

**KENYA NATIONAL SECRETARIES
ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL SUMMIT 2019 FOR OFFICE
ADMINISTRATORS
PRESENTATION
BY
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The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. The shapes are primarily triangles and polygons, creating a dynamic, layered effect. The overall composition is clean and modern, with the text centered in a white space.

TOPIC: MODERN DAY ASSISTANT AS A STRATEGIC BUSINESS PARTNER

Definition of strategy

- ▶ Strategy is what drives the business forward. It is the plan or road map that all employees follow to make the business successful. It is made by the top management to be followed by all staff.

- Strategy is basically the art of adding value.
- Assistants are superheroes with an invisible cape. The role of an Assistant is always evolving, keeping pace with the wider executive environment. The role has transitioned from being reactive to proactive and a manager of their executive's office.

Assistants are there to add value by saving the bosses' time and also working on projects and tasks outside the traditional secretary's role. To achieve this, the Personal Assistants should learn the following:

1. Become a stronger, more effective and influential assistant
2. Understand the role and how to add value to the executive
3. Enhance their communication skills, understand body language and explore emotional intelligence

4. Learn how to build a powerful business partnership through networking
5. Master the art of managing more than one executive
6. Explore processes for problem-solving and decision making.
7. Learn to deal with multitasking, stress and overwhelm.

Tips for a Modern day Assistant

1. Organize Your Emails

- ▶ A Personal Assistant should manage not only their own inbox, but for the manager's as well. The boss can get overwhelmed with so many emails flowing. Reaching inbox zero is nearly impossible, however there are other options to defeat this challenge by simplify the inbox using priority matrix a tool that allows you to simplify your inbox. They should consider organizing emails in a quadrant based template with the four quadrants labeled as follows;

- ▶ **Urgent: Requiring Reply** – It is critical that you give these emails your utmost attention. Reply to them ASAP; Do not leave the office without this quadrant nearly empty.
- ▶ **Less Urgent: Replies** – You need to reply to these emails eventually, but you have bigger priorities for the time being. It is recommended that you put a due date on these emails so you do not forget about them as they are still significant.

- **Follow-Ups** – Set due dates for when to follow-up with these emails as these tend to slip through the cracks.
- **To-Do's** – A designated spot for those emails that list tasks that must be done. Set due-dates on these as well.

How modern day assistants can become strategic business partners

- ▶ This term strategic business partner was used to elevate the Assistant from the “typing pool mentality” of many businesses and to show that what the Assistant does contributes to the bottom line.
- ▶ In order for personal assistants to be strategic they must understand the following

1. Why the company/organization exists

Why the organization exists, its purpose and what it does. The roles of the executives, their core beliefs and values, why they work in certain ways and what makes them tick. This will give the bigger picture of what is supposed to be done.

2. **Live and breathe the company strategy**

The personal assistant needs to live and breathe the company strategy and align it with their roles and responsibilities based on the overall objective of the organization and that of the boss.

3. Never stop learning

The personal assistants should never stop learning, attend training in areas that can improve business strategy, be it finance, marketing whatever etc. so as to add value and fill where is there a gap in expertise.

4. Assistant should know how to network

- ▶ Networking is basically the foundation to good overall business acumen and understanding the direction of the business.
- ▶ Networking for PAs is essential for so many reasons but in terms of business acumen it will greatly improve their knowledge. Networking helps to find out about information that can be useful to the company.

5. Read a lot of stuff

- ▶ If the manager subscribes to magazines they should open their post and can read the magazines before giving it to them! Not only does this help with the business knowledge it also gives them something to talk to the boss about, which is great when you are building rapport and finding common ground which in itself is vital to being a strategic business partner.

6. Be a good listener

- ▶ You should listen to everything because this is how to find out how the executive operates and the people they surround themselves with. Taking minutes at meetings is another fantastic way to increase business awareness.
- ▶ They should also listen to what is going on around, what their colleagues are talking about over lunch or during post-work drinks so as to get the mood and feel of the office and also to have a good understanding of what is happening with colleagues and the culture of the organization.

7. Attend Meetings

- ▶ Attending meetings with the manager makes the personal assistant privy to the same information as the manager. They may be times that is impossible to attend meeting with managers but they should not miss meetings with other members of staff Attending meetings brings one into contact with the company's decision makers and helps the personal assistant to be privy to their conversations and how they come to make decisions.

Some skills and competencies that make up what is considered to be a strategic business partner.


▶ They Maximize efficiency

They are result oriented

They think like managers

They are proactive rather than reactive

They are analytical

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- ▶ They are willing to adapt to change
 - They are not afraid to apply new skills
 - They can work under pressure

What are the challenges; why aren't we all there yet; Here are a few examples of the challenges we face as Assistants:

- ▶ Finding the time to be strategic
Having the confidence.
- ▶ Moving from a reactive to a proactive assistant.
- ▶ Having the backing of your executive

“The world exists in your eyes. You can make it as big or small as you want”

This is your career and you have to put yourself out there if you want the rewards and the gratification that really can come from being an assistant.

