

Executive Assistant Coaching



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About the Tutorial

Truth be told, the job of an Executive Assistant does come with the customary money and glamour, which is a huge incentive for those who want to make a career out of hobnobbing with the rich and successful people. However, that is exactly how this job profile appears to an outsider.

The job of an Executive Assistant is much more than meets the eye – It is about giving valuable support to a person and his organization, which makes the job of an Executive Assistant unique. To become successful in this field takes long-term practicing of the unique skills that are associated with the job.

Audience

In this tutorial, we will discuss how interested candidates can become Executive Assistants and help in building value for the business by supporting their managers and making their jobs easier. They act like an organizer for their bosses. They remember appointments, coordinate with teams and synchronize events, so that the tasks are handled in a systematic way.

Prerequisites

This tutorial is designed to identify the roles and the contribution of an Executive Assistant through their creative problem solving and coordinating methods. The readers need to have a basic knowledge about the job of an assistant and the job responsibilities that come with this type of a profile.

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1. Executive Assistant – Introduction

Truth be told, the job of an Executive Assistant does not come with the customary money and glamour, which is a huge incentive for those who want to make a career out of hobnobbing with the rich and the successful people. However, that is exactly how this type of a job profile appears to an outsider.

The job of an Executive Assistant is much more – It is about giving valuable support to a person and his organization, which makes the job of an Executive Assistant unique. For any individual to become successful in this career, it takes a long-term practicing of the unique skills associated with this profile. This job is not always easy and fun as it might appear, however the experience could be rewarding.

Executive Assistants are expected to coordinate with multiple staff members and oversee all crucial administrative functions as a part of their daily support to their boss. Their job is to ensure that their manager makes an optimum use of their time, while the work and responsibilities are carried out in an efficient manner.



These Executive Assistants help in building value for the business by supporting their managers and making their jobs easier. They act like the organizer for their bosses. They remember appointments, coordinate with teams and synchronize events, so that the tasks are handled in a systematic way.

The job of an Executive Assistant comes with a lot of challenges and plenty of career opportunities. It is a wholesome job, in the sense that there is no “pick and choose” to it. The good comes with the bad in this job, and while some will find it fascinating and challenging, others may misunderstand it as a dull and tedious job.

There are numerous cases of Executive Assistants loving their jobs so much that they want to remain Executive Assistants till the day they retire. They see the job of an Executive Assistant as a reward they feel they have earned for being excellent in their people management skills.

Depending on the way you approach the job, aided greatly by your previous experience of administrative work, you will find a lot of positives on this job that can make someone’s career grow faster than any other platform possible. This is the only job that gives you an opportunity to work with the owners of the business, which is not bad for someone who wants to have a high growth in his career, is it?

2. Executive Assistant – Core Competencies

The most important thing about being an Executive Assistant is a strong commitment towards the job. In other words, there needs to be a strong desire to succeed. As a candidate, the person must be willing to constantly improve his/her performance and add new abilities.

The demands of the position always keep on changing with the advent of newer technologies and business practices, so Executive Assistants should be **adaptive, flexible and inquisitive**. Much of the support that an Executive Assistant provides is nearly invisible as he/she works without any supervision, hence there are no performance reports that an assistant requires to submit.

The only yardstick of their performance is the way they make lives easier for their bosses, some of their core responsibilities are given below:

- Keeping them informed about all details
- Assuring their presence in all the important events
- Anticipating their needs
- Prioritizing their work and other engagements
- Managing the daily workflow.

Apart from the above-mentioned responsibilities, in total, there are nine core competencies that every Executive Assistant must be good at, which are listed below:

Adaptive Skills

- Is flexible to changes and adjusts accordingly.
- Has a positive attitude towards work, irrespective of the nature of work.
- Can manage and prioritize many conflicting priorities in a composed manner

Organizational Skills

- Knows how to best utilize the time.
- Knows how to distribute time as per the tasks at hand.
- Knows how to utilize office space and organize paperwork.

Task Management Skills

- Anticipating needs and addressing them.
- Ensure completion of crucial projects within the time frame.
- Balances many priorities and designs a suitable workflow.
- Being able to foresee problems and taking pre-emptive actions.

Communication Skills

- Listens and actively works to improve those skills.
- Writes well-rounded sentences in a professional language without errors.
- Speaks confidently and sends clear messages that are easily understood.
- Knows how to employ oral and written skills to convey a positive message.

Client Service Skills

- Responds to queries in a timely and professional demeanor.
- Is aware of the latest developments about the client's business.
- Interacts in a formal and professional way with clients and colleagues.

Business Concepts Skills

- Is aware of the fundamental business principles.
- Knows organizational behavior and demonstrated it.
- Understands the overall industry and business operation.

Team Player Skills

- Likes to be counted upon as a competent team member.
- Gives importance to group goals and participates accordingly.
- Is willing to be a back-up support for others working with the manager.

Computer/Technical Skills

- Displays proficiency in using the standard office equipment.
- Displays a proficiency in using computers, peripherals and accessories.
- Demonstrates advanced proficiency by quickly adapting to new technology.

Judgment Skills

- Exhibits sound decision making and fair judgment skills.
- Refers issues to the appropriate authority when necessary.
- Works effectively independent of constant supervision or direction.

These nine core competencies are not easy to cultivate in a matter of days, so it is clear by now that the list of things that an Executive Assistant should be doing is exhaustive. The role of an Executive Assistant is never easy; there is sometimes not a moment of rest. In these cases, it is imperative that the person maintains a positive attitude and unwavering focus on the job. This job is much larger than the sum of its parts.

3. Executive Assistant – Types

There are three types of Executive Assistants, however the differences in these three types aren't dependent on work responsibilities, but rather on the professional aspirations of the assistants themselves. As their career grows and changes, they are found shifting between these three classifications.

The reader may take some time here and try to guess which category he falls under. He is free to take a wild guess just from the way they interpret the names given to these following three categories:

- Climbers
- Lifers
- Partners

Climbers

Climbers are executive assistants who think of the job as their “stepping stone” to higher success in the business world. They use their position to increase networking and climbing the corporate ladder, so that they can further their careers that way.

This thought is a tried and tested method of learning from the job while earning from it. The assistants know about the intricacies of the job, make a name for themselves and get to interact with the top leaders of the company, and the industry. They also get a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to pitch their ideas in front of the people who can make a difference.

Style

Climbers are very career driven hence they are naturally enthusiastic people. They like their ideas to be heard, so they are affirmative speakers. They treat the job as a platform to consolidate their image, build a reputation and get noticed. They are not very loyal towards either their job or their employers.

Climbers have more focus and dedication towards their own careers, so they pay more attention to their own goals. They don't consider the job of being an executive assistant a long term one, and think of it as a stairway to professional growth.



Motivation

As they are motivated by future career goals, they can easily go above and beyond the call of duty to improve their chances at career growths. Climbers need to send a clear message to their boss about their ambitions, so that he/she can provide opportunities to them or at the least, understand when they change their jobs.

However, the fact is that some managers don't fancy the thought of recruiting an assistant, training him, grooming him, providing him details of business and professional network, only to lose him to another position, even within the same company. Hence, it is always important to keep the expectations clear and transparent.

Lifers

Some Executive Assistants love their job so much that they want to remain Executive Assistants till the day they retire. They are not worried about moving to a different career path. They see the job of an Executive Assistant as a reward they feel they have earned for being excellent in their people management skills.

Lifers don't want to change their career or company. The reason behind this might not explicitly be only loyalty towards their clients and company; they might have lost their appetite for a different career seeing that he is content with his position.

Style

Lifers view their position from the point of view of a long-term career choice as they like their job enough to keep it till the future, which is why they always look forward to performing well. However, as they are looking for a gradual career curve instead of steep career growth, they are less motivated to exceed expectations.

Lifers like predictable environments and avoid surprises. They are not particularly loyal towards their managers, but their own jobs. If the manager they have been working with for years quits, they can keep working with the replacement.



Motivation

Lifers are motivated by the stability that comes with their jobs. They are not interested in climbing the corporate ladder as they like the space their life is in now and would love to persist with it till the end of their careers. They like consistency because they are used to a systematic work load that comes with a degree of certainty.

They generally avoid taking over new responsibilities suddenly, however that doesn't mean they are unwilling to take new responsibilities. If the new responsibilities come as a natural but gradual outcome of the tasks they are performing, then they will take them.

Partners

Executive Assistants who think of themselves as partners for their managers or bosses have a positive mental approach towards their job and end up being in the best position to grow and progress their skills and career. For them, the job is like collaboration, where they take care of coordination and the executive they report takes care of the process.

Such kind of Executive Assistants can work efficiently in the right working environment, i.e. a working place where there is mutual respect and acknowledgement for teamwork and efforts

that assistants put in. These assistants view the success of their manager as the result of a collaborative effort.

Style

Partners have a fluid style of communication with the executive they assist. They cut across hierarchy and often brainstorm and offer opinions. Partners appreciate when they are given a level playing field and truly function at their peak when the manager treats them like their equal, rather than a subordinate.



When they work together, the executive and the assistant offer a lot of mutual support and pursue goals as a team. This makes them very loyal towards each other and often such assistants accompany their managers, or the manager asks them to move with them, when they change companies.

Motivation

Partners are encouraged and motivated by the fact that they are making an important contribution to the job being done. They feel connected to the goals of the business and sense a personal responsibility in their role. They want to make important contributions by providing exceptional support.

They are also motivated by the strong relationship between them and the manager. The fact that their boss appreciates their efforts and contribution to the work being done properly inspires them to do better. Such assistants have high salaries as they function not just as a subordinate, but also as the second brain of the boss.

Before you move on to the next chapter, take some time to consider which kind of Executive Assistant you are and which one you would like to be. There are no rights and wrongs here. Any type of an assistant is good. However, the type should match with your temperament, attitude towards work and the kind of life goals you have.

4. Executive Assistant – Career Path

Most Executive Assistants start their careers as an Administrative Assistant, from which they get promoted to higher designations within the company. However, it does not mean that an Executive Assistant must have some special skills.

In fact, many employees with the right skill sets become an Executive Assistant, as the experience can prove useful for many positions in the company.

Working as an Administrative Assistant is not only one of the most enriching ways of gaining business experience, but also one of the most effective. As an Administrative Assistant, you can gain valuable knowledge of how business works and what networks can be used to further your career.

As an Administrative Executive Assistant, you will:

- Build a reputation of a hardworking, fast learning and a dedicated performer.
- Learn about the standard office procedures and business operations.
- Knowing the important people in different departments of the company.
- Gaining an overall awareness and idea of the business environment.
- Becoming familiar with the flow of work daily.
- Begin to understand the long-term cycles of the business.

Core Competencies of an Executive Assistant

Upon reviewing the list of nine core competencies an executive assistant is supposed to have, one may observe that these skills are not associated with a specific job, but almost all the management related jobs, especially those that deal with the public – such as sales or customer service. The 9 core competencies are as follows:

- Adaptability
- Organization
- Communication Skills
- Proactive Anticipation of Needs
- Judgment
- Team Player
- Client Service
- Computer/Technical Skills
- Business Concepts



That is the reason it is not easy to get the position of an Executive Assistant without prior administrative work experience. To put all your best talents

forward, you can focus on how your experience is an indication of your clear ability to meet the requirements of the job.

To further understand this concept, we will be **discussing two resumes** –

- One whose working experience has been in a constant progression with increasing levels of responsibility with respect to experience and
- The other of an individual who started working in a completely different field, but changed and adopted to a strong path of career growth.

This list of non-administrative jobs mentioned below also are considered as good experience for becoming an Executive Assistant:

- Servers in Restaurants
- Sales Associates
- Receptionists
- Salon/Spa, Fitness Associates
- Teachers
- Customer Service Representatives
- Medical Assistants

In the next chapter, we will consider sample resumes for an executive assistant.

5. Executive Assistant – Tips for Newcomers

Candidates who are interested to have a career as an Executive Assistant without prior office administrative work knowledge or experience, need to realize the fact that initially the process will be much more difficult for them. They may have to opt for some non-traditional jobs in the beginning, mostly because, their resumes might not reflect the necessary background. This often leads to resumes getting overlooked; at times, even rejected.

Those who want to become an Executive Assistant should try alternative routes of networking, like friends and family members, to build up a resume with considerable work experience. The resume should reflect what your real skills are, instead of just what the job wants you to be. Try to map each of the nine necessary competencies to a specific job that you have mentioned in your resume.

Prepare extensively. In case you get the call, you should have all the necessary details in your mind during the interview. Be clear in your intentions and approach and don't try to blend in and become a type. Stay true to what you are and present yourself as an organic whole, who is much more than just the sum of parts explained in your own resume.

Understanding the Responsibilities

To understand what makes the position of an Effective Executive Assistant so distinct and special, we need to first understand the fact that the job title of "Executive Assistant" comes with its own challenges in the form of frequently-occurring unique and challenging scenarios.

Recognizing all the unique challengers and scenarios will help the candidates to understand the demands of the job and its responsibility in a better manner. That been said, the job does not only have challenges. It has its share of unique and rare benefits that don't come with other job profiles; at least not that early in this career.

In the Direct Line of Fire

The Executive Assistant's job is to constantly communicate directly with the boss, even if other employees rarely interact with their bosses. This provides a different requirement of the job as they are always in the firing line of their bosses.

If the Executive Assistants revel in their bosses' success, they will also be dealing with their bosses' frustration. Bosses expect their assistants to put in as much effort and time as they do, which leaves little time for life outside work.

Muddled Authority Levels

Even if an executive assistant acts on behalf of the manager, people often forget that they are only the messenger, not the decision maker. This makes the assistants tempted to directly make changes or put in inputs on their own authority, even without asking the management.

Sometimes, they start answering questions that should ideally be directed at the boss. The Executive Assistant may share his inputs and suggestions with the boss. However, he should keep in mind the fact that the buck always stops with the boss.

The Know It All Expectation

Executive Assistants themselves admit that once they have worked with a boss for a long duration, they get so connected that they can preempt the needs of the boss. This may be possible when it comes to lifestyle and habits. However, bosses often mistake their assistants to be a “Know It All” person.



They expect their assistant to be able to read his mind, which makes him/her complacent and less communicative. He/she needs to understand that even the most experienced assistants need spoken communication at times to sort out certain decisions.

Distance from Co-workers

Assistants are often considered a part of the manager’s team, even if it is not necessarily the case always. Hence, the general perception is that they are privy to insider information. This makes co-workers cautious in their interactions with assistants, as they feel every word of theirs could be reported back to the boss.

Assistants should also know that anything they say will be considered as the words of the boss. Hence, they should avoid participating in gossip or rumor spreading, as everything they say will be misconstrued as “inside scoop”.

The Role of an Intermediary

The most difficult role that an Executive Assistant plays is that of the intermediary. This is one job that takes up most of their time. They are like gatekeepers, who provide selective permission to people to meet their boss and stop rest of the outsiders from intruding their boss’s personal space and wasting their precious time.

This may earn them praises from their boss, but they turn evil in the eyes of the ones who don't get to meet the boss. The assistants often become replacements of the boss in many cases, either by taking notes or asking his questions in the meetings.

6. Executive Assistant – Unique Rewards

Apart from the challenges that come with the job of an Executive Assistant, there are also many unique perks and career opportunities that are rare to find in other job portfolios.

One-on-one Interaction with the Boss

While being constantly in communication with the boss has its share of challenges, but it is both a blessing and a curse. However, this level of direct and transparent discussion allows the opportunity to know exactly what issues are there in the bosses' mind, so that the executive assistant can provide a strong, long-lasting support and assistance.

Along with that, the assistant has the golden opportunity to study how a successful person thinks, communicates and influences decisions. Very few positions allow the opportunity to have a direct and frequent interaction with the source of inspiration.

Opportunity to do Multiple Tasks Daily

Assistants are used to performing a large variety of tasks ranging from daily duties to unique ones like attending client meetings, and planning events.

If the assistant enjoys doing these unique tasks, he/she will find doing more of them. However, if the assistant feels bored, he/she needs to communicate it to their boss that he/she wants to do something else. Often, the bosses comply and provide new tasks.



Creating a Reputation in the Organization

Working directly with the boss of the organization presents the opportunity to meet and know the heads of many departments, which in turn helps building a good presence and reputation.

Executive Assistants know that every person they interact with could be their employer in the future. Hence, they try their best to be as cordial and professional as possible, so that they can forge a strong and long-lasting relationship with the people they interact with and work with on a regular basis.

7. Executive Assistant – Myths

When a job demands so much discretion as the job of Executive Assistant demands, there is every possibility that people will start making conjectures on the actual nature of the job. A lot of people might think that assistants are overrated, while others think that they are the ones who run the proxy show.

It is true that there are many unofficial responsibilities that come with the job, so the Executive Assistants understand that they might have to live with a few myths around their job.

Some of the most prominent myths have been mentioned below.

Myth 1: “Executive Assistant” is just a Fancy Name for a Secretary

Reality: While the most important tasks of an Executive Assistant are secretarial in nature, their job responsibilities often give them additional authority to step in as an alter ego on behalf of their bosses in meetings and presentations. They are considered a natural extension of their bosses.

Many executives are completely dependent on their assistants to keep track of their progress, work and tasks. They also rely on their assistants for new ideas, perspectives and brainstorming other thoughts. In these cases, the assistants can also influence decision making. Hence, they play an integral role in the success of the executive and the organization of which they are a part.

Myth 2: Being an Executive Assistant means being used and abused

Reality: The relationship that an Executive Assistant shares with his boss is complicated and unique. The levels of dependency that a boss develops on his assistant could convert the relationship from that of a “supervisor-subordinate” deal to a genuine partnership.



Typically, the relationship between an assistant and an executive involves sharing important details that are confidential in nature. Hence, it involves a high level of trust. The assistant is explicitly involved in the planning and needs to be a person of high integrity. Because of this loyalty that these two share, their goals are often defined by each other's success.

The assistant faces some of the biggest challenges simply because he is managing the most powerful executive in the entire department, possibly the organization. There will be many processes running parallel to one another and the assistant is expected to keep a track of all these, and provide a timely conclusion for all of them.

Most leaders are intensely driven by their goals and vision which makes them quite vocal with their opinions. This often leads to stress and high tempers. The assistants get subjected to such emotional outbursts at times. However, experienced Executive Assistants know that dealing with conflict is a standard part of any job and know how to communicate effectively even under stressful conditions.

Myth 3: Executive Assistant is a poorly paid position with Little Opportunity

Reality: An Executive Assistant has the entire world as his oyster to speak. He/she has the privilege of getting an opening into all the important departments of the organization. As it is highly likely that he/she will get career opportunities that few can only dream of. It is possible because of their regular interactions with influential people in their organization.

Working as an Executive Assistant is also a very lucrative career option, unlike what the public perception is. In addition, Executive Assistants are also entitled to many performance-based bonuses. Not to mention the various perks, discounts, add-ons and incentives they receive in their job in the form of travelling benefits, air miles, health benefits, gym memberships, etc.

This makes the Executive Assistant's job financially secure, and an enviable job in many ways. Not only are they working with the crème' le crème' of the organizations, but they are proving their skills and getting handsomely compensated for their sincere efforts as well.

Myth 4: It takes little or no training to be an Executive Assistant

Reality: While some parts of the job of an Executive Assistant are quite basic and clerical in nature, the overall job responsibility rivals that of the boss himself. Although the designation doesn't always demand a college degree, it can be a valued asset for someone trying for an ambitious and influential career goal.

Many Executive Assistants don't start their careers with a degree. In the absence of a degree, they go for additional services like attending junior college courses and obtaining important and relevant certifications, preferably in computer technology or business administration or anything that helps the assistant in professionally expanding his or her skills set.

This position requires a person with a level-headed approach and a pleasant personality. The person needs to be a problem solver, so he/she should have the analytical skills of one. These skills will come in time and with facing different scenarios. These intricate details cannot be learned overnight.

Myth 5: Being an Executive Assistant is a boring, thankless job.

Reality: The Executive Assistant is as boring as the assistant wants to make it. In other words, there are innumerable career opportunities and learning chances available in this position. When you report directly to the boss of an organization, there are no shortage of different responsibilities and the best assistants work hard to learn all the roles, so that they represent their bosses in meetings confidently.

It is because of this extremely personal nature of the job that some people find it extremely fascinating while others consider it too challenging. Some will also find it boring and dull, however, one can say that they never understood the job in the first place.

Most of them feel rewarded and enriched with experience after spending some time working as an Executive Assistant. Having said that, the importance and value of the designation changes as per company and organizational needs.

8. Executive Assistant – Sample Resumes

In this chapter, we will show you two sample resumes, one for a Grade-1 Executive Assistant and another for a Grade-2 Executive Assistant.

Sample Resume for an Executive Assistant – Grade 1

Jane Doe

Antwon, Berkley, USA

Phone: 020-515-5752 | Email: janedoe@anything.com

Summary of Qualifications

- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Capable of working under pressure with time constraints.
- Ability to be a team player and providing excellent client service.
- Ability to develop and maintain productive long term relationships.
- Advanced proficiency in Excel, Word, Power Point, Internet Research.
- Ability to interact with people in a courteous and professional manner.

Professional Experience

Financials Inc., Senior Executive Assistant, 2010-2016

- Responsible for coordination of all client meetings.
- Developing a tracking system to check timely and proper scheduling.
- Designing agendas and spreadsheets etc.
- Managed daily work flow of associates and prioritizing tasks and obligations.
- Doing administrative tasks such as client correspondence and other services.
- Doing clerical jobs like answering the phone, updating computer database, filling out paperwork, etc.

Cooperative Union, Customer Service Representative, 2008-2010

- Efficiently handled customer service inquiries and requests.
- Effectively performed tasks to ensure cash balance and drawer balance.
- Provided superior customer care always by time management skills.
- Worked with clients on financial transactions, such as deposits, withdrawals, etc.

Lawson Suite, Receptionist, 2006-2008

- Occasionally filing paperwork.
- Keeping the office space tidy and organized.
- Greeting clients and visitors in a professional and pleasant manner.
- Answering queries and directing clients to the appropriate team member.

Education

- Associates Degree, Jackson's Senior College.
- 1-Year Vocational Training Certification, Business Technology.
- Advanced Proficiency MS Office, Excel, Internet Research.

Sample Resume for an Executive Assistant – Grade 2

Vickey Rourke

Address: Plot-66, Hitech City, Hyderabad, 500081

Phone: 010-565-4762 | Email: vickyrouke2@anymail.com

Summary of Qualifications

Highly motivated performer with twelve years of experience in tourism industry. Skilled at creating and establishing long-term productive working relationships with clients and staff. Excellent coordination, organizational and time management skills, with proven track record of providing composed resolutions under stressful and time sensitive scenarios.

Professional History

1. Assistant Manager, Nigel Tours (2012-2016). Promoted from Supervisor

- Assisted in scheduling and supervising a batch of 40 tourists.
- Maintained excellent customer relations and inter-personality skills.
- Handled various financial and administrative responsibilities including:
 - Programming different tours
 - Making batches and invoices
 - Tourist games and spots
 - Checking receipts
 - Checking lodgings and boarding
 - Checking cash transactions

2. Shift Supervisor, Troxy Travels (2008 - 2012) Tourism Package Company

- Effectively managed time and provided prompt customer service.
- Provided effective coordination between staff members and customers.
- Executed Front of House supervision duties like hospitality and inventory.

3. Lead Guide, The Fun House (2006- 2008), a tourism package company

- Responsible for guiding approximately 10 visitors.
- Trained new guides in company policies, procedures and etiquette.
- Promoted different company packages and addressed customer queries.

4. Guide, Italian Stallion (2004 – 2006) Family Tourism Package Company

- Demonstrated the highest quality of customer care always.
- Coordinated with supervisors to accommodate customers promptly.
- Responsible for taking calls, addressing queries, greeting customers.

Education and Licenses

- Graduate, Bramhas Senior College – Business Administration.
- Advanced proficiency – MS Word, Excel, 10-key, Internet Research.