

## **Woman offers virtual assistance around the globe**

*BY Roger Varley, Staff Writer  
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**Michelle Jamison doesn't like to dwell on the fact four years ago she was a struggling single mother in small-town Ontario. But it was her battle to make ends meet that led to her present career.**

**Jamison now runs her own virtual assistant company, Michelle Jamison VA and Associates, from her modest home in Keswick.**

**Virtual assistant? An independent contractor who uses the Internet and other telecommunication technologies to provide administration services to other companies, large and small.**

**"We're more than office temps, who are hired to fill a vacant position temporarily," said Jamison. "We work long term with our clients to grow their business. " Jamison admitted the term virtual assistant is confusing.**

**"Virtual, to most, means non-existent, but I'm here," she said. " We handle all aspects of administration; word-processing, bookkeeping, spread sheets, we partner with our clients and learn our clients business allowing us to support their growth." That includes handling e-mail and having company telephone calls forwarded to her own office.**

**Which adds another small confusion. Does she work for bosses or clients?**

**"A bit of both," said Jamison. "We are accountable, as we would be to our bosses, but we refer to them as our clients"**

**It was a client-boss relationship that gave her a start as a virtual assistant. A neighbour who used Jamison's day-care service was one of the first VAs in Canada and introduced her to the profession in 1998.**

**"She taught me everything," said Jamison. "It grew to where I now have my own VA practice and have four associates who work as a team in supporting clients." Sitting in her compact, neat home office, with family pictures on a shelf and her son's Spiderman stickers decorating one window, Jamison said much of the appeal of being a virtual assistant is the diversity of the work.**

**"You work for so many different companies and take on different roles," she said. "I am director of operations for one company, another I am an event planner, as well as president of my own."**

**In June 2001, Jamison briefly moved from the virtual world to the real world where she traveled to Hawaii as an event planner.**

**But she will take her laptop computer along to keep up with her work. After all, she still has bosses/clients in Vancouver, Georgia, California, Illinois and Washington to keep happy.**

**she said, "because often you never meet the 'boss'. Working virtually is a unique experience and may not come easy to everyone. Working virtually also means working with discipline.**

**"I've gotten used to focusing on what I'm doing and letting the rest go by," she said of working at home. Jamison admitted, however, that it works both ways.**

**"I also have to set boundaries on working in my office," she said, noting she sets her hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

**Her immediate goal is to further grow her business.**

**"We have highly-skilled VAs to meet the demands of clients, and they (the VAs) can be located anywhere," she said enthusiastically. "I am very fortunate to have an amazing team of VA's." My Associates, Monica, Cynthia, Linda and Paula are great! Her Associates each have specific skills: bookeeping, proofreading, client service etc. "Another goal is to bring awareness to the field of Virtual Assisting."**