

A NEW GENERATION OF EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS

1 Patrizia Lacono logs onto her emails after dinner to keep up to date, reviews the next day's executive meetings « so that when I walk in at 8 :30 AM I am prepared » and switches on her phone at 5 :30 AM to catch up with overnight e-mails and news.

5 No, she is not the chief executive officer. She is his executive assistant – a role once described as a secretary. But let's be clear : Lacono does not pick up dry-cleaning, buy birthday presents for her boss's partner, nor bring in baking for his afternoon tea.

She is one of the new breed of executive assistants, a senior and multi-skilled corporate role attracting tertiary-educated applicants and providing a career path which does not revolve around typing.

10 « I think our job is no longer what it was 20 or 30 years ago with the traditional personal secretary who sat in the typing pool, made cups of tea and went home at 5PM » says Lacono, executive assistant to Mike Wilkins, chief executive officer of the Insurance Australia Group.

15 Jonathan McElroy, director of the Executive Assistant Network, says a key distinction relates to initiative and self-direction : « Previous assistants were given tasks to complete, most of the stuff they did was handed to them ».

« Today, it is much more of a senior level partnership. The executive assistant is using much more of their own initiative and intuition to anticipate what the executive is going to need. They are finding solutions before the executive has asked for them. »

20 The Executive Assistant Network is a 5000-member network for senior personal and executive assistants which holds networking events and offers training and education. Its goal is to help its members « become more efficient and proficient, understanding that their role is to manage the office of their executive in a way that facilitates them being as productive and effective as possible. »

25 McElroy says excellent time management skills are vital, but so too are high-level analytical and financial skills, legal awareness, information and knowledge management, knowledge of marketing and sales and of human resources.

Lacono recommends internships for those potentially interested in the role and says a degree in business management or communications is an excellent starting point.

30 Asked to describe what she does, she hesitates – every day is different, she says. Managing her boss's diary is key, ensuring he is briefed before his meetings, dealing with his invitations, taking minutes¹ at executive committee meetings and following up the action items, organising his travels and « helping him respond to issues that arise. »

35 « There's not much typing these days, such tasks belong to the past », she says.

Adapted and abridged from *The Sydney Morning Herald*, February 14th 2015

¹ minutes: notes

Après avoir attentivement lu le document, rédiger EN FRANCAIS un compte-rendu en 190 mots (+/-10%) afin d'en dégager les idées essentielles.