

Your quick guide to:

# THE CHANGING ROLE OF PAs

The days when PAs merely managed diaries and worked in typing pools are long gone. Now, PAs manage a huge variety of tasks, and often have an influence on big business decisions. This guide examines how the role of a PA is changing, and what you can do to keep on top of your ever-expanding responsibilities.

## The modern PA

As a result of technology, changing social attitudes, and to some extent the recession, the role of a PA has changed dramatically.

Many PAs now say their boss regularly takes their advice on key business decisions

PAs now manage huge budgets on behalf of their boss – in many cases negotiating directly with suppliers

PAs often stand in for their boss in senior meetings

Most PAs now undertake projects for the wider business – co-ordinating large events and organising office moves

Unsurprisingly, with these experiences established, many PAs are using their role as a path into another career. But at the same time, PAs are increasingly looking at their job as a lifelong role, with the variety and opportunity to sustain their interest.

## How to manage your new responsibilities

Having variety in your job is great. It makes work fun, and it's usually good for your career.

But balancing everything without impacting the quality of your work is tough.

Here are some handy tips:

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### *Don't make promises you can't keep*

It's tempting as a PA to say yes to everything. After all, your job, to some extent at least, is to make your boss' life easier.

But with these new responsibilities you'll need more time, and perhaps, more guidance to perform the tasks – especially those that are on your boss' behalf. So, be clear and honest up front, and only agree to work and deadlines you can reasonably fulfil.

### *Ask for training*

When you're given a new responsibility outside of your standard job specification, ask yourself whether you know how to perform it.

If you're not entirely confident, then explain your limitations and see if you can be given the necessary guidance to get you up to speed. There's great and needless danger in taking on a new task that don't know how to complete – especially if it's covering for your boss.

### *Assess how much time you have*

To be able to take on more duties, you need to know how much time you have.

As you know, your boss doesn't always realise quite how long certain tasks take, and can underestimate the amount of free time you actually have. So, try to monitor how long each of your regular tasks take, and therefore, how much time you have left for anything else.

Keep track of it, and use this when your boss drops something else on your lap.

### *Don't push for too much too soon*

You'll see your career grow quickly when you start to have an influence on your boss' decisions.

Equally, when you start to manage big budgets, or take their place in meetings, your stock will rise rapidly. However, to sustain this trust, you need to beware of trying to exert too much influence.

While it's tempting to push for more and more responsibility, it's best to remain cautious and humble.

### *Learn from others*

Unavoidably, as you accumulate new responsibilities, there will have to be some on-the-job learning – and quickly. This can be daunting. The key to staying calm and confident is watching others to see how they do it.

For example, if you're acting on your boss' behalf in an upcoming meeting, watch how they approach it at your next opportunity. Equally, be open and honest about gaps in your knowledge, and ask for support. You can't be expected to know everything.

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