



FOREWORD

BY LUCY BRAZIER

Back in 2011 when we relaunched ‘Executive Secretary’ magazine, one of the first profiles that we featured was that of Angela Garry – the most connected Assistant on the planet. Back then, Angela was working as the Principal’s Personal Assistant in an inner city secondary school, but had somehow managed to build a network of LinkedIn contacts greater than any other Assistant in the world.

From the off, it was clear that Angela’s aim was similar to our own; to ensure that Assistants were recognised for the incredible work that they do. In the five years that have passed since we first featured her, she has made a new career for herself as one of the world’s most recognisable faces in the training arena for Assistants – particularly in her own field of education and as an advocate for the profession. And make no mistake – it is no longer just a job. It is a profession.

There is no doubt that since the recession, seven years ago, that the Assistant’s world has taken on the appearance of a circus. With middle management being made redundant and Assistants being asked to step up and take on those roles, usually resulting in workloads increasing by upwards of 25% and the majority of Assistants also finding themselves with an ever increasing number of Executives, the role has changed beyond recognition. Last year, the ASAP, one of the USA’s largest associations, proved categorically that Assistants are the new middle management. And yet the perception within the businesses that they serve and the remuneration attached so often hasn’t caught up.

Our latest research conducted in association with Avery shows that an Assistants’ IQ (intelligence quotient) is as high as their peers’ in the office but their EQ (emotional intelligence quotient) is off the top of the scale. They are prepared to take on projects and tasks with no training, yet somehow make it

The PA / EA Circus

work. And they work considerably more overtime than most other members of staff. In many ways they are the ideal employee.

This, combined with recent research conducted by Hays, raises questions of both Assistants themselves and the businesses that they serve that need to be answered. The Hays research shows a huge perception gap in how the Assistants see themselves, and the way that senior management see them. One in ten CEOs see Assistants as equal to their senior management team and over a half as management level, and yet the Assistants don't see themselves like this at all. Maybe this is because most businesses are not investing in Assistant training and salaries in the same way that they are with other members of staff.

With the role changing as it is, the smartest businesses are investing in their Assistants' training and that investment is dropping straight to the bottom line in terms of real savings made to the Executives' time.

Angela Garry's book looks at a role that is at a point of crucial change.

Bonnie Low Kramen is fond of saying that there has never been a more exciting time to be an Assistant because everything is changing so fast. I would add that there has never been a scarier time to be an Assistant, because everything is changing so fast! Angela seeks to take away that fear and to make sense of it all.

The Assistant's time is now.

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