



[With This Master Virtual Assistant You Have A Whole Team Working For You ...](#)

Sharon Williams of [The 24 Hour Secretary](#) has been offering Virtual Assistant services since 1990, long before anyone knew what a VA was. Here is how her extensive experience and team-based approach can help you reach the top.

MI: Sharon, your impressive [background](#) reads like the “Who’s Who” of women entrepreneurs, leadership, and community service. You are also a true pioneer of virtual outsourcing having started your VA business back in 1990 when the term “Virtual Assistant” didn’t even exist! Share with us how you happened to start a VA service 13 years ago when no one even knew what it was...

SW: You’re right. The term “virtual assistant” didn’t exist in 1990 nor was I interested in forming a company that specialized in the administrative (virtual assisting) field. My love was business management and marketing. However, I quickly realized that small businesses needed administrative support as much as or even more than management and marketing assistance. Since a segment of my prior employment and military life included working as an administrative secretary, it made perfect sense. The twist? [The 24 Hour Secretary](#), open 24 hours a day, every day. As the saying goes, “the rest is history.” I received referrals from small business owners throughout the United States. So, even years before the term virtual assistant was coined, we’d already embraced it.

MI: Your company provides all kinds of support, some of which is real estate related –what are some of those?

SW: Our portfolio of service ranges from online transaction coordination, marketing solutions and listing services to database and contact management, website creation, and real estate administrative support. E-Prevas fulfill the real estate professionals’ administrative and marketing campaign needs. We have created a professional “teaming” model – enhanced services through niche specialization.

MI: Why did you decide to have real estate support as one of your specialties?

SW: In the 1990s, one of my clients regularly held home buying seminars. I was his admin/marketing assistant for these events. The real estate industry had its fluctuations, and RE assistants were always the first laid off. The demand for quality RE administrative and marketing service continued to exist, so it just made sense to add it to our portfolio. So, we launched E-Preva.com

MI: I understand that you have over 25 other VAs providing support for your clients. How does that work so the client still feels in control of the process?

SW: Communication is the key. We rely on open channels to control every aspect of our business. Clients talk with Team Leaders who work with Team Specialists. Besides e-mail, instant messaging and telephone, we also provide a real time, voice activated meeting room, a LivePerson chat that rings instantly to an on-duty specialist, and a password protected Intranet. Clients can “reach out and touch us,” and instantly receive updates. Team Leaders speak with clients regularly. They develop trust and comfort in every relationship.

MI: One of the real estate specialties you offer is Online Transaction Management. How does this work, what does it cost, and what are the advantages to an agent to have their transactions managed this way?

SW: Online Transaction Management is a godsend. It literally frees the agent from the mundane and administrative responsibilities of touching and monitoring EVERY step of the transaction process and eliminates endless, voluminous paperwork.

Our RE team creates a property transaction case at our secured and encrypted online transaction Gurunet.net site or via the agent’s preferred transaction platform. We create individual action plans and accompanying task lists to insure smooth transaction and audit trails. We are the hands, eyes and ears of the agent until the deal is closed. Afterwards, we even send the “welcome to your new home” gift.

We tailor the rate structure for processing online transactions to individual situations. Listing and Closing Coordination requires a nonrefundable setup fee, ranging from \$50-\$75 and \$150-\$225 at closing. All new clients are subject to an initial \$150 setup fee to customize task lists, vendors and letters to agent specification. Retainer clients receive attractive partnering rates.

There are many advantages to using online transaction coordination as outlined above. However, the main benefits include realizing nothing related to the transaction can fall through the cracks, increased productivity, and more personal time for the agent and his family.

MI: What do you like best about working with REALTORS®?

SW: First, I love partnering with professionals that recognize the value of working with virtual assistants and appreciate our dedication to the growth of their businesses and our own. I appreciate the unlimited opportunities available through working with real estate professionals. Finally, I enjoy learning the nuances of the real estate industry and how laws are unique to each state.

MI: What do you find most frustrating when working with them?

SW: We work with three types of agents: Those that “get it” and are very easy to establish a rapport and relationship. The “can’t wait to relinquish authority” type and the “totally hands on and uncomfortable with delegating” agent. Category one is very easy with which to work. She

understands we are experts and professionals. The “can’t wait” agent wants to “heap” all the overdue projects on our shoulders and asks us to handle them within unrealistic timelines. E-Preva develops an efficient administrative and marketing strategy, introduces technologies to enhance the operation, and streamline procedures. Category three, the “non-delegator,” has difficulty relinquishing even the most mundane responsibility. Our solution – the “gradual approach.” We handle one task at a time. This allows him to become comfortable with our organization. With each group, we establish trust, relieve frustration, and develop mutually beneficial relationships.

MI: What is the best way for business people to evaluate Virtual Assistant services so they can feel comfortable in hiring them?

SW: This is a very difficult question. My company is not your “traditional” solopreneur virtual assistant service. The traditional answer would be to interview several individuals and select a VA based on your level of comfort with their responses, their references and if their niche meets your need. E-Preva.com is a “team/multitasking practice.” Therefore, business owners would not necessarily speak with individuals who do their specific tasks. Instead, they would communicate with a Team Leader who walks them through our prescreening process to decide the perfect fit for him and our company. We believe relationships work two ways – clients comfortable with us and us with them.

MI: Last Question: What advice do you have for REALTORS® who are thinking about hiring a VA but haven’t made that first step yet?

SW: Okay, one, two, three, leap! Really, make this one of your important New Year action items. Identify at least one task you desperately need completed or hate to do yourself and outsource it to a virtual assistant. From January 5th to 31st visit <http://www.AllianceforVirtualBiz.com>, to participate in a Virtual Assistant industry-wide Silent Auction. Bid on VAs services, read profiles and learn more about the industry. I’m sure you will meet your ideal VA.

MI: Sharon, you are a true leader and visionary within the virtual assistance field –thank you for sharing your wealth of experience and insights with our readers!

SW: Thank you, Michael. I enjoy sharing information about the VA industry. I want to thank you for your endless and unwavering support of virtual assistants. Without it, many VAs would not have met their perfect client. Have a great holiday and a happy and prosperous New Year.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Sharon was kind enough to recently assist me during my speech to the Maryland Association of REALTORS® Rookie Seminar.

To learn more about Sharon and her services just go to <http://The24HourSecretary.com>. You can contact her via e-mail at info@The24HourSecretary.com or call her at **888-254-7636**. Always remember to do a thorough due-diligence before hiring any kind of assistant. This interview is part of an ongoing series of VA profiles designed to help you find that perfect VA that will launch you to the top quicker and with less effort than you ever thought possible!