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EXECUTIVE ASSISTANCE

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The Elusive Male Executive Assistant....What Makes Them Tick?

Ann Binsted, President Executive Assistance & Worth Recruiting

I reached out to several male Executive Assistants for this article, and got a great response. They were articulate and confident in their answers. I have come to expect this level of quality and responsiveness from most professional EA's at this level. I asked some very pointed questions, and got some very interesting answers.

The male Executive Assistant is certainly the minority in the administrative profession. They are quite elusive and don't often show up in the list of applications I get when I put a job out to the marketplace. What makes them tick? I will focus here on Roberto and JS, as they both had some great insights on being a male in a female dominated role.

Roberto is the Executive Assistant to the CEO of an alternative energy firm who also sits on multiple boards. He didn't start out with this career in mind but "the opportunity to do something different", attracted him to a temporary position. Eventually,

JS is a Senior Executive Assistant in a fast paced financial services firm. JS did not start out on this career path either. He has been in marketing, nursing and even worked as a flight attendant. He feels that his ability to relate to and understand his boss, as a way to keep things simple for them, is his greatest strength as an EA.

When asked if he sees himself as an equal to his female peers, Roberto answers with a definitive yes. He used to think that it was a male versus female scenario when it came to the administrative environment, but he has learned through the years that it is really dependent on one's personality and character. JS had a similar opinion, "Organizing is pretty much like anything – perhaps personality matters, because some people can be unorganized regardless of gender."

When asked about an interesting situation that related specifically to his "maleness", Roberto relayed a couple of interesting anecdotes! "I remember sitting beside my boss (a young female exec) and people kept addressing me during the meeting. I

Both JS and Roberto felt that they have been discriminated against in an interview situation because they were male. The companies in both of their scenarios made it quite clear, which is completely unacceptable! Both of these gentlemen are extremely polished and professional, it is unfortunate that the stigma that females are better at this role is still a factor when these gentlemen seek new opportunities.

I wasn't surprised by any of the answers I received in my research for this article. As with most of the Senior Administrative Professionals I work with, both JS and Roberto's view of the role is that it is their goal to make their executive's life easier. Whether it be managing a calendar, getting coffee or planning a major event, executives completely rely on these individuals to participate in the smooth and profitable running of the business. It is a symbiotic relationship that all companies can benefit from!

So what makes them tick? Male or female.... it is the attitude, and work ethic that make a great EA.

he realized that his personality and skill set were an excellent fit for the role. His strong organizational skills, business acumen, and caring personality provide the support his Executive needs to focus on his core business functions.

eventually learned that, since I wasn't introduced properly they assumed I was her boss. In another situation, I was trading emails with a male executive who kept referring to me as Roberta, assuming that I was female. When we finally met, he was very surprised to meet Roberto..not Roberta!"

Keep up the good work Gentlemen!

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A bit of bad faith can go a long way...

Daniel Lublin, METRO NEWS

After putting in many long hours of hard work as a machinist for food packaging supplier Packall Packing, all Roland Carter wanted to do was take a four-day vacation. But when Carter filled his name under the wrong day off in the company's vacation planner, his vacation became more than just a long weekend — he was fired and out of work for nearly two years.

As usual, the company granted Carter's request for a long weekend. Carter was supposed to be off work Friday, Saturday and Sunday and he had taken Monday as a vacation day. However, Carter mistakenly entered his vacation day in the wrong space on the company's vacation planner and forgot to fill a mandatory vacation slip. Carter's gaffe left Packall scrambling to fill the void when he didn't show up on Monday. When the boss learned Carter wasn't there, he called Carter to come into work and hung up on him when Carter insisted he had taken the day as a vacation day. A few minutes later, Carter's boss called back. He was scrambling to try to get someone to cover this shift and was hoping that Carter would come in for a few hours. When Carter didn't answer the phone, his boss left a profane message telling Carter not to come back to work because "he wasn't needed there" anymore.

The boss left Carter some more messages later that week, suggesting he had been fired or laid off. But believing he was fired, Carter never returned the calls and never returned to work. So, after 10 years of service at Packall, the confusion over a day off cost Carter his job.

Testimonials

I just wanted to let you know that I provided your contact details because I think you are so great to work with as a supplier, I was certain you'd be wonderful to work with as a candidate. Thanks.

- Client

Thank you for all of your time with helping me find a job. This has been a very positive experience working with you, and I have nothing but good things to say about you and your firm to my peers.

- Candidate

Thank you so much for calling me back earlier today and for all of your valuable knowledge about the market and your industry.

- Candidate

Ann, Thank you! You are an amazing woman with whom I greatly appreciate working; and, I appreciate your promotion and support of me to your client(s).

In a recent column, I wrote about the duty of good faith and fair dealing that employers have towards employees at the time of termination. Where employers humiliate, mistreat or act unreasonably towards employees, they can be forced to pay additional damages for this misconduct. Packall had to learn the hard way when Carter took the company to court. In the reasons for judgment, the Court found that Packall acted in bad faith by carrying out Carter's dismissal in the following manner:

- Rather than communicating with Carter privately, the boss terminated Carter in a message left on the home answering machine that could also be heard by his family;
- Carter's boss was abrupt, discourteous, rude and profane;
- Carter's boss disingenuously suggested that Carter had been "laid off." The judge believed this was done in the hope that Carter would agree to treat his termination as a lay off so that he would be owed less money;
- Packall made untrue allegations of Carter's misconduct in his Record of Employment, which initially disqualified him for Employment Insurance; and
- Because of the allegations that Packall made, and continued to make up until the trial, Carter was discouraged from getting a reference letter — which hampered him from finding another job.

As a result of management's behaviour, Carter was awarded additional damages above and beyond what he would have received had Packall acted more reasonably. The lesson to both employers and employees is clear: employees should be treated reasonably, decently and fairly at the time of their termination, and afterwards as well.

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- Candidate



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