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TIMELESS POWER SKILLS FOR EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Introduction

Executive assistants offer extensive support to the executives under whom they work. This has been the case for the longest time, earning these assistants the title of “gatekeepers.” Thanks to quality training and development, the role of executive assistants has, today, transformed into a more strategic one.

Today’s executive assistant offers strategic counsel and the technical expertise required for problem-solving. To effectively execute all that pertains to this crucial role requires expert-level skills. This white paper discusses the top timeless skills that make a great executive assistant.

1. Top-Notch Communication Skills

An executive assistant holds communication for one or more executives throughout the day. The assistant will be handling internal communications from the executive to team members, as well as communication with partners, clients, and other stakeholders. Be it via email, call, or face-to-face interactions, both internal and external communications must be handled appropriately. Active listening is a crucial component of the communication skills an executive assistant should have, as it allows you will understand the tasks at hand better when you listen better.

For an executive assistant, having expert-level communication skills goes far beyond your listening, talking, and writing skills. It calls for investing time towards mastering the knowledge that allows you to communicate authoritatively. Additionally, you will need excellent negotiation skills even as you communicate with various parties. You also need to pay attention to your tone and know when to be strictly formal and when to use a warm and friendly tone.

As an executive assistant, you also need to be reliable, loyal, and discrete in your communications. Understand what qualifies as private and confidential. As a professional, you will not be especially cautious with whom you share this information. Anything but this level of discretion, and you may share information with the wrong people, jeopardizing your executive’s reputation, the company’s reputation and even threaten its continuity.

2. Impeccable Organizational Skills

Staying organized is crucial because the role of an executive assistant is very fast-paced and involves juggling different tasks as well as handling multi-directional information flow. To excel in this role requires that you keep track of events, meetings, files and stay on top of your executive’s diary and to-do lists.



Without an organizer or proper system in place, you may find yourself losing track of it all. As a result, you are likely to fall behind on your tasks and even miss deadlines. On the other hand, an executive assistant with top-notch organization will have all operations flowing smoothly.

Staying organized requires impeccable planning and time-management skills. A high-level, competent executive assistant will make setting goals, allocating resources, scheduling, delegating, and collaborating a part of their planning process. You can also benefit significantly from various organizational tools and software.

3. Creative and Analytical Problem Solving

The role of executive assistant calls for expert problem-solving skills. Your boss will face challenges you'd need to figure out, in the same way, that other team members will come to your boss with issues.

Away from the mundane, you may find yourself faced with a problem that requires a lot of creative thinking to solve. You may also have to tap into your networks and collaborate with others, both inside and outside the organization, to find a solution.

Being able to think out-of-the-box and on your feet whenever a curveball or any issue is thrown your way is indeed, a power skill. A great executive assistant will be able to come up and present even more than one alternative solution to the problem at hand.

4. Balanced and Strategic Multi-tasking

Very rarely, if at all, would an executive assistant be focusing on just the one task. You may be drafting your executive's itinerary for the upcoming business trip when a colleague walks up to you requesting a file.

This will no doubt happen throughout the day, and an expert executive assistant will know how to juggle it all. You must be able to prioritize effectively, giving attention to the most immediate need, and smoothly resuming to the previous task after handling the interruption. If you are on the phone, for example, and end up being put on hold, this is an excellent opportunity to do something else, such as draft that email, as you wait to be connected.

5. Excellent Time Management

Executive assistants need to get so much done in what never seems like enough time. It is then no wonder that time management is a skill every assistant should master.

Throughout the day, your in-tray will be filled with steady work and requests. You need your time-management competencies to be top-level; otherwise, you'll fall behind. It comes down to developing efficient workflows and knowing how you prioritize tasks, as well as multitasking.

After some time on the job, you should have an idea of how much time and focus a task requires. Based on that, and the urgency attached to it, you can allocate your time accordingly to each task. Again, good time management is also a matter of being able to delegate some of your workload.



6. Outstanding People Skills

Every day, throughout the day, you will be interacting with so many people, both within and from without the organization. Excelling in your job demands that you have proper people skills and can establish a rapport with the different people you interact with, be it via phone, on email, or even in person.

A warm personality and being friendly goes a very long way. This is especially true when you need to ask for a favor. People skills have a lot to do with the details, that is, the small things people tend to ignore. Be a good listener, and remember the name of another executive assistant's kid, and you can ask after them in the small talk before you ask for a favor. It says you pay attention during your conversations and are invested, and the other person will be more than happy to help.

Also important is using your people skills to develop a positive relationship with your executive. You should be friendly but respect the clear boundaries between an executive and their assistant. Please make a point of learning how to read them, so you know when to be friendly and can even crack some jokes and when to be strictly formal. As you try to understand your boss, do not hesitate to ask them questions, in addition to the deductions you'll get from their interactions with others.

7. Technical Savvy

It's an absolute must that you stay current on technology, even if your boss is a little technologically behind. With the technical savvy, you can be the one to help with something as simple as syncing their accounts or devices to offering more technical support.

You should familiarize yourself and have access to the management tools your executive and the organization use. Be able to learn how to use new software and tools easily. Invest your time in internet research to help you master the use of a particular tool. The best news is that once you understand how it all works and personalize these tools to your needs, you should be able to do most tasks very easily. Dropbox, for example, is a great tool to help you keep your files well organized.

8. Adaptability

The role of an executive assistant is quite dynamic, and your workdays will not always look the same as your duties may shift quite drastically. A great assistant is one who can demonstrate flexibility in the face of shifting ground. You should be able to manage these changes without losing your composure or allowing yourself to be thrown off by changing conditions.

Again, you will be instrumental in implementing changes passed down by your executive and the management to other team members. Take time to understand what these changes mean, maintain a positive attitude, and the other team members will follow suit in being as adaptable. You should be able to embrace change when it comes, and offers the support that others may need to do the same.



9. Proactive Anticipation of Needs

A good and competent executive assistant will respond to the requests tabled by their boss and other team members. On the other hand, an outstanding assistant will proactively anticipate those needs and avail solutions.

To be able to do this requires a broad understanding of the business and your executive's role, as well as analytic skills. You should demonstrate an ability to foresee any problems and have ready solutions for these situations. Take, for example, a day when your executive is all booked for back-to-back meetings, and you can order for food delivery from their favorite restaurant.

10. Sound Judgement and Decision-Making

A great executive assistant must collect the facts of a given situation, and ask the right questions to sum it all up, before acting. There will be no oversight on many of your tasks, and your boss will need you to be an independent thinker. Always make informed decisions.

That being said, you need to understand the actual limit of your powers. While you can go ahead with self-guided courses and make some decisions on your own, you also have to understand situations that require the boss' sign-off before proceeding.

Conclusion

Which kind of an executive assistant are you? An even better question is, what kind would you like to be? A good assistant will get the job done. A great executive assistant will get the job done right, and then some, adding value to their boss and organization. You can be a great assistant by cultivating the timeless power skills listed in this white paper.



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