yourself and putting yourself out there, and sharing your value and your brilliance, which people are looking for. Again, it goes back to that believe in yourself statement.

Williams: Okay. Now, you were going to say another one before I cut you off.

Mershon: No worries. The other one is because the industry is growing by leaps and bounds, we're getting more scammers that are coming into the industry. And what I mean by that are people that don't seem to have many ethics. That they will tell a client what they want to hear only to get their money, and then, because they can't do the job, disappear. That gives us all a bad name. That puts a black-eye on the industry. So, you know, my advice is never tell a client that you can do something that you can't. Always be honest and ethical.

Williams: Well, you know, this question has come up, and your response and similar responses have come up too. And then they go on from that point about always being ethical to if it's a job that you really feel you need about either partnering with another VA who has that expertise, or subbing it out to a VA and get a commission from that job.

Mershon: Right. Right. I mean, there are work arounds, but it's all about being upfront and honest. And, you know, if you do take on something that you don't know how to do, get the help so the job gets done, because your business is your reputation.

Williams: I totally agree with that, especially saying your business is your reputation. And once you get a bad reputation, that just goes like wildfire around the different industries, so.

Mershon: It does. And it takes so long to get trust and get yourself situated as a go-to person in an industry, and it takes one thing to set it off.

Williams: Okay. Now, that we've covered some challenges, what about the big opportunities that VA's might be missing?

Mershon: Oh, the sky is the limit. So, to me VA is not a title. Virtual assistant isn't a title, it's an industry, right? Because nobody's really concerned with titles in this market. Because you can call yourself, you know, goddess of the world, because it's your own company. Titles are not what it's about. It's about the value and the benefits you bring to your clients. So, my

point to that is that it doesn't matter what your skill set is, there's room for you in the industry. Because online businesses, as well as brick and mortar businesses, need what you offer. Whether it's programming; whether it's transcription and copywriting; bookkeeping; branding; website design; and the list goes on and on. Each person comes to the table with a unique set of skills, and you can learn anything you want to be successful in this industry.

Williams: And you know—

Mershon: (Overlapping conversation).

Williams: That's a good point, because it's so wide open, there's so many programs out here now, that you can get to learn from online, as well as in some of your community colleges are even-

Mershon: Yes.

Williams: Offering programs that you can take to enhance your skills. What are some of the tools or resources you think have become obsolete?

Mershon: Tools or resources that have become obsolete. I really don't think anything has become obsolete, I think they just enhance it, basically. So for instance, you know, email marketing, right? Email marketing is still big. The tools grow and change, but not necessarily become obsolete. Because as you know, technology changes at the speed of light, right? So that in itself can be, not a challenge, but that can be something that sometimes can be hard to keep up with. So as far as what's obsolete, I will say, in my opinion, is the more technical skills you have, the easier it is to get clients. And what I mean by that is, you know, executive assistants have a great skill set, but clients still need people to help them with the techy part of their business, because that's where they struggle the most.

Williams: That's true, very true.

Mershon: Right? And I'm not saying that you can't survive as an admin assistant, I'm saying it's more difficult to make a living in that segment, because more and more clients want technical support, not just the professional support.

Williams: Okay. So then, are there any tools or resources that you would recommend that VA's learn and get connected with?

Mershon: I say that every VA should know Word Press. And people are probably rolling their eyes, but hear me out. I'm not saying you have to be a web developer, but you need to know how to get in and make changes, because all your clients will have a Word Press website, at least 98% of them will. And it's a marketable skill right out the door, right? So, if you can't find clients, if you learn Word Press, all your clients or prospective clients are going to have a Word Press website which they should not be monkeying with, because that's not what they're in business to do. So, WordPress is one that I would definitely say. I would learn an email marketing tool, like MailChimp. It's another one that all online businesses would use, they all have some type of email marketing platform. So, Word Press and MailChimp. And I actually have a program that I'm currently revamping, it's currently called the VA School. But basically what it is, is it's a membership program where you get access to all the big technology trainings. And what I mean by that is you can learn Word Press, and Mail Chimp and Infusion Soft, and

Convert Kit, Lead Pages. And basically, when you join, you have access to every single one of these programs, not just the training, but you actually have access to the Lead Pages, and InfusionSoft, and WordPress, and MailChimp, and Convert Kit, all part of your membership. Nobody else does this in the industry; something I've done for several years. When you learn software, you have to learn on the tool, you can't just watch it in a video, you have to get the hands-on time to build the confidence. And so that's the VASchool.com. It is a great place to learn all of those. I'm revamping it to keep it kind of cutting edge, if you will. So, we will always have multiple different platforms, and you can pick and choose which ones you want to learn. Some people come in and stay for a month and learn one thing. Others have been in my program for six months and have learned all the different pieces of technology that they can then offer as a service. As I mentioned, the more technical you are, the more money you can earn, because that's what clients are looking for. So, the higher your expertise, the more you can command in your rates.

Williams: So, is it going to be video training or one-on-one training?

Mershon: No, it's all self-paced. Right? If it was one-on-one training, I wouldn't be able to open it up, because it would just be me. So, it's all very detailed video training, but you also have access to the program, so you can watch the training and actually do what I'm doing in the program at the same time.

Williams: Okay. Well, you're right, I don't think I have heard of too many other VA type training programs that actually give you the hands-on experience.

Mershon: I was the first. And I brought that into the industry based on my past of teaching software. So, it's part of the program. A lot of people teach you InfusionSoft or MailChimp, but they don't give you access to it, they expect you to have access to it. Not me. You have access as part of the membership program.

Williams: And what was that URL again?

Mershon: The VA, so short for virtual assistant, School.com. TheVASchool.com.

Williams: Okay. And for our listening audience, we will have the links to all of the URL's that she's mentioned today on her podcast page. What about some tips for time management, do you have any of those to share?

Mershon: Oh, I do. As I said, I was a project manager in a previous life, so managing multiple things has always been something I've had to do. So first off, is if you get yourself a task management system, you can really put all of your tasks and deadlines in there, so you don't have to, you know, use sticky notes or Excell. You can use a program that's designed to hold all that information. And then, some of the best advice I got, you know, after I'd been in business a while, I did have a business coach, still do. But some of the best advice I got is put your calls on specific days. So, don't do calls every day, do calls like Tuesdays and Thursdays. I'm just throwing out ideas. It's your business, right, it's your choice. But consolidate your calls on specific days, and that way you can just do calls on a specific day versus breaking up your focus to stop working on a task or a project to take a call.

Williams: I'm confused. When you say put your calls on different days or limited days, does that mean don't answer the phone-

Mershon: Yeah.

Williams: On particular days?

Mershon: Yeah. Don't. I mean, it's all about getting your work done. And so, for me, I would tell clients that, you know, we schedule weekly calls. So each of my clients, we have status meetings every week, and that's our time to talk. If there's an emergency, in my business policies, I would tell them what to do. But no, I don't just stop working and answer my phone, because I have to get my work done. And my clients respect that because they want me to get their work done too. So, by having weekly status meetings with my clients, we have a standing meeting every week on Tuesday at 10:00, for instance, and then we can talk about what we need. If there's an emergency between now and then, I would tell them what I needed them to do, like text me, right, don't call me, text me. So, I would not answer my phone except for if it was an emergency, because I was actually committed to doing my task. One other thing I would say is always do revenue generating tasks first. Always do the tasks that pay the bills first every day, because that's what pays the bills.

Williams: Okay. Everybody write that down. Do you think it's easier or harder for a new VA starting out today than when you started?

Mershon: I think it's easier because there's so many more programs out there, there's so many more training programs. You know, when I started there was nobody training. You know, Linda.com trained Word Press, but if you didn't have access to Word Press and you weren't a techy, you know, it was difficult to figure out what they were talking about. Same thing with when Shopping Cart and Infusion Soft. All of these different tools are becoming easier to get training on than when I first started. That I think is an asset. And same thing, there's more and more people coming out with business training around being a VA and how to run, you know, a homebased business. So, for me, I think that's a benefit.

Williams: Okay. Speaking of benefits, could you share with us ways that you're actually helping the virtual assistant industry in its growth?

Mershon: Good question. I guess from my point of view, I would say that I am definitely helping to train virtual assistants in how to run a professional, successful business by teaching them the business skills. And the business that I teach, is the business that I built. So it's not based on book smarts, it's experience. The system that I teach is the system that I use for my business, so I know that it works. But on the flip side, you know, I'm also teaching them skills, right. I'm also teaching them the true technical skills that clients need, so they're not trying to learn it and then do something for a client when they're fully not confident or understand what it takes. So not only do I teach the technical stuff, I also teach why you use it, why would a client use it; why would they do email marketing, right. So not just the tool, but also the concept of why the tool is necessary.

Williams: Now, I don't think I've heard anyone actually answer the question including why the tool is necessary, so this is a first. I don't think I've ever heard anybody respond with that answer.

Mershon: Well, for me, I'm a why person. I'm like okay, well, why do I need to use it. If I don't understand why, then it doesn't complete the picture in my mind. So that's how I teach.

So it's always why first, right, examples, and then here's how the tool works. So, you can put in concept. Otherwise, if you don't know why, it doesn't make a lot of sense, right. Because a client is going to come to you and ask, or they're going to say, "Hey, Sharon, you know, I know I need email marketing, but what's it all about?" Because clients come to their VA's looking for business and techy advice, and if they don't have that, then they're not doing their clients the service, right. So having that knowledge is confidence boosting, but it also helps your clients learn to trust you and then pull you into their business even more.

Williams: Okay. Now we've got only a few more questions left. Is there a particular story, or a case study, or an example that you'd like to share just to pull everything together?

Mershon: Let me think about that for a second. So, a case study. I guess I have a couple. I've been teaching now for almost four years, so I've taught thousands of people. And there's a few that stand out in my mind, I would say as a case study. I won't mention names. But one lady when I first did my first business training course four years ago, she was one of a handful that joined. And her rates were so low, and I kept telling her you need to charge more. And she really had a fear around charging more. I guess she didn't believe that people would pay her what she wanted, so she kept lowballing. Anyway, long story short, after working with her for six months and really going through the program, she was able to double her rate and double her business. And I think of her because is she still a friend, if you will. And she always comes back to remind me, oh, my God, you know, when I first started I had no confidence. But by going through your program and working with you, I was able to get over my fear and believe that I had value in what I offer. And her business, you know, changed. So a lot of it comes down to your own mindset, which can get in your way when it comes to being successful.

Williams: Well, I'm just curious, when this particular lady doubled her volume and doubled her income, did she retain those original clients, or did they go by the wayside because they didn't want to pay the higher rate?

Mershon: It was 50/50. So, half of them stayed and half left. But that, unfortunately, is how business usually works when you start to raise your rates. It happened to me as well. But I had clients that could see, and actually some of my clients said you're not charging enough. But yes, to answer your question, it was 50/50. So, she did retain, you know, half of her original clients, and then she got new clients at the higher rate and has continued to grow. I think she actually has a team now.

Williams: Oh, okay. Now, are there any other tips or secrets you'd like to share with the industry?

Mershon: I would say probably one of the biggest tips is you need to be aware of a couple of things when it comes to your mindset. Because mindset controls everything in life, not just your business, right, it controls everything. So really understanding your mindset when it comes to money is a big one. You know, I had a salary my entire career, right. I started working at seventeen, and every job I ever had was salary. When I became a VA, it changed to hourly. And it was whole different way of life. And not understanding, you know, finances and billable hours. So my point is, I think for a lot of women especially, is really getting a handle on your mindset with money, and understanding the numbers in your business makes a huge difference.

Williams: So then just going forward from there, do you believe in only hourly rates, packages, or retainer agreements, or a combination?

Mershon: Well, my favorite motto is it's your business, your choice. You do what works for you. But I would say that all VA's that are brand new, you have to start hourly, because you don't know how long it takes you to get stuff done. And you cannot package something if you don't know what the task involves and you don't know how long it takes. Because a package is like a mini project, it has a set of deliverables that you delivery for a specific amount of money. So, I would start hourly. And to me, retainers are hourly. You should always work off retainer. Don't chase money, have it all paid up front. So a retainer is a bucket of hours that the client can pay you to do whatever they ask. Think of an attorney, same thing. You pay an attorney, you know, \$250.00, and you can call them and ask them any of the legal questions that you need, and they simply deduct the call time from your invoice. That's how retainers work in the industry. So, a retainer is just a bucket of prepaid hours that clients can use until they're gone. A package is a set of specific things that are delivered for a specific price. So, I had a combination in my business. I did start off hourly, and then I moved to strictly retainers. And once in a while, I would have a client that wanted to pay me after the fact, but we already had a relationship, and I always charged them more hourly to pay me after I was done instead of as a retainer.

Williams: Okay. Now, we're back down to our final question. Is there anything that I haven't asked that you'd like to share with the audience?

Mershon: Yeah. I would just like to say that for those of you that are looking to get started and are looking for training that comprehensive in building your business, I am launching a new product called the VA Business Academy. And it is going to be a very comprehensive, business based training on getting started, getting up and running, getting clients, keeping clients, and growing your business. It will also teach you Word Press and Mail Chimp. So not only does it teach you business skills, it will teach you two marketable skills that you can use immediately. And that is called The VA Business Academy. [VABusinessAcademy.com](http://VABusinessAcademy.com) is where you'll find all of the details. I welcome you to take a look at that. And I want to say, Sharon, thank you for your time and allowing me to be part of your wonderful program.

Williams: Oh, well, I'm supposed to say thank you.

Mershon: I beat you to it.

Williams: Yes, you did. I have another question that is not pre-planned.

Mershon: All right.

Williams: And it's for veteran VA's, because a lot of the presentation Q and A's that I've done are geared toward VA's that are just entering the industry or have only been in business for less than three years.

Mershon: Uh-huh.

Williams: Let's talk about something for veteran VA's.

Mershon: Okay.

Williams: I'm trying to identify ways, even though they've been in the industry, eight, nine, ten years, a way for them to grow past the level that they are, be it through a business sense, a technical sense, a mindset, etc. Do you have any suggestions for those VA's that are just, I'm going to use the word stuck?

Mershon: Yeah.

Williams: Stuck just at that level and they want to go a little higher, but they don't know how to do it.

Mershon: I do. As you know, like I said, I was a VA and then I moved into what I'm doing now. But it's all about revenue streams. It's all about multiple revenue streams in your business. So, for VA's who've been in business and what to earn more or have some of your time back, there are ways that you can do that. You can build a team, for instance. And there's a lot of different ways that you can do teams, right. You can actually have a group of subcontractors; you can do matchmaking, which is you match clients with VA's. Those are another option that will give you additional revenue. I will be actually launching a course later in 2017 on how to do just that. How to actually, you know, take your business into a team dynamic, and have a team of VA's where you are the owner, or maybe you're the project manager working with clients, or I should say operations manager. So that's one. Another thing you could do is you could move away from just doing VA work and move into project management instead. And there's a big difference between those two. Project managers help manage launches of every size in a business. So, a new product launch could be an e-book, a training course, social media. It could be a number of things. And project management is very different than what a lot of VA's do. I'm actually working on a course on that now, how to transition from being a VA to a project manager. As I think I mentioned, project management is my expertise, I am actually a certified project manager from my corporate days. So that is another revenue stream where you could actually have a business based around nothing more than a team of project managers that do product launches. So it's about specialization. And then, one other idea would be you could start teaching. You could learn how to create course ware and teach other VA's how to build and grow their business. Yes, this is what I do, but I am not one to think about competition. There's more than enough for everybody, and we're all different, and everybody should have choices on who they want to work with. So there are many ways that you can have revenue streams. You could write a book; you could go into coaching. So, there's some of the ones off the top of my head. How does that work?

Williams: Well, that's fantastic. And I had no idea that you had other programs coming down the pike. So just everyone look out for them when they're available.

Mershon: Yes, those will be coming later in 2017, you know, and they're all based on, you know, what I've done in my business. I did have a team; obviously, I do teaching now as the majority of my business; but I also do coaching. So, all of those things would be another way for you to increase revenue. I mean, I loved being a VA, but after a while I decided that I needed something else, and so that's how I transitioned into what I'm doing now. I've always trained, most of my career I was training in some way, shape or form. So, to me, that's my favorite thing to do, and so that's where I am today.

Williams: Okay. Well, at this time, I'd like to thank you, Susan Mershon, for a great, great interview. I'm sure all the virtual assistants in our audience have gotten a ton of value from the

tips, tricks, and secrets that you've shared. It was really some great insider stuff. So once again, I want to thank you for sharing it with us so graciously.

Mershon: Well, you are certainly welcome. It was my pleasure. And again, thank you for this opportunity, I so appreciate it.

Williams: Okay. Well, everyone, this concludes this Chat with a VA Industry Leader. We look forward to our next chat. And don't forget, go over to OIV as in victory, AC.com (OIVAC.com) for information on the upcoming convention, which will be held May 18 through 20. That's OIVAC.com. Thanks again, and everyone have a great day.