

## Dortha Hise

### Innovative Woman

Sacramento, CA



#### How/why did you begin your business?

I started my business in 2004 after attending an event and being approached by someone looking for a research assistant. I had a background as a paralegal and I loved doing research. As that client relationship grew, I began taking on more tasks and responsibilities with her and learning more and more. I loved the independence and flexibility having my own business afforded me – in particular, that I could travel with my husband when he needed to travel for work and I could take my business with me. I'm a person who is always looking to grow and challenge myself

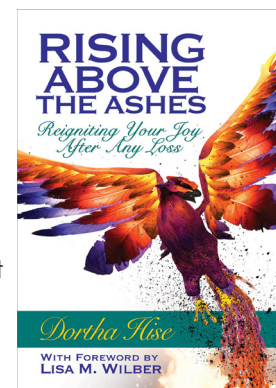
and take my business to the next level – in addition to offering social media support, blogging, ghostwriting, shopping cart integration, etc., I took some classes at the community college to learn more in depth about web design, to expand my service offerings. In 2007, I began building my business out into a team model, having independent contractors who supported me and my clients in the tasks we handled for them. In 2014, I started a mentor program to train others how to create their own business as a virtual assistant, working from home. And after completing the 6-week program, participants have the opportunity to interview with me and stay on as a part of our team.

#### What has been your biggest challenge and how did you overcome it?

I lost my Mom in July 2012, and over the course of the two years that followed, I lost 27 more friends, family, acquaintances, and associates. Along the way, in February 2013, I woke up with what I thought was severe laryngitis. Over the course of the next few months, several visits to my doctor, specialists and speech therapists, I was diagnosed with a vocal disorder called abductor spasmodic dysphonia. My voice sounds like a cross between a very low whisper and horrible laryngitis. I'm barely audible in many situations. For example, I'm unable to use the phone, as the speaker isn't sensitive enough to pick up my



speech. I'm unable to go through a drive-through. I have great difficulty in eating alone, as people often mistake my condition that I might be hearing impaired, which creates a whole different set of challenges. I'm unable to yell for help in situations where that may be necessary. Most days I have to repeat myself multiple times to be heard – which is honestly, very exhausting. This condition has completely changed my life as well as the way that I run my business, and I have been adamant that I will not let it limit me in what I do. I transitioned from doing phone meetings with clients and my team to meeting via Skype or Google Hangout and typing my response while the other person talks.



I had known I wanted to write a book about the experience of losing my Mom, and initially I thought the book would be about grieving the loss of a difficult relationship (my mom and I weren't very close)...After other various losses, and then that of my voice, I felt like there was a bigger message in what the book would become. In September 2014, I joined a write your book in 10-week program with a colleague and friend. We met weekly, and at the end of the 10 weeks, I was finishing up my book and publishing it. It released in December and it's called *Rising Above the Ashes: Reigniting Your Joy After Any Loss*. The direction that the book took was really around supporting people to find their joy by working through their loss or grief – whether that of a loved one, a beloved family pet, a business partnership or a big client.



#### How do you define SUCCESS?

I define SUCCESS as doing what you want, when you want and with whom you want to do it. Having the ability and the means to do those things as well – not necessarily relating to money, perhaps it's the ability to spend time, etc.

#### If there was one thing you wish you knew before you began your business, what would that be?

That not everyone works from integrity – there are, unfortunately some bad apples out there...and not to let those bad apples ruin it for the rest of the good ones.

#### What makes you an Innovative Woman?

My ability to roll with the punches and continue to persevere no matter the circumstances.

For further details about Dortha at <http://prettysmartvaservices.com>.