

EA/PA TOOL-KIT:

ACCELERATING TECHNICAL SKILLS FOR THE MODERN EA



There is no doubt the duties of an EA have gone beyond much more than answering phones, filing and typing documentation.

The EA of the 21st century must now be equipped with skills to navigate the internet, have a high understanding of software packages (like PowerPoint or Excel) and the ability to deal with the pressures associated with a changing workplace environment.

And given the acceleration of change and evolving nature of technology, the role of an EA is only set to continue to transform in the future.

With that in mind, ahead of **EA PA Sydney 2016**, we have compiled a complete tool-kit of specific strategies you can use to equip yourself to become future-ready.

Whether you're looking to strengthen your productivity and efficiency in your current role, or looking for new avenues to excel and take the next step in your career, this tool-kit outlines the key strategies for success.

I hope you find it useful!



Lauren
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EA PA Australia & New Zealand Series



CREATING A PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUR BOSS

Managing your boss (or bosses) is one of the main tasks any EA needs to do well, but this can only be achieved if you have a good relationship with your boss.

While it sounds simple enough, it can sometimes be difficult to know where to start – what are the foundations needed to build a ‘good working relationship’? And, more importantly, how can a good relationship be sustained?

Here are five key areas identified by Kaye Hodge, EA, Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education and Learning at the University of Auckland, that are essential to getting it right:

1



Establish a sound and genuine partnership with your boss!

Right at the start – make sure that you get off to a good footing. It should be a working relationship which recognises the old fashioned values we often talk about: of trust, respect, honesty and openness. You will need to have a genuine understanding of their role and that for all purposes, everything that you undertake, should send a strong signal that they have your support.

2



If you are new in your role, or if you are working for a newly appointed boss, be organised but also patient in your approach in the early stages.

Allow time for the newness to settle. Foster the relationship and don't be impatient for overnight success. The working relationship should build gradually to ensure that you reach the desired level of trust.

3



Be mindful of the challenges both parties will face in a new situation.

Keep in mind that changes can impact upon the workplace. It may be that you need to diplomatically manage the expectations of others. Strong two-way communication will promote and ensure effective relationships are built. Another tip: keep your boss informed of important items that may have the potential to escalate.

4



Have a thorough knowledge of your core business and what is required of your boss. Make sure that you are working in sync with them. The real strength of your relationship is about being kept in the loop in relation to significant issues.

5



Understand the style of leadership your boss has, as well as their approach to the requirements of their job. If there is a need for you to fill gaps as they arise when you see a shortfall – where it's appropriate, take the initiative. When you anticipate the needs of your boss you may well exceed their expectations.

BECOME A LINKEDIN PRO

As technology continues to evolve, so do the platforms we use to communicate and build our own personal networks. While LinkedIn might seem like a platform more relevant to your boss' needs, it can actually be quite a powerful tool for an EA when it comes to career advancement and expanding your professional networks.

An optimised LinkedIn page can open doors and help accelerate your professional career. Improving your LinkedIn profile is important to increase the value of your most valuable asset – yourself. It's the most effective way to show your worth to your current employer, co-workers and industry leaders.

So, where do you start? Below, Marketing Specialist, Svetlana Kogan and Alex Pirouz, Founder of LinkFluencer, share the key steps you can take to use LinkedIn effectively – to not only build your own personal brand, but use it as a tool for career progression.

1 ADD YOUR MANAGERS TO YOUR NETWORK

Svetlana: There's no easier way to get your manager to think about the value you're adding to the business, than a subtle nudge showing them that you're active on LinkedIn by inviting them to be in your network. This will stop any potentially bad manager taking you for granted and thinking that you're not going anywhere no matter what they do. It's a nice gentle wake-up call.

2 ENSURE YOUR NAME AND DETAILS ARE PERFECTLY CORRECT

Svetlana: Having all your details correct is very important and will enable you to be found. If you've married and changed your name, include your maiden name as your middle name as it will help people find you.

Ensure that you've properly annotated all your current and employment history with the official LinkedIn pages of the organisations you have worked at – market the organisation you work for with their official page and included all keywords related to your industry in your description.

In the same way SEO is important to a website, having your profile annotated with the right keywords is very important to enable a recruiter to find you and present you with an offer or for a previous colleague to locate you to reconnect.

3 BE RELEVANT

Alex: For an EA, I one hundred per cent believe they should definitely have a LinkedIn profile that resonates with potential employers and their fellow colleagues. A lot of profiles out there look like an out-dated resume or a cover letter. My recommendation is to build a profile based on the 'outside - inside' approach.

Think about the three objections you normally face when you are presented with a job opportunity and then what makes you unique in the market place. If you build your profile around these two elements, you will definitely stand out from all the other EAs and PAs out there.

4 A PICTURE TELLS A THOUSAND WORDS

Svetlana: Ensure there is an appropriate photo that you've uploaded to your profile. A photo is a great way to express your character and charisma, but, it must be in line with your industry. For instance, if you work in professional services, you should take a corporate style photo with a bland background.

Don't use a photo from your Facebook page sipping cocktails on Friday night. In general, if you think a photo is appropriate for your Facebook profile picture then it probably isn't appropriate for LinkedIn.



5 BE CLEAR ON WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE

Alex: Before you even set up an account, or even if you already have an account, you need to be clear on what your outcome is for using LinkedIn. For example, if it is going for a job, be clear in terms of the job you want and get into the specifics. Then build your profile and connections around that job. 90 per cent of people we speak with have no clue what their outcome is in using LinkedIn.

Your profile is your centrepiece of everything you do on LinkedIn. Whether it's someone looking at your profile, whether it's a connection accepting an invitation you've sent out, whether you're reaching out for a job and someone looks at your profile before, during and after that. You need to build profile based on your ideal outcome.

6 SEEK RECOMMENDATIONS

Alex: Getting recommendations from other people you've worked for or with around why you are such an amazing EA is also a good step to build your brand. Think about the top three challenges you solve for an Executive or CEO and the top three objections you normally face in a acquiring a job, and then get people to write recommendations based on that.

7 BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER

Svetlana: They say that you're the average of all your friends. On LinkedIn, you're the average of all your professional connections. Always remember that what's appropriate for Facebook is probably not appropriate for LinkedIn.

You shouldn't add your drinking buddies or fellow party crew on LinkedIn. It's important to expand your professional network and add people that you have worked with and respect – but this can work in two ways. When someone may see that you have a connection in common with them and they have had a positive experience with that connection, it will reflect well on you and they will want to work with you.

If someone looks at your profile and notices that you are connected with people that they have had 'not so pleasant' experiences with, it could be counter productive.

Basically, be proud of all your connections and ensure they're people you respect in a professional capacity.



Interested in learning more about how to use LinkedIn to boost your own personal brand?



Check out our exclusive video interview with Alex Pirouz here

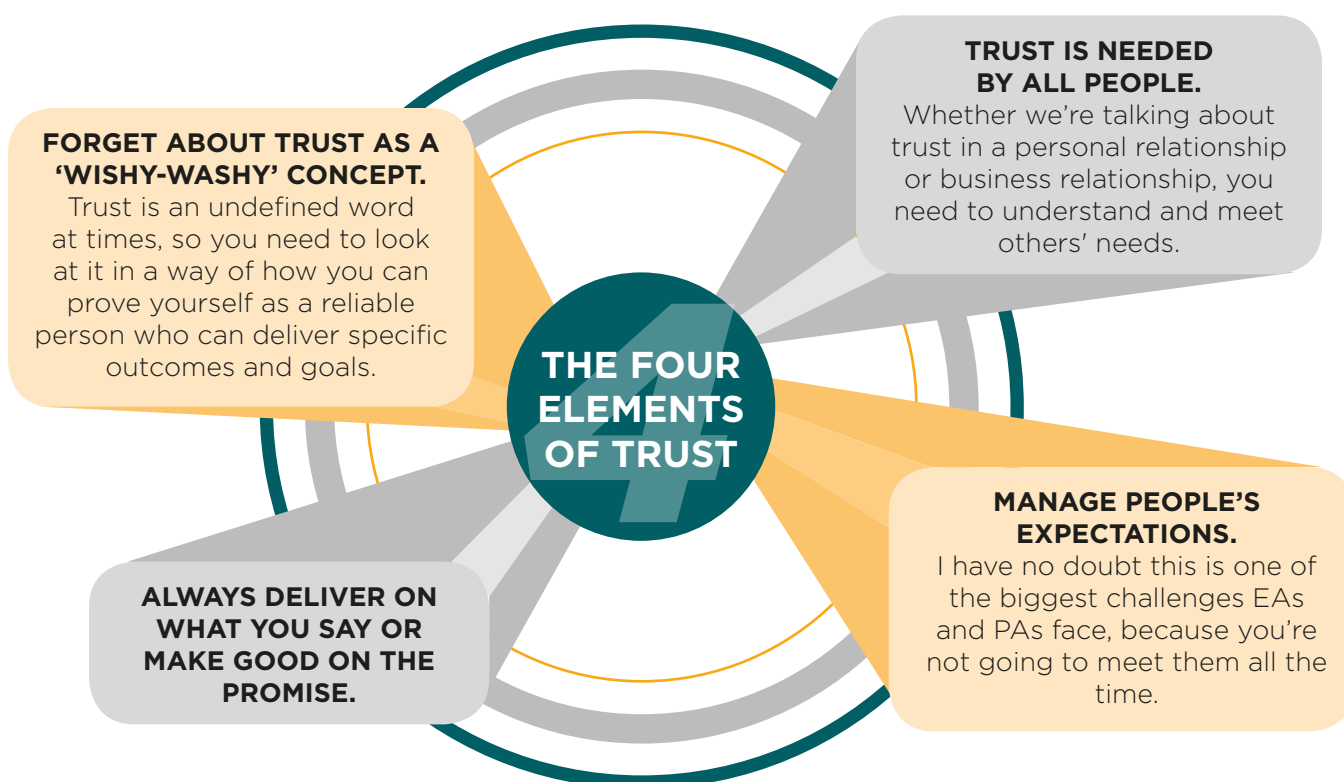


USING TRUST AS A TOOL TO POSITION YOURSELF AS A LEADER

Trust is at the centre of every aspect of communication and that is why it is essential for an EA to be able to build trust in order to be at the forefront leadership.

But the problem with the word trust, is that in a technical context, it sounds a bit 'wishy-washy.' It is also sometimes hard to define, especially in the workplace.

Below, Antony Bonnici, Director of Brain Blinkers, shares the core aspects of trust you need to understand to build trust in your own organisation and how it can help you excel in your role.



ARE YOU AN OPEN OR CLOSED TRUSTER?

There are two types of people when it comes to trust: an open truster, or closed truster. An open truster is a person who will trust first openly, but then when they are crossed, they won't trust again and it becomes quite hard to build that trust back up.

Then there is the other type of person who is a closed truster, who at first requires you to gain or build trust, then they will openly trust you.

People are generally either of the two, and there are challenges to both. The other challenge is that most people, when they are dealing with another person, don't really know what that person needs. So putting the effort into understanding the needs and managing their expectations are important.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BODY LANGUAGE

Body language plays a critical role in building trust. It is through body language that people give others an indication of whether or not they are open to building trust. This comes down to things like the face, the arms and legs and also the body position. But to really build trust it's about open communication, open body language and really good eye contact.

In the Australian culture, direct eye contact and facing the other person is important. An interesting concept is where your feet are positioned subconsciously. If you really want to demonstrate that you're engaged with the other person, you're feet will always be pointing towards that person.

If your feet are pointing away from that person, that is a subconscious cue to yourself and to the other person that you don't want to be there. The direction of your feet will often dictate where you want to be.



BECOME A MASTER OF NEW TECH

Technology has become an important tool EAs can use to improve workplace productivity. But when not managed and utilised properly, new technology can become more of a foe than friend - and hamper efficiency.

Here is a checklist which our resident EA PA speaker Mario Halouvis, National Training and Development Manager at Priority Management has put together to help you successfully use new and old tech tools to improve workplace performance:



Increased concentration

Don't be afraid to turn off devices (or switch to airplane mode as an alternative) when working on big projects or tasks. You'll be able to concentrate better, with a higher quality output.



Get rid of default notifications

Whatever it is, whether it's a phone or a tablet, look and try and change some of the defaults so it's not distracting you and make the technology work for you. Rather than working because of the technology, work through your technology. Don't be a slave to your technology. It's about getting the knowledge and tips to be able to actually take some control.



Don't let your inbox 'lead a life of its own'

Get into the habit of doing a chunk of work and then checking emails so you're not constantly checking them every five seconds which will stop you from getting work done. It's also effective to manage volume of emails through some rules and quick steps - so creating automated rules. For example, if you get a lot of acceptances from meetings, you can have those acceptances moved to another folder automatically which helps productivity and also frees up your inbox.



More innovation

Getting back to the basics, new technologies like smartphones, iPads and the like are essentially there to make our lives easier. Take control over how you use your devices in different situations or environments. While in meetings your iPad can be your best friend, but once you're back at your desk put it away for improved productivity.



Empowerment

The more you take control of the technology you're using at work, the more empowered you'll become. We all feel more empowered when we're able to take charge of our work and make decisions about the tools we use to do our work and achieve our goals.



Increased engagement

Technology allows a more dynamic workplace. Sharing files or spread sheets via Google Docs or Google Drive is a great tool many EA's are already adopting when collaborating with executive on shared projects or files.



Flexibility

The benefits of mobile technology is you can use it in different environments - whether you're working from home or in the office it can prove to be a great tool to improve and aid flexible working hours.



Improved performance

When used effectively, technological tools can have massive benefits to performance. Effective diary management through outlook can help you organise your day according to different priorities.



Improved communication

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits of all, all types of technology - from iPads to mobile to simple old outlook - makes communication easier between you and others. While an overload of communication (like an overflow of emails) can potentially dampen productivity; it's about being able to manage these technologies effectively to improve the way you work.

PERFECTING THE ART OF PRESENTATION GIVING

As the role of an EA evolves to encompass more general office administration tasks, it is becoming quite common for EAs to have to give a presentation at some stage during their role. Whether it's just for your boss, for your colleagues or a broader wider office there is no doubt that the art of presentation giving is a skill the modern EA should master.

Here are eight of our favourite tips we've sourced from a useful [blog](#) which we believe can help you give the perfect presentation:

1 PRACTICE

Naturally, you'll want to rehearse your presentation multiple times. While it can be difficult for those with packed schedules to spare time to practice, it's essential if you want to deliver a rousing presentation. If you really want to sound great, write out your speech rather than taking chances winging it – if you get nervous about speaking, a script is your best friend.

Try to practice where you'll be delivering your talk. Some acting strategists suggest rehearsing lines in various positions – standing up, sitting down, with arms open wide, on one leg, while sitting on the toilet, etc. (OK, that last one may be optional.) The more you mix up your position and setting, the more comfortable you'll feel with your speech. Do a practice run for a friend or colleague, or try recording your presentation and playing it back to evaluate which areas need work. Listening to recordings of your past talks can clue you in to bad habits you may be unaware of, as well as inspiring the age-old question: "Is that what I really sound like?"

2 TRANSFORM NERVOUS ENERGY INTO ENTHUSIASM

Studies have shown that an enthusiastic speech can win out over an eloquent one, so try and make sure you're as enthusiastic and energetic as possible before going on stage. Of course, individuals respond differently to caffeine overload, so know your own body before guzzling those monster energy drinks.

3 USE POSITIVE VISUALISATION

Whether or not you're a Zen master, know that plenty of studies have proven the effectiveness of positive visualisation. When we imagine a positive outcome to a scenario in our mind, it's more likely to play out the way we envision. Instead of thinking "I'm going to be terrible out there" and visualising yourself throwing up mid-presentation, imagine yourself getting tons of laughs while presenting with the enthusiasm of Jimmy Fallon and the poise of Audrey Hepburn (the charm of George Clooney wouldn't hurt either). Positive thoughts can be incredibly effective – give them a shot.



4 TAKE DEEP BREATHS

The go-to advice for jitters has truth to it. When we're nervous, our muscles tighten--you may even catch yourself holding your breath. Instead, go ahead and take those deep breaths to get oxygen to your brain and relax your body.

5 EXERCISE

Exercise earlier in the day prior to your presentation to boost endorphins, which will help alleviate anxiety. Better pre-register for that Zumba class!

6 WORK ON YOUR PAUSES

When you're nervous, it's easy to speed up your speech and end up talking too fast, which in turn causes you to run out of breath, get more nervous, and panic! Ahh!

Don't be afraid to slow down and use pauses in your speech. Pausing can be used to emphasize certain points and to help your talk feel more conversational. If you feel yourself losing control of your pacing, just take a nice pause and keep cool.

7 USE A POWER STANCE

Practicing confident body language is another way to boost your pre-presentation jitters. When your body is physically demonstrating confidence, your mind will follow suit. While you don't want to be jutting out your chest in an alpha gorilla pose all afternoon (somebody enjoyed Dawn of the Planet of the Apes a bit too much), studies have shown that using power stances a few minutes before giving a talk (or heading to a big interview) creates a lasting sense of confidence and assurance. Whatever you do, don't sit--sitting is passive. Standing or walking a bit will help you harness those stomach bats (isn't that more appropriate than butterflies?). Before you go on stage, strike your best Power Ranger stance and hold your head high!

8 DRINK WATER

Dry mouth is a common result of anxiety. Prevent cottonmouth blues by staying hydrated and drinking plenty of water before your talk (just don't forget to hit the bathroom before starting). Keep a bottle of water at arm's reach while presenting in case you get dry mouth while chatting up a storm. It also provides a solid object to hurl at potential hecklers. (That'll show 'em.)

EA/PA SUMMIT 2016

To learn more about the tools and strategies needed to excel in your role as an EA, join a number of professional development trainers and expert EAs at EA PA Sydney 2016.

For more information call +61 2 9229 1000
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