



EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT EXECUTIVE SUPPORT:
A LOOK AT THE VIRTUAL MODEL



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Imagine sitting in the airport, awaiting your flight to an important business presentation. You are busy responding to emails, confirming your hotel room for the night, and putting the finishing touches on your slide deck. Tired and overwhelmed, you manage.

You learn that your flight has been canceled. Frustratingly met with a new set of challenges, you now need to find an alternate flight, inform the hotel to hold your room, and muster up enough focus to finalize your presentation.

Is this the best use of your time and energy?

Executives often find themselves juggling excruciating to-do lists. Their roles involve making critical decisions that significantly impact the organization. Trying to balance clerical and housekeeping tasks in tandem with upper-level responsibilities can cause discord, disrupt the chain of command, waste a significant amount of time, and unnecessarily overwork mental energy.



THE TRADITIONAL ROLES OF AN ASSISTANT

For decades, personal assistants have been partners in carrying out a wide array of administrative tasks. Serving as a 'go-to' resource, their contribution frees leaders and managers, giving them the availability to focus on their roles – those that involve the bigger picture of the company.



SOME OF THE MOST COMMON TASKS ASSISTANTS PERFORM ARE:

1

SCREENING EMAILS

The average American employee spends over five hours per day managing their email. Assistants are available to streamline this by pre-screening and flagging important messages for review, accepting or rejecting meeting invitations, filtering non-essential messages, and providing follow-up correspondence as appropriate.



SOME OF THE MOST COMMON TASKS ASSISTANTS PERFORM (CONTINUED)

2

SCHEDULING CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

Arranging conferences, scheduling appointments, planning itineraries, preparing meeting accommodations, and coordinating needed props or literature requires significant time and organization. Experienced executive assistants manage these by corresponding with key parties to determine availability, timing, costs, and preferences. Scheduling can be a waiting game. Assistants are at the ready to finesse the dynamics accordingly.

3

PROOFREADING REPORTS

Accuracy reinforces professionalism. Errors can reflect poorly on the person who made them. Having the time to review reports and presentations, assistants offer editing and finishing touches, checking for typos and a solid, well-groomed presentation. Often, there are data images and graphics that need to be double and triple-checked before being released.



SOME OF THE MOST COMMON TASKS ASSISTANTS PERFORM (CONTINUED)

4

CALENDAR MANAGEMENT AND SCHEDULING

The calendar of an executive is a revolving door. Coordinating people and plans, it offers changes and challenges. Assistants seamlessly finesse the ebb and flow of calendar management, and it is a task that fits nicely between others during the day.

5

ARRANGING TRAVEL PLANS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Executives are often on the road for extensive periods of time. Coordinating logistics for such business trips can be complicated, time-consuming, and mentally exhausting. Experienced assistants book flights, make accommodations, and arrange on-ground transportation, as well as manage logistical challenges along the way. Their access to executive schedules allows them to find suitable accommodations, put all necessary information and confirmation numbers in one place, and effectively communicate, keeping the executive up to date.

A trusted assistant, whether virtual or in-person, performs the vital duties, often behind the scenes, that keep processes for their executive team moving forward.

VIRTUAL BENEFITS AND SAVINGS



Current times have prompted two changes: executives are overextending their daily efforts on routine tasks to increase efficiency without adding cost, and the remote workforce is empowered and here to stay.

Virtual executive assistants are proving to be a task-efficient and cost-effective way of partnering with busy executives. A remote workforce lends to a reduction in overhead. Shifting to non-payroll-based personnel removes expenses such as health insurance, workers' compensation, and paid time off benefits, which slims expenditures while allowing the human resources team to focus on vital company initiatives.

Because virtual assistants are not physically sitting in one space, it is easier and more effective for executives to share the work efforts of one assistant. This provides support when needed for those who may not have enough daily tasks to warrant a full-time assistant. This saves on costs and under-utilized resources.


Housing a decreased internal workforce might also justify downsizing the physical space, leading to a smaller, less expensive office, or renting the vacant areas, adding consistent income to the revenue stream. Virtual assistant models allow for customized support and flexibility, such as the option for multiple executives in varying locations to be supported simultaneously with one team.



VIRTUAL COMPETENCY BOOST

The growing need for administrative support has prompted the Bureau of Labor Statistics to predict an 18.7% growth in employment for executive assistants within the course of the current decade. The appeal of being part of a virtual workforce is sparking renewed interest in administrative work and generating a genre of applicants with updated renditions of skills and traits to offer busy executives.

While each assistant has their unique skills and backgrounds, virtual assistants are getting creative in broadening their competencies.



HERE ARE SOME OF THE ASSETS THEY BRING TO THE TABLE BOTH INNATELY AND IN SKILLSET:

ADVANCED INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Virtual assistants must be attentive, with excellent communication skills. The ability to communicate quickly and concisely is crucial. The finesse to serve as the outward face when speaking with clients and exude professionalism and competence when corresponding on behalf of the executive is imperative.

EXCEPTIONAL AND FLEXIBLE ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITIES

Proper organization is essential to time management, project and task execution, effective communication, and self-awareness. Executives have several things to manage at once and the guidance received may be minimal. The ability to adjust and interpret is vital. Working remotely requires attention to detail and the ability to be creative with ideas and solutions.

A PENCHANT FOR COLLABORATION, DRIVE, AND DISCIPLINE

Assistants work closely with their executives and must thrive as collaborators to turn executives' goals and requests into reality. While they must have self-sufficiency to handle tasks independently, they must innately have a collaborative, disciplined mindset, to enable their executive's success. They must also have the drive and self-discipline to manage daily within the remote environment.



SOUND JUDGMENT AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

Executives trust their assistants to handle each task appropriately and efficiently. Executives cannot always provide lengthy, detailed instructions on each task. The virtual assistant must be able to process and progress certain tasks independently, and with sound judgment, using available tools, knowing the appropriate point to wait for review and input before proceeding.

A BROAD SKILL SET

Professional interests and traits that span into sales and marketing functions allow for flexibility in task management and team support. The ability and drive to seek involvement in areas like lead generation and nurturing, website design, email campaigns, and social media advertising are skills that can help contribute to the overall growth of the company – even from behind the scenes.

With logistical creativity and ease of online ordering and delivery, virtual assistants can mirror their in-person counterparts by having things like coffee and donuts delivered for the team or arranging meals for an important lunch meeting.

Assistants who thrive in a virtual role possess several core competencies that enable them to be highly effective, efficient, and personable. Through skill and personality, a seamless set of processes and responsibilities develop as assistants learn and grow with their executives and gain an understanding of their work rhythm, objectives, and goals.



A RESOURCE WORTH INVESTIGATING

Executives are vocalizing that they struggle to make good decisions after performing and responding to various repetitive tasks throughout the day. In the absence of an assistant, your higher-salaried resources are left to manage routine tasks on their own. This can be detrimental to the company, creating an unnecessary mental load, decreasing executive performance.

By investing in a customized team of professionals, executives are recouping dozens of hours per week, allowing for focus on activities that have greater benefit for the company. Productivity increases, and employee overhead costs decrease. Executives find too, that their work-life rhythm is better balanced through the daily help with tasks and administrative duties.

Be sure the next time you get aboard that business flight, you have a resource at the ready. You might realize you left the final copy of the slide deck on a flash drive on your desk, and need it overnighted to the hotel immediately.



THE CAYUSE MODEL

In addition to the necessary skills and attributes required to perform an administrative role, an additional 'must have' in the realm of virtual assistance is the solid pairing of assistant-to-executive. Camaraderie and comfort are important, even at a distance, and the skills and interests must align with those of the executive, and the company.

Cayuse virtual assistants have impressive tenures that involve a culmination of knowledge, skillset, and personality, allowing for solid alignment with the needs and goals of the executive. Working in three teams, they maintain overlapping schedules to provide full support from 5am PST to 5pm PST, Monday through Friday.



THE CAYUSE MODEL (CONTINUED)

Communication with virtual assistants is done through chat, phone, and email. Their computers contain the tools and applications they need to handle tasks successfully. They have access to project management platforms, time management and scheduling tools, and video conferencing tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Each Cayuse assistant works on a virtual, protected computer and is certified in providing confidentiality.

Offering onshore and offshore resources, Cayuse Virtual Executive Assistants provide support services to over 800 top-level executives. Metrics and performance are reviewed monthly to facilitate high-level client satisfaction.



THE CAYUSE PARTNERSHIP

Headquartered in Pendleton, Oregon, Cayuse has additional offices in Honolulu, Hawaii and Rosslyn, Virginia with over 500 employees globally. Our relationships include Global IT Fortune 100 companies and multiple Government clients. Cayuse is a certified Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), as well as a premier provider of responsible sourcing and a member of the Global Impact Sourcing Coalition.

As a certified diversity supplier, working with Cayuse allows companies like yours to support Native Americans and Native Hawaiians while receiving world-class technology and business process services at a competitive price.