

Las Positas College
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Course Outline for CIS 78

BECOMING A VIRTUAL PROFESSIONAL

Effective: Fall 2005

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

CIS 78 — BECOMING A VIRTUAL PROFESSIONAL — 3.00 units

A Virtual Professional is an independent entrepreneur that provides their services on a contractual basis using today's advanced technology from their own office or remote location. Services offered by each Virtual Professional differ according to their own skills. Students will explore the career opportunities available to administrative support personnel or "virtual assistants" or other professionals offering their services in a virtual environment. This course provides information and guidance in creating a virtual office. Topics include: marketing your abilities, setting up an in-home office, using technology to support your business, coping with working alone, electronic communication, and professional networking.

3.00 Units Lecture

Strongly Recommended

CIS 50 - Intro to Computing Info Tech

Grading Methods:

Letter or P/NP

Discipline:

	MIN
Lecture Hours:	54.00
No Unit Value Lab	18.00
Total Hours:	72.00

II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1

III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

Before entering this course, it is strongly recommended that the student should be able to:

A. CIS50

IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- A. Examine the evolution of the virtual office.
- B. Assess skills and work habits related to independent working environment.
- C. Identify types of virtual employment opportunities.
- D. Develop a marketing plan, including a virtual portfolio, for a virtual enterprise.
- E. Practice virtual communications skills through email and website construction.
- F. Evaluate technology needed in a virtual office environment.
- G. List ways to successfully manage a virtual business environment.
- H. Design a virtual office.
 - I. Develop a plan to create an Internet site to share with prospective clients.
 - J. Prepare a budget including billing procedures and methods of collecting fees.
- K. Discuss business ethics for virtual assistants and create a code of ethics for virtual assistants.
- L. Research professional organizations for virtual assistants.

V. CONTENT:

- A. Understanding the Concept
 1. What is a Virtual Assistant or other Virtual Professional?
 2. The Evolution of the Virtual Office
- B. Do You Have What It Takes?
 1. Personal Analysis
 2. Is the Virtual Office Right for You?
 3. Assessing Your Skills and Work Habits
- C. Getting Started
 1. Identify Advantages of Owning Your Own Business
 2. Identify Disadvantages of Owning Your Own Business
 3. Identify Advantages of Working Solo

4. Identify Disadvantages of Working Solo
5. Identify Your Services
6. Identify Additional Training Needed
- D. Working for Yourself
 1. Creating a Checklist for Starting a VA Business
- E. Mission, Goals, Objectives
 1. Developing your "Brand" into a Business
 2. Personal and Business Goals
- F. Financial Requirements
 1. Start-up Costs
 2. Financial Risks
 3. Establishing Methods of Payment
- G. Identifying Your Services
 1. Detailed Descriptions of Services
 2. Production Costs
 3. Pricing
- H. Identifying Your Customers/Target Market
 1. Target Clients
 2. Target Geographic Area
 3. Target Related Services
- I. Advertising and Networking
 1. Media Research
 2. Promotional Strategy
 3. Professional Organizations
 4. VA "Barter" Networks
 5. Maintaining Visibility through Marketing
- J. Customizing Your Workplace
 1. Equipment and Office Setup
- K. Evaluating Technology
 1. Hardware and Software
 2. Communicating Effectively Through Technology
- L. Establishing a Home Office
 1. Managing your Family and Relationships
 2. Private Office
 3. Productivity and Distractions
- M. Structuring the Work Environment
 1. Time Management
 2. Staying Organized
 3. Daily Operational Procedures
- N. Working in a Virtual Environment
 1. Coping with Working Alone
 2. Taking Care of You
- O. Domain Name
 1. Branding
 2. Register
- P. Website
 1. Consult Professionals
 2. Keywords
 3. Design
 4. Links
- Q. Online Marketing
 1. Search Engines
 2. Anti-Spam
- R. Dos and Don'ts
 1. Learn from Others
- S. Tips for Success
 1. Research/Network
- T. Ethics
 1. Establish Guidelines/Set Rules
- U. Overcoming Obstacles
 1. Plan B or C
- V. Staying Positive
 1. Follow Business/Marketing Plan
 2. Analyze and Revise
- W. Bookkeeping/Collecting Fees
 1. Procedures
 2. Outsource
- X. Client Relations
 1. Stay Current
- Y. Professional VA Organizations

VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Lecture** -
- B. Classroom discussion
- C. Computer demonstrations with overhead display panel
- D. Discussion boards
- E. Lab experience: hands-on lab assignments
- F. PowerPoint presentations
- G. Chat rooms
- H. Read text and other supplemental sources (example, Internet sites)

VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

A. Lecture a) You are not alone, associations and support groups b) Equipment and office setup B. Reading a) Read the chapter on Establishing a Web Presence b) Read the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook Virtual Careers C. Hands-on lab assignment, such as: a) Use Notepad to create a web page b) Upload your web page to a web host D. Weekly Project a) Create the layout for a home office including furniture and equipment. b) Identify the software and hardware needed to provide the services offered to clients.

VIII. EVALUATION:

A. **Methods**

1. Exams/Tests
2. Quizzes
3. Class Participation
4. Lab Activities
5. Other:
 - a. Methods
 1. Quizzes and final examination
 - a. Typical questions: Objective
 1. Which are potential 'virtual careers'
 1. real estate
 2. insurance industry
 3. legal transcription
 4. booking services
 - b. Identify 3 advantages and 3 disadvantages to owning your own business
 2. Graded hands-on lab assignments
 3. Web site evaluation
 4. Relevant active participation

B. **Frequency**

1. Frequency
 - a. Two to three quizzes, examinations (mid-term, final)
 - b. Weekly written assignments to reinforce and demonstrate mastery of the various concepts

IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. Bredin, Alice *The Virtual Office Survival Handbook: What Telecommuters and Entrepreneurs Need to Success in Today's Nontraditional Workplace.* , John Wiley and Sons, 1996.
2. Ennen & Poelker *Up Close & Virtual: A Practical Guide to Starting Your Own Virtual Assistant Business.* 2nd ed., Self-published, 2003.

X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS:

- A. Mobile storage device: zip disk, flash drives, CD RW
- B. Access to the World Wide Web with any major Web browser