

# From Executive Assistant to Business Partner: Getting the most from your EA

The importance of the Executive Assistant is growing exponentially. From humble beginnings the role of the Executive Assistant has been changing from purely administrative support to one of "Business Partner".

Particularly since the removal of middle management layers combined with and the need for organisations to become leaner and more efficient, the importance of the Executive Assistant has become more paramount and the role more demanding across the board.

## ARE YOU TAKING ADVANTAGE OF YOUR PA'S SKILLS?

### 1. Share the Business Strategy

Fundamental to the role of senior executives in any organisation is the formation and delivery of the business strategy.

These senior executives need the support of a high quality team around them if success is to come. The Executive Assistant is at the core of this team and needs to be able to speak the language of the senior management team or Board.

The old adage of "Once you know why, you'll figure out how" applies to the role of the Executive/Personal Assistant. Executives and Senior Managers who enable their Executive/Personal Assistant to gain this understanding get the significantly enhanced performance.



Source: BMTG Ltd. The Effective EPA  
Advanced Certificate for the Executive Personal Assistant

## **DON'T KEEP THE BUSINESS STRATEGY TO YOURSELF – SHARE IT WITH YOUR EA**

### **2. Share the Wider Business / Organisational Issues**

Your Executive Assistant is your eyes and ears across the organization but they cannot do this if tied to their desk. Too many managers think that the good people are the ones always sitting at their desk. Nothing can be further from the truth.

The good people are the ones out there listening and communicating. Having a clear understanding of the priorities, motivations and issues of others across the organization is invaluable to the Executive Assistant in the daily tasks.

## **LET YOUR EA BE YOUR EYES AND EARS AND DO NOT TIE THEM TO THEIR DESK**

### **3. Encourage Internal EA Networking Events**

They do say that a problem shared is a problem halved and it is true that many issues and problems are rarely solved by an individual alone.

Your EA, like many others in your organization, face daily frustrations brought about by broken and inefficient internal processes which cause them to be not as effective and efficient as they could be.

Many of these issues could be eliminated or their impact mitigated if people had time to tackle them and to apply basic problem solving techniques. This is best achieved by sharing the problem and working as a team to jointly resolve the issues that all are facing.

Encouraging and supporting internal EA Network in your organization that meets say every 4/6 weeks with a remit of delivering solutions to known issues that affect them is a great way of achieving this.

## **PROACTIVELY SUPPORT THE FORMATION OF AN INTERNAL PA NETWORK ACROSS YOUR ORGANISATION**

### **4. Delegate**

Natural leaders know how to effectively delegate. Traditional Managers are reluctant to delegate as they feel that they will lose control or feel that they cannot 100% trust their subordinate.

Think about those tasks that you do on a daily/weekly/monthly basis that could actually be conducted by your Executive Assistant. Challenge yourself as to why your EA should not undertake the task on your behalf – is it because they just couldn't do it or is it because you never considered that they were capable of doing it?

For example; is there any reason that your EA cannot delegate for you in some of those lengthy meetings where you would be better off being elsewhere or doing something more productive. Project Status Meetings / Project Steering Groups are a prime example where a well-trained EA

can effectively delegate for you. They have your delegated authority in the meeting and project management is one of the subjects that many EAs wish to get on their CV.

By sending your EA to the meeting they can filter out the wheat from the chaff and bring anything to you that needs your attention. This is happening more and more across organisations. Why not try it – what do you have to lose.

## LET GO! AND STOP MICRO MANAGING

### 5. Trust

Trust is not just about keeping confidentiality. Trust between an executive and their EA is built upon many facets and the responsibility for creating the trust environment lies with the Executive.

To create that climate of trust you must **Communicate** with your EA, you must **Support** them and **Respect** them, you must treat them **Fairly** and **Predictably** and most importantly you must invest in their personal development so that they feel **Competent** in their role.

### TAKE THE INITIATIVE TO CREATE THE CLIMATE WHERE TRUST GROWS

## Don't let the value fade away



About the Author: **Richard Arnott**

Richard is a Director of Business Management Training Group Ltd and is the lead author and course for the internationally renowned **Advanced Certificate for the Executive Personal Assistant (ACEPA™)**