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- How To Use This Site
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- Compare Businesses
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You are here: [Home](#) » [Articles](#) » **Inspiration for today: Ruth Martin's Work-at-Home Story**

Inspiration for today: Ruth Martin's Work-at-Home Story



Name: Ruth Martin
Company Name: [Maplewood Virtual Assistance](#) and [U Write Santa](#)
Website Address: <http://www.MaplewoodVA.com> and <http://www.UWriteSanta.com>

Tell us a little about yourself and your business:

I am Ruth Martin, owner of Maplewood Virtual Assistance (aka MaplewoodVA). MaplewoodVA provides online business support services to small to mid-size businesses and entrepreneurs with an emphasis on business and project management, marketing and writing services, and administrative/executive support services. My seasonal business, U Write Santa, finds me as an official Santa helper writing Santa letters.

How did you decide on your business:

Prior to becoming a work-at-home mom, I returned from maternity leave with an infant (and all the baby gear) to the management workforce. This worked until my little fella became pretty mobile at 8 months old and then it was time to transition to being a work-at-home mom. In August 2000, my virtual services began as an administrative assistant independent contractor locally for a church and a few weeks later I added a non-profit organization to my client roster. After 7 years of working this way, I formalized the business to a Limited Liability Corporation and went global with online business support services. This path has satisfied my craving for being a stay-at-mom plus nurtured my need for producing business results, has kept me grounded in exceptional customer service, and has provided meaningful, impactful outcomes to those I interacted with. I knew working with other like-minded entrepreneurs as their online business manager and 'go-to' person would free them to pursue their business goals and put me into a position of working in my strengths all while giving me the freedom to be a hands-on mother to my son.

Name the one thing you love best about your business:

I absolutely love the variety of projects and clients I work with daily. Guess that was two but they go hand-in-hand.

How do you market your business?

I've been fortunate that most of my business has come by way of referrals. I do stay active with forum participation and social media marketing.

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What is your biggest lesson you've learned.

I can't be more invested in a client's business than they are. This quote, "Poor planning and lack of judgment on your part does not constitute a crisis on my part," helps me keep things in perspective when a client comes with a crisis that needs an immediate fix. I'm here to help my clients grow their business and achieve their business goals but I am their partner in the process not their personal magician or handy-woman.

How do you balance work/family?

Truthfully, some days are much easier than others. Observing set business hours, utilizing crock pot menus, taking time out to reconnect with my son when he comes home from school and reconnect with my husband when he gets home from work, being organized, and good project planning have been essentials. Not being too hard on myself, when a project needs me to work an occasional evening and being tentative to take some time off the next day since I worked the evening before.

What tip would you give to those wishing to start a business?

Take the time to plan your business. There's such excitement about wanting to just start but without a good foundation there's little to build and grow on. It needn't be a formal written plan but needs to be thought out so you have focus and direction and don't find yourself running full force without a clear concise picture of where you're headed. Gosh, how will you know when you're there if you don't know where you're headed and the routes to get there?

Find a mentor, someone you admire, and get to know that person. Follow their business writings/blog, and observe what worked well for them to see if those methods can be incorporated into your business plans. Don't copy them but use these things to get your own creative juices flowing.

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[Terry](#) on [February 7th, 2010 at 3:33 pm](#)



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