

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE I FACE staying open-minded as the world of the PA enters a whole new phase.

by Lizelle Gilliland



Many of us start our careers at the assistant-level, and if you think it's a job that's going nowhere, think again. I've found that starting your career as an executive assistant can be a great way to make connections, gain experience, and get promoted. All it takes is a little time, hard work, and willingness to step out of the box. Here's how to make the most of your job as an assistant - and use it to get wherever it is you really want to be!

- Take time to thoughtfully read the reports, projects, and memos that you handle.
- When you work with people from different departments, ask questions about what they do and what they're working on.
- Think about career paths within the company you'd be interested in and use your role to find out as much about them as you can.

Are you big-picture minded?

Your position as an assistant allows you to see an industry and a company at a higher level than many people in entry-level jobs get to. Use this to your advantage:

- Treat everything that comes across your desk as a learning experience.

How about becoming the Person-to-know at the office!

Depending on who you're supporting, the exposure you get to people, places, and knowledge can be tremendous, and you can quickly become the person to know in the office. You have the authority to schedule meetings and make exceptions. You ultimately are the one who decides who gets face-time with the boss and who can wait in line.

Use your power as the gatekeeper wisely. If you're the reliable, responsive, and competent assistant everyone wishes they had, others will want to know you (or even poach you!). The more good contacts you can make, the better off you'll be when you want to look for that next step.

Just how indispensable could you become?

Chances are, your role will require you to frequently interact with a variety of people. Leverage this and offer to take on tasks outside your role to test the waters on different aspects of the industry or company.

Ask to help out with a project in an area that's understaffed or to take the lead on a task no one else is keen on. Use your exposure to other teams as a key opportunity to augment your résumé and to show your current boss and potential employers what you're capable of.

Are you ambitious?

Bottom line: Be the best employee you can be to your boss. You will likely be trusted with confidential projects or information - don't betray that trust.

Also, your role may occasionally blur the line between personal and professional - for example, selecting gifts for a spouse or family member, or helping with a personal real estate acquisition. But instead of getting frustrated, look at it as an opportunity to become close with your boss - an opportunity that most people won't get.

If you think your boss is taking advantage and using you more as a personal assistant, then by all means, sound the alarm. But, start with the mentality that no task is too small or too big, and you'll be seen as a team player.

Working as an executive assistant can get you unique exposure to an industry and can be a great way to help set your career in motion.

Think broadly, learn as much as you can, and establish a good relationship with your boss. The experience you gain can catapult you toward your dream job - or one you hadn't even known about.



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Her tenure of 24 years in the Industry has contributed to her extensive knowledge of business and operational procedures.

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**She believes that:
To have success and fulfillment you need purpose and passion!**