

## *Chapter 1. In the beginning*

March 2014. I was attending the Executive Secretary Live (ESL) event in London. I remember being blown away by the attendants, and especially the numbers: over 250 PAs from 17 countries! I have never experienced so much PA power in one room. Just imagine the tasks we could have accomplished with all of us there right that moment! I get goosebumps just by thinking about it...

I could only attend one day of the conference, so I was soaking up every second. I will never forget that day, for one important reason. I saw the need to be together. With the will to learn together I realized we can achieve amazing things, and that our successes will pile up when we support each other in our intense and ever-changing profession.

This book builds on that inspiration. It is meant to collect and share knowledge of our beloved profession of being top-notch Assistants. Even more importantly, this book is born out of my own determined search to find ways to grow and develop. I want to be able to meet growing expectations, fulfill my responsibilities: basically, be able to cope with anything that life throws at me. There was something missing and I kept looking for answers until it hit me... I already possess everything I've been looking for, I just need to acknowledge my talents, and then reinforce them to become stronger.

My journey so far has made me a better PA, a better person. I believe this process is just beginning, and will evolve over years of experience, commitment and a lot of hard work. I feel strong and empowered and truly want to share this with every Assisting Professional out there.

Maybe you will find something here that can help you elevate your career, skills, and perhaps even your precious personal lives.

*Pleasure to meet you*

Let's exchange pleasantries first. I'll start by telling you something about me. My career developed in a rather unexpected way, as it usually does for PAs. I started off in the financial corner and throughout the years grew into this amazingly varied and rapidly expanding profession of Personal Assistant. I'm part of the so-called 'younger generation' of PAs, and my 14 years of experience began right after my graduation. Believe it or not — I couldn't wait to get a job, I was much more of a doer from the beginning. I worked in a Big Four accounting firm as a junior auditor and got to know the inner workings of various businesses in a relatively short amount of time. Soon I realized that being involved in different companies for only a few weeks at a time wasn't enough for me. I wanted to focus all my attention on one company, so I made my move to the internal finance department of one of the world's best known multinationals. From then on, my life took turns and leaps that helped me experience amazing new areas, and eventually led me to where I am right now — feeling proud and satisfied.

Along the way I turned out to be a good office manager and travelled extensively across Europe to manage offices, financial administrations and facilities. At some point, my executive was so happy with my results that I became his Assistant. All of a sudden I was a PA to a high-powered executive in the glamorous world of luxury yacht building. Here I developed a thirst for knowing my company inside and out and became more and more involved in different aspects of the business. I tried my hand at setting up companies, running overseas living facilities, organizing business and private matters of traveling expat employees, and I even had a taste of the commercial side of the business.

In addition, my Russian heritage came in handy when new business opportunities in Russia cropped up: I ended up in the middle of negotiations, new business developments and met some major players. Very exciting stuff!



After a while I decided to make a new move, and I soon found myself assisting a brilliant executive in a major Dutch live entertainment company with a strong international presence. This time my duties were focused on being a corporate PA, an Executive Assistant, for multiple busy executives with overwhelming schedules, frequent complex travel schemes and an extended international team. Even here I combined being an EA, running the office and assisting in legal mergers and acquisitions. As my dedication to this company grew, I tried to be involved in everything I could get my hands on, even things such as finance and business development. It was an incredible experience to work in such a dynamic and high-profile company. I had to be very flexible, sharp and quick. Soon I adopted the working hours of my executives — that was my big introduction to their extreme office lives and almost nonexistent personal time.

In search of more balance I decided to make yet another move. My next challenge was an incredible opportunity to combine my passion for architecture with my profession as a PA, working for the partners of an internationally renowned architecture firm. This was definitely mixing business with pleasure! The experience of working alongside the world's most admired architects was beyond anything I could imagine. I witnessed the creation, development and building processes of some astonishing architecture. Being on top of the world has a new meaning to me now!

As time passed, one specific recurring dilemma of the extremely busy professionals I was supporting caught my attention: they all had so little time after hours! In each case the work-life balance was brutally disturbed — obviously in favor of being so passionate and dedicated to their businesses.

As I have personally experienced such a time shortage, this phenomenon inspired me to become the Assistant that the PA profession intended to be all along — personal! And so I started my own business and became a private PA. At the heart of my company is being available to entrepreneurs, executives and solo professionals to ease their lives and make them as effective and efficient as possible. Being their private PA on demand, whenever they need it. Now, here is the



point where you need to understand something crucial: in the Netherlands having a PA is not a common thing. It's a luxury (I like being a luxury product, don't you?).

So here I am, assisting successful entrepreneurs and professionals in business and in private and I'm loving every second of it. I enjoy the variety of my daily tasks: the intensity of different schedules, the power of amazing personalities, being involved in the workings and growth of various companies and being in the presence of true experts. Witnessing their results and seeing them excel makes me feel part of their success. You know what — everybody excels in these situations!

### *Turning point*

Let me be honest here, my road was not always an easy one. There was one major moment in my PA career that changed my way of working upside down and inside out. It shook my very core in a very unpleasant way — but to this day, I can firmly state that it made me stronger and a bigger person.

The experience I'm talking about can perhaps best be described as follows: I was working in a company with the *The Devil Wears Prada* kind of executives, but you have to quadruple the character from the movie in order to begin to understand the magnitude of the force I was up against. To make the story short but vivid, I will tell you this: it was a very extreme working environment! It made you feel less valued than even the most insignificant animal, with no rights or freedom to have your own opinions or input, let alone a personality. I have never felt so small, humiliated, used, powerless...

That was definitely the lowest I have felt as a PA, but also as a person. It came close to being emotionally abused — every imaginable boundary was crossed ten times over. We worked in constant fear, up to a point where you actually felt physically incompetent to even move from your spot, trying to be as invisible as possible and hoping that it was just a very bad nightmare. And I say 'we' because there were a few PAs there experiencing exactly the same thing. You can imagine what this working



environment did to the concept of teamwork. People on edge never make a good team to say the least. It was challenging on so many levels.

Specifics are not really important here, and I will mention some elements later in this book, but here is something to paint a picture for you: we frequently experienced flying stacks of papers, pens and coffee mugs, broken glass doors and visible footprints on the furniture, screaming, spit-talking, name-calling and threats. I found myself constantly comforting crying colleagues, all the while working ridiculously long hours and facing rejection. Well, you can imagine that all of that doesn't make it a great place to spend most of your waking hours. It leads to aggression, fear and backstabbing.

Instead of dwelling on this experience, however, I became determined to help others in some way, so that no one will ever feel the same way! It is my intention to prepare you for those situations: I will provide solutions and checklists which you can implement right away.

At one point, the harder I tried to incorporate any strategies the more miserable I got. I don't give up easily, so I kept trying to make it work. I worked harder to fulfill the expectations, which I did in every way possible, despite everything. And the crazy thing was that I was actually succeeding! My executives were content with me, and I supported them longer than any other PA up to that point.

Strangely enough you get used to that kind of treatment. You grow a thicker skin and you train your emotional immune system to work overtime! After hearing over and over again from my husband that the situation was not acceptable, I finally started to listen. But only after my physical health slowed me down, and when the tears were running down my face uncontrollably at the very thought of going to work. At that point I just snapped and walked away. It's not a solution to every difficult situation, but I know now that it is very important to not lose yourself. Looking back, I would have done one thing differently. I would have walked away much earlier.

Right after I left, I felt like a failure. PAs are supposed to overcome difficult personalities and make everything work, right? It took me



almost a year to understand that, first of all, I'm not the only one that has experienced this, and, secondly, seeing it from a distance, it surely wasn't acceptable or normal. Sometimes executives do go too far and you need to stand up for your rights! And, most importantly, if you are not in perfect shape as a person, you cannot be a perfect PA. You have to look after and nourish yourself first.

This was the beginning of my quest to find ways to make my mind and spirit stronger. I needed to excel as a person first to become an amazing PA. I realized that we need to have a certain 'PA state of mind' to become those shiny Assisting Professionals. To be truly effective in every way and provide fitted assistance to our execs on their (usually) tough journeys, with huge responsibilities and pressure to perform. Right then I truly understood the saying 'love yourself first before you can love another'. Twist it around a little and you will understand the most profound lesson I have learned to date, one which I had to learn the hard way!

Now I can stay calm in every situation by being me, keeping my attention and problem-solving radars on without freaking out at the possibility of failure. I can predict actions and the ways in which people react because I truly care about them and know their personalities. I'm prepared to act accordingly, knowing upfront what they might think or ask of me because I'm committed to their lives. I get huge satisfaction by chasing the impossible tasks and I get grounded by doing the nitty-gritty errands.

I love what I do, because I see the bigger picture and at the same time I understand that I'm the hidden driving force behind all of this. I have found ways of actually having a life too, spending time with my family, raising my beautiful daughter and running a business.

Most of all, I feel centered, focused and secure about myself and my abilities. All those are not personality traits — those are skills that you can develop. Those are the exact abilities I want to share with you so you can be that empowered professional.



### *The know-how*

Your story doesn't have to be anything like mine, or even remotely similar in any shape or form, for you to be able to benefit from what is written in this book. I actually assume that you have an incredible executive who treats you well and that your relationship and cooperation are up to everyone's expectations and satisfaction.

The techniques and programs I will reveal will be beneficial to any Assisting Professionals who love what they do. True professionals always look for ways to elevate their mindset, level of excellence and productivity. After all, that is the universal necessity to succeed in anything you do, business or personal!

One thing to note here. I often get asked, 'How can you work for such a difficult person?' The truth is that most execs are seen as difficult creatures, but there is a big difference between being difficult for the sake of being difficult and simply being highly demanding and result driven. This is how I always saw my execs; they are all qualified perfectionists, they aim for the highest standards and constantly tend to exceed them in everything they do. So yes, they are very demanding and they act from a different place in the hierarchy. And in addition to the pressure of their responsibilities they all have incredibly packed and demanding agendas, to the extent where you even have to schedule five-minute toilet breaks (true story!).

So it's not a big surprise that they can come across as rude in conversations with you: they are often very to the point in their thoughts and they frequently act on a tight schedule. Don't perceive that as difficult, but take it as a challenge and a sign of their faith in you.

Them being demanding of you is a sign that they think you are fit for the job! It's a hidden compliment people are usually not aware of. Think about it: would you waste your precious time and effort asking somebody you think is not good enough to accomplish anything important for you? No, you wouldn't! I will admit that it is challenging to live up to some requirements, but there are many roads to Rome. Find the one you can walk to the best of your abilities and be proud of the



things you accomplish along the way. Again, it's a mindset and if you think from that perspective you will be a lot more effective and pleased with yourself.

### *Checkpoint*

Let's go back to the event I attended in London. After speaking to a few participants (a special thank you to those amazing ladies at my table) my findings were confirmed, and actually matched the results of my interviews with over 50 top Assisting Professionals worldwide: we truly love what we do! This needs to be celebrated, treasured and become our main encouragement to grow and evolve our abilities and personalities.

Our community of Assisting Professionals is large but scattered. There is a big online presence, but you have to invest much time and effort to figure out which sources fit you best. There are a lot of similar questions asked, related problems discussed and issues shared. All this points to a need to be together and I hope to start a movement of focused attention on personal development.

In the last part of the book I will explain explicitly what I think we can do to get more focused, get tailored support and initiate effective sharing. We can organize complicated and impossible things because that is asked of us on the job, so let's organize some things for ourselves too. A wonderful example is the work of Victoria Darragh, who initiated internal PA networks at Hays UK and successfully translated them to external networks. Right now, she passionately pioneers this method across the United Kingdom. For all of us working in the private sector or representing single clients — we can do it too online! We just have to get our heads together. More on the importance and value of this topic is still to come, so stay tuned.

### *Hear hear*

The main focus of everything you will read here is based on my strong conviction that you need to excel yourself first to be able to help others





to excel too. True, simple and confrontational. We are not used to focusing on our own needs (at least I'm not), so that can be quite a challenge on its own. Please be patient and kind to yourself, respectful and loving, because it is especially those characteristics that will make you feel empowered, balanced, happy and accomplished. As Debbie Gross, celebrated EA to the CEO at Cisco, said in her presentation at ESL, top PAs are usually not expected to have a (personal) life. Sadly that's true, but I figured out a way to be that kind of PA and have a life! Sounds good right and no, it's not impossible!

We all know that you have to know the rules to play the game. In this book you will get my rules that help you to get ahead in our game. They will make you better equipped to face anything and everything, and act accordingly. I believe that our main power comes from our mindset. It determines our feelings, our thoughts, our actions and thus the inevitable outcome. It's that flow that we need to be aware of. If you have the knowledge and control that source, you will have the power of influence.

### *Magic beans*

It all comes down to this: I believe that by incorporating a specific set of six core soft skills you can develop into a truly extraordinary Assisting Professional. Those skills are summarized in a fast forward formula: W.A.N.T.E.D. (I'll let you know what it stands for in the coming chapters). The important thing to realize is that these soft skills must be fully understood and internalized before they are put into action. I have to agree with Sheryl Sandberg (COO at Facebook, author of *Lean In*) that internalizing certain principles is a heavy duty but a necessary one.

We have a lot of convictions and beliefs stored deeply and firmly within us and we need to clear up that stash first before you can add anything new and daring. After ticking that off your list, you will need the sacred combination of preserving and acting on behalf of your authentic personality and leading a balanced lifestyle. Only then will you feel empowered, accomplished and truly content. I believe it's all about seeing and understanding the bigger picture, whether it's your life or the life of your executive. Our ability to master this will translate into



direct results. Our willingness to notice those results and act upon them will determine our level of success. It's all up to us! We always have the choice to take control and responsibility for our actions. You reap what you sow, no hocus pocus there.

Again, please remember to be kind and patient with yourself on this journey, which will take time and effort. A truthful way of knowing if you're on track is very simple: check in with yourself — are you happy? If you feel grumpy today, adjust something if needed and move on in the desired direction. I can testify that the result is very satisfying!

Before I explain the next steps, I would like to take a moment and dig deeper into some terms and definitions that I will mention frequently in this book. Although they are commonly used I want to clarify the core basics and translate them to a PA's situation, the way I intend to use them. The meaning of these terms in our context might not be straightforward.

### *Hard skills vs soft skills*

This book is primarily focused on the soft skills of Assisting Professionals. But let me state it loud and clear: this does not mean that you can succeed without the hard skills! You definitely need both. The main reason why I don't explore the practical abilities you need to perform at the highest level of being a top Assistant is because there is a significant amount of material already available: books, training, seminars, blogs and online forums. Of course you need to know how to take minutes, how to use Microsoft Office, how to use travel software and admin programs efficiently and effectively. But that's not the subject of this book.

On the topic of soft skills little has been published. There is no real sequence or program that specifically focuses on developing the soft skillset of Assisting Professionals.

Currently, there is no certificate in any of these soft skills (I would love to have an MBA in the 'Troubleshooter Mindset'). In fact, the only courses available are pure personal development courses (which most



employers don't take seriously for us PAs). There are workshops out there, modules and many blogs, but no accredited institution willing to state that your mindset and soft skillset are up to a certain level of expertise. Don't you think that's strange?

I'm absolutely positive that none of us could succeed with excellent hard skills only. We need soft qualities and we need to master them at an all-time high level with continuous attention, effort, reminders and supporting tools. Most great PAs already have them and use them on a daily, no, hourly, basis. It's nothing new. However, we all need to focus a bit more on those qualities and cherish them. They determine our mindset and our mindset is a direct multiplier of our skills!

One small thing before we continue. I will use the word 'exec' as an abbreviation in reference to your employer, whether it is a business executive, a private individual, a group of people you assist or any other form of entrepreneur, professional or employer. I will also address the exec as 'him', but it may of course be a 'her' as well. It's nothing personal (I love working for female executives)! I will keep using the term 'PA', but it implies all variations of the title of being an Assistant.

Did you know there are over 150 title variations for what we do? Also, I will presume that the PA is a 'she' (how conventional) but I know from experience that the male population of Assisting Professionals is huge and growing. I love this trend, we can learn from gender-specific points of view and the way we do things. I better dig up more on this exciting distinction (goes on my to-do list).

### *From wanted to needed*

There is a difference between being a *wanted* PA and being a *needed* PA.

Let's start with wanted. If you *want* to have something (unrelated to PAs) then your mind says: 'It would be really nice, good and useful to have it. But I don't want to spend too much effort, money or time on it.' If you don't end up pursuing the object of your affection you say: 'Too



bad, but no harm done. Something else will come along or I will look for other options.'

Now presume you *need* something. That is the moment when your whole being is screaming that you simply can't do without it (think shoes!). It's something that will make the biggest difference to you and enable you to be, do, fulfill and have something that was missing. If you don't pursue that object of affection you will be truly devastated.

See the difference?

Let's translate this phenomenon to 'having a PA'. A lot of execs *want* a PA because they don't want to do their own scheduling, getting coffee, making copies, checking PowerPoints, running errands and calling all day long to make appointments. Now, if these execs do not get the PA they were hoping for it's no biggie. They will just keep on interviewing and change PAs as they go.

But, let's say you've found that special one who you just click with, she gets you, and does everything you ask of her the way you intend. Your partner loves her, your children adore her, your schedule never looked better, you get your stuff done and you talk to the people you need to at the required moments. Your fabulous vacations are taken care of and there is always a quick solution to any issue. She knows everything you ever ask and she actually helps you stay ahead and feel confident about your daily tasks. With this PA you feel at ease and you let her do more.

You trust her, you actually throw some of your ideas at her to see if they make sense and if there are any gaps you might have missed. At some point you even trust her to update you on 100-page reports in 15 minutes, you agree that she will represent you at some meetings so you can enjoy some quality family time, and you get to go to that 'ultra-difficult to get in' event you have been dying to attend for ages.

This list grows over time. You get to know each other on a personal level, she knows when to cheer you up and when to back down. She senses when you feel stressed out or when you're floating in a creative mode. Your mutual understanding is quick and subtle (her nudge of the



head means your next appointment has arrived, you looking down at your watch means you are dying to be rescued from this meeting ASAP). She knows your every preference so everything runs smoothly etc. etc. etc.

At this point your PA has become almost irreplaceable. Your life will become hugely uncomfortable if she ever leaves her position for whatever reason. You would experience a moment of despair because you know A. it will take a while before you find anybody like that, B. the adjustment period will not be easy and C. you will keep comparing your new PA to the previous one — which will not make it easier for either party.

Some execs go a long way to keep their PAs for as long as possible, and are sometimes even willing to create new positions within the company for their PAs to grow. I know of cases where tears were shed when saying goodbye! They write a personal lengthy recommendation to the next employer, because they know it is a sign of trust and a stamp of approval. They know that this will make all the difference for their beloved PAs to get the next job of their choosing. Some relationships remain over time and friendships are made. There is even an internationally known case of including a longtime PA in a will! (James Gandolfini included his Personal Assistant and close friend Thomas Richardson and his secretary Trixie Flynn Bourne in his will, with each receiving \$200,000, which demonstrates just how close the exec/PA relationship can be.) Now that is an extreme but pure form of appreciation, wouldn't you say?

I hope the picture I have tried to paint is clear. In conclusion, being a *needed* PA makes a lot of things easier for both PAs and their execs. Effective and efficient communication, speed of trust (a definition advocated by the renowned author Steven R. Covey), ease of information sharing, delegating and instant mutual understanding will make you a winning team!

And it's not a fairy tale. There are amazing tributes from high-profile execs on the internet praising their PAs and telling the world that their support makes them better, stronger and faster (just search for Sir



Richard Branson's LinkedIn blog post on his Assistants or John Paul DeJoria's video message to his valued EA Veronika Judish). Wouldn't it be nice to be that PA mentioned by name and with a personal note instead of being the third in a row of many?

### *speed of trust*

Let's take a closer look on the essential topic of trust. Strangely enough, trust is usually overestimated and underestimated at the same time. If all is good and jolly then the trust is there and thriving, but if something does not go to plan then it is damaged forever. Is trust that unreliable?

Trust is absolutely essential for the relationship between PAs and their execs, no doubt about it. Trust is a perfect measurement of the outcome of your efforts and can be used to predict the scalability of the relationship with your exec. I will mention it a lot in the upcoming chapters so it's important to be on the same page when it comes to what it actually means. The thing is, it is vulnerable and delicate.

How do we know it's there? How do we know when we still need to work for it? And if it is breached, is it really beyond repair?

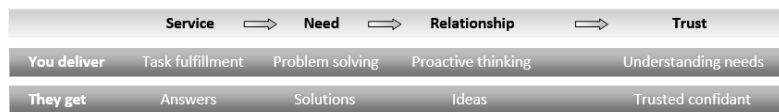
The difficulty here is that it's a very personal issue and the answers vary with the person. Through the years our criteria change as we grow wiser (yes, it happens to some of us). I know some will disagree with me, but I compare trust with image. Your image is defining you, your positions, your family, your goals, your past and your future. You can build it, you can lose it, and it can be at an all-time high or low. The good thing about image is that we can control it! For some reason we tend to think of trust differently, it's there or it isn't. And that's just not true!

Trust is as elastic and manageable as image, you only need to know how to handle it. I believe that being honest, sincere and professional are key factors on the subject of trust. To make it more vivid I will illustrate trust in a wonderfully measurable equation later in the book (a big thank you to Charles H. Green, the founder of The Trust Equation) and we'll discuss different levels of trust, which will reassure you. Knowing this trust equation makes it so much easier for us PAs to find out where we stand



when it comes to trust, where there's not enough so that we can poke and twitch and make it better. Or when to stay clear and move on, because without trust you cannot be a *needed* PA! When trust becomes a manageable concept we are a whole lot more in control of the most important element of our relationships, in control of the quality of our support. And we love anything manageable, right?

Here is one definition I would like to kick off with for now: the trust flow. It illustrates how trust is built and shows the whole flow of the concept. You can clearly see here that you have full control over it! It explains your part in it and makes it obvious why the six defined W.A.N.T.E.D. soft skills are so applicable to nurturing a trusting relationship with your executive.



This will turn you into their safe haven. Now that's a title I won't refuse!

*You've got the power*

I use words like power, control and influence with ease but, truth be told, they can be perceived as dirty words in business. Unfortunately, people have often misused their power to control circumstances in ways that have been devastating. The latest extreme example is the worldwide recession. Let me state that the purpose of the *needed* PA is to elevate others and let our execs excel in what they do. If these three magical words are used in relation to making something better, then I urge you to act on them fearlessly.

Here is a fitting description I have read somewhere and I think it's a great way of showing how we as Assisting Professionals have to act on those magical words:

*Power is the capacity you possess, influencing is the way you are using that power. Be in control of those abilities to the best of your judgment*



*and engage them in order to excel yourself so you will be able to elevate others.*

This would be a great pledge for an Assistant!

Influence and being influenced mean being able to achieve our objectives by getting help, cooperation and commitment without formal authority. By using our strong soft skillset we can communicate and act without manipulation. Think about it, your habitual and automated actions can hurt your progress as they mean that you act unconsciously. You have to consciously control your actions in every situation while spicing them up with your soft skills magic. This will boost your effectiveness, professional impact and personal credibility.

Targeted use of our soft skills magnifies our ability to build and establish strong and sincere relationships. This is the right way to build the essential trust which is needed in order for us to be truly supportive.

The direct result of that trust translates into our 'PA power' to influence people, events and outcomes. It's a huge force to be reckoned with so use it wisely! Again, no hocus pocus here: trust is the foundation of it all. Keep in mind the above statements and you will see clearly why and how you can create trust and be in control of it when we examine Charles H. Green's magnificent formula of trust in chapter 5.

*Keep your ears open and your mind alert*

One of the most important abilities of a valued Assistant is understanding needs and acting on them. While it seems like a fairly simple and logical matter, it is an ability not often applied well. It begins and ends with our capacity to really and truly listen to what people are saying with the intention of actually hearing them.

Let's be honest here, Assistants often listen not only with the common devices called ears, but with a sixth sense. We use our multitasking skills to fit the received information with already existing knowledge of our execs. We know exactly through which lens we need to view the new data to understand what they really mean. In other words, we listen in





3D! The first dimension represents the actual words that are being communicated. The second dimension is understanding the context of when and how something has been said. The third dimension is being able to compare new data with past experiences, past intended reasons and achieved results. Are you still with me?

Let me simplify it through this smartly put together acronym:

L = Look interested, get interested, act interested with intention

I = Involve yourself in the conversation by responding thoughtfully

S = Stay focused on the target and topic

T = Test your understanding by reconfirming, comparing and asking questions

E = Evaluate the message in terms of content and timeline importance

N = Neutralize your emotions, but show compassion, understanding, support and resourcefulness

Need I say more?

Yes I do! There is one more element which is really important and can make all the difference, and that is the manner and execution of communication. Nowadays, I spend most of my time indulging in cyber communication and that makes things challenging at times. We all know that the actual words appearing on our BFF smartphones do not always reflect the core message or intention. Over time, we learn to recognize the little things that show us the state of mind of the typing hand.

What I'm trying to say is that we know how our execs communicate and it's important to use it to our advantage. So if you keep ending up with misunderstandings (online or offline) try to figure out what about the way your exec communicates doesn't get through to you.

I know that communication is a two-way street, but we are their Assistants for a reason. It's our job to make it easy for them to get things across, with us they can be less formal and at ease. We need to make communication work. We need to make it convenient for them, with no fuss.



*What you resist... persists!*

Last but definitely not least, I would like to mention resistance. Depending on your current situation, past experience, seniority of position or personal convictions you might feel various degrees of resistance to the things you'll read in this book. There is always a reason for that resistance and it's good to look closer at the areas where your resistance is strong. There is a space in the back of this book which I call The Resistance List. This is actually the first list of the workbook I created for you to track your findings and important insights (see the last pages in this book). Give it a go and fill it in on paper, in your head, or in an app and analyze your thinking processes and progression. You will work with most lists in the workbook later on, so it might be a great reference point on your journey to become the indispensable assistant you really are.

I would like to invite you to write down anything that comes up while going through the chapters. No judgment, just state the feelings and thoughts and move on. We will address them later in the book. I dare to promise you one thing — that list will give you the biggest insights! Furthermore, to be able to understand what is needed for us Assistants I would love to receive a summary of your Resistance List. Please see my contact info in the back. As you will find out shortly, there is something bigger cooking in my brain so I would love to hear any feedback, your current issues or anything else you might want to share with me or with our PA community. There is a method to my madness — just bear with me.

*The pleasure is all mine*

Before we begin the amazing journey into our PA minds (and it can be a scary place sometimes) let me express my deepest gratitude for you picking up this book and spending your precious time reading it. I truly hope I can support your mindset and give you tools that you can apply along the way, managing your busy schedule while juggling a thousand and one errands. I hope to help you deal with difficult conversations and challenging situations. I hope to make it possible for you to do all that



with the ease and grace of an absolute top Assisting Professional who knows what needs to be done before it happens. To act fearlessly and decisively in any situation, to always remain professional but authentic. And most importantly, to grow in the desired direction, be proud, content and enjoy your life!

When PAs excel, others benefit! Let's go for it, let's get into that 'PA state of mind'!

