

Best Practices in Professional Development

by Melanie O’Kane

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When we talk about professional development, we are really talking about the endeavors involved in meeting or exceeding certain criteria set by industry leaders or accreditation authorities that define the professional standard of excellence.

Determining best practices in professional development for small-business owners within the Virtual Assistant (VA) Industry may involve a review of whether the VA has an understanding of and demonstrates competence in the standards set forth by industry leaders like the International Virtual Assistants Association.

As defined by Wikipedia, “A code of ethics is often a formal statement of the organization’s values on certain ethical and social issues. Some set out general principles about an organization’s beliefs on matters such as quality, employees, or the environment. Others set out the procedures to be used in specific ethical situations - such as conflicts of interest or the acceptance of gifts, and delineate the procedures to determine whether a violation of the code of ethics occurred...”

The International Virtual Assistants Association outlines a Code of Ethics for its members, and membership is conditional upon adherence to these criteria; these are the Code of Ethics followed by MAD Typing and Consulting:

- Always exercise integrity, honesty, and diligence in carrying out their professional duties and responsibilities;
- Safeguard the interests of their colleagues and clients and shall not knowingly be a party to any illegal or unethical activity;
- Enter into no agreement nor undertake any activity which may be in conflict or give the appearance of conflict with the legitimate interests of their clients or that would prejudice their capacity to perform their professional duties;
- Protect any confidential information obtained in the performance of their duties and shall not use such information for personal gain nor in a manner that would be detrimental to their client or any other party;
- Continually ensure the currency of knowledge, skills, and technical competencies required to perform their professional activities;
- Members shall refrain from conduct or action which would detract from the reputation of the IVAA or the profession of Virtual Assistance as a whole; and
- Shall be mindful at all times of their responsibilities as professionals toward the community at large.

From this, a Virtual Assistant should be able to delineate areas in which they excel and areas where professional development is warranted. Luckily, if improvement is needed, the organization that set the standards can usually offer assistance and guidance relative to obtaining pertinent resources and/or services to enhance deficient areas/functions of the Virtual Assistant's business.

Melanie O'Kane is the Owner of MAD Typing and Consulting (MADTC), a professional virtual assistance (administrative support) firm headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin, serving clients throughout the United States and Canada. MADTC specializes in executive administrative support; proofreading, editing and formatting; transcription; PDF conversion and form creation; event registration assistance; and e-mail newsletters. To learn more about Melanie and MADTC, visit her online at <http://www.madtyping.com>.