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FEBRUARY 6, 2017 BY **JOAN BURGE**

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# 8 Killer Tips for a Successful Executive and Assistant Partnership



There is no greater relationship in the workplace than that of an executive and assistant. I can honestly say that because of my experience as an assistant for 20 years and as an executive for 27 years.

While the world is a much different place today, there are core strategies for a successful executive and assistant partnership that do not change. That is because they are the interpersonal side of the partnership. Whether your team relationship is just beginning or has matured, you will benefit from these tips.



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prevent chaos, flag issues before they arrive and make working together more enjoyable.


**2. Discuss and implement consistent processes.** In **last week's** Monday Motivators™, I said the magic formula for a stellar executive and assistant team is People + Processes = Success. I wrote an entire **80+ Page Guide** incorporating the main processes executives and assistants need to have down pat, such as: regularly scheduled meetings, calendar management, meeting preparation, e-mail management, project management, travel, follow-up systems and prioritization. An executive and assistant will be much more productive when they have proven processes in place and consistently use them. That is the key—consistency. While we have occasionally gotten off track at our office due to seasonal events like our **Annual Conference for Administrative Excellence**, we get back on track as soon as possible.

**3. Provide status updates to each other on a regular basis.** This would occur during daily huddles or throughout the day. Assistants... don't wait for your executive to ask you the status of a project, task, follow-up item or other requests. And executives should give their assistants status updates on projects, important presentations and meetings, travel and upcoming business initiatives.

**4. Work to improve performance and job satisfaction.** Even the greatest of executive and assistant teams work to improve their team performance and their processes. Life changes, things change, business changes, technology is constantly changing. We cannot afford to be stagnant or accept that the way we do something today is the best way. If you want to be a truly successful team, you need the mentality of "continuous improvement."

**5. Welcome feedback from each other.** Whether feedback is about performance, processes, each other's role, or a situation, be open. A strong executive and assistant team knows that feedback is important. Yet I often see assistants who are afraid to approach their executive about something. I also see executives who aren't completely comfortable giving feedback to their assistant outside of the annual performance review.

**People + Process = Success**  
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**6. Implement quarterly strategic meetings.** The business world is largely structured around quarters. For this reason, I recommend scheduling a more in-depth strategic meeting at the beginning or end of each quarter. The purpose of these meetings is



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- Re-commit to deadlines.

**7. Be comfortable with uncomfortable conversations.** It's ok for an assistant and executive to disagree on how they think something should be done or how a situation might be handled. Recently in an [executive and assistant coaching session](#), I asked the assistant to talk about one thing she would like her executive to either: start doing, stop doing or do more often. The executive was in the room with us. This was a team who had already been working together for many years. The assistant said, "I want you to start talking to me more often." While that seems like a simple request, one might wonder why the assistant kept quiet about this for so many years.

**8. Compliment each other on a job well done.** We all love to get a pat on the back. Sometimes assistants don't feel valued. An executive needs to compliment their assistant from time-to-time on a job well done. On the other side of the desk... executives are humans and they also like compliments (even if they don't say so.). An assistant can compliment her/his executive on a great presentation; graciously handling a difficult situation; or taking the time to talk with a stressed employee. Remember positive reinforcement encourages a person to continue the same good behavior in the future.

Well, I hope you like my 8 killer tips! They work extremely well, especially when done in conjunction with each other. Wishing you a great week.

Joan Burge

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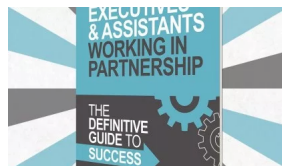
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March 20, 2019 at 12:50 pm

I really enjoy receiving these tips. They are wonderful and often address issues/concerns that I am having. Thank you so much. I am hoping to attend the “Empowered Assistant Conference” in October.  
Thank you for all you do!

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