



## CHAMPIONING SKILL ADVANCEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE: A BRAVE NEW FRONTIER

# The Executive/Executive Assistant Business Partnership

### A MESSAGE TO EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ATHLETES

The transformative skills of the Executive Assistant can be compared to those of outstanding athletes! Here's what professional quarterback Tim Tebow says: "I think that everybody that puts on a uniform, you want to go out there and you want to play. However my role is, however I can try to expand my role, I will do that."

Like athletes, Executive Assistants are informed by their experience to know that simple continuity leads to boredom and stagnation. They are constantly looking at the way they do things, and adjusting their strategies to adapt to goals and resources. They know that in order to retain the aura of their sphere of influence, they must be diligent to continually update their performance, so they focus on the dictates of at least three strategies: developmental objectives, performance targets, and consistent rethinking of assumptions (as a common-sense-tactic for overcoming obstacles).

Executive Assistants' advantage is in the ability to focus on the central factors that now are establishing the basic qualifications for the position. These include learning to solve problems that correspond to the pluralistic world in which we live (individually and collectively), remaining effective and focused while technology processes increase in complexity (creating the demand for new learning), a commitment to cultural fluency and collaboration, requiring international work experience (driven by the intensity of market competition of our global world of work).

Yet, sooner or later, even the most successful of us are stalled, run out of fresh ideas, and are compelled to reinvent ourselves. Those who are able to pull themselves up from one level to the next are in the high-performer category, and share a common trait: a desire to improve upon their capabilities in order to surpass current threshold levels to respond to emerging trends and changing circumstances. Success is dependent upon the ability to accomplish this reinvention process before it becomes a glaring need. One of the most successful athletes in history, basketball player, Abdul-Jabbar, says: "To really excel you need both (talent and practice)...being prepared, understanding your strengths and limitations, and having a good game plan – those are essential elements of success."

While the appeal of the Executive/Executive Assistant business partnership relationship remains in place, with the Executive Assistant's primary purpose being to help executives to succeed, what matters most is what you can't see: those emerging *next...* ▶

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6-day Premier© Program for C-Suite  
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Leadership, Management,

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(212) 297.6141 [info@duncangroupinc.com](mailto:info@duncangroupinc.com)

## THE DUNCAN GROUP INC.

**The Duncan Group Inc.** is a New York-based firm specializing in four practice areas: recruitment of senior-level executive assistants and chiefs-of-staff, organizational consulting, coaching and "executive level" training for professional assistants. The firm operates on a national basis.

**The Duncan Leadership Institute** offers Business Education for the Executive Assistant. Our curriculum models executive education programs that concentrate on professional development needs of executives. For information on our curriculum, please visit [www.duncangroupinc.com](http://www.duncangroupinc.com).

**The Duncan Group Inc., 420 Lexington Avenue, Suite 300, New York, NY 10170 (212) 297-6141**

trends that trigger the end of the parts of the job that are becoming obsolete (not just answer a phone and take a message; instead, manage the communication), and the advent of what the job is becoming in our technology-driven culture. In addition to creativity, agility, and tactical speed to capitalize on opportunities to excel, these changes require broader organizational skills and an understanding of global business strategy.

Organizations need highly analytical individuals with the ability to turn a problem into an innovative solution, technological fluency, and a global mind-set. In this new world, Executive Assistant dominance will be the ability to provide organized and streamlined strategic administrative support, and to collaboratively solve complex and rapidly changing problems every moment of every day: much as the professional athlete continuously assesses his/her strategic competitive advantages.

To Executive Assistants it is staggeringly obvious that this role can be debilitating unless they connect with the evolving demands of the job, and learn the new strategic capabilities to meet those shifts. In this new era of business, efficiency must dictate. Recognizing this urgent need for improvement, Executive Assistants ask the question: in this changing business environment, what demonstrably specific skills should I cultivate to meet these challenges?

Gaps in skills are hard to detect and easy to ignore. Yet, in the search for increased effectiveness, one's ability to make quick decisions, and ensure fast execution, provides the relevant data and feedback that signals current business intelligence and performance level. To achieve real progress, Executive Assistants apply their greatest strengths: their indomitable will, incomparable powers of persuasion, intestinal fortitude, reliable hard work, the ability to focus and persevere despite obstacles, flexibility to express ingenuity, the resolve to check facts and "take nothing for granted."

## CHALLENGE AND REWARD

It's difficult to find the assistant  
who anticipates your needs.

It's difficult to find the employer who  
encourages you to develop your potential.  
At The Duncan Group, we meet the challenge.  
You experience the reward.

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420 Lexington Avenue, Suite 300, New York, NY 10170  
(212) 297-6131 [info@duncangroupinc.com](mailto:info@duncangroupinc.com)

SPECIALISTS IN THE RECRUITMENT OF  
C-SUITE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS,  
SENIOR LEVEL EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS, AND OFFICE ADMINISTRATORS

Underlying these essential talents is the flexibility to respond to change, which is a key factor in the reinvention process because it responds to the irrepressible nature of human curiosity; it determines who soars and who stumbles, it is based in who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

Confidence and experience are important assets; yet, we always have to step back, consider our skills and where we are; then commit to what we need to learn, and learn it.

Like athletes, Executive Assistants know that development options begin with challenging assumptions and a self-assessment strategy, which take into account:

- a personal and academic development agenda to acquire the ability to respond quickly and confidently to catalyze change
- how to work around and supplement traditional approaches; to be creative and not wedded to the past; knowing what to archive and what to create
- how to formulate distinctive capabilities; "what do I need to learn?"
- how to do this quickly, because what matters most is time

Executive Assistants know about reform and renewal, leadership, interdependence and how the ability to influence can have wide-ranging implications, even to world relations. They adapt to the changes and instability of a dynamic, global marketplace.

Executive Assistants know that most executives really do not know how you do what you do, or how you make those miracles happen every day. But, they do know when their assistants are not keeping up.

A lot of your attention needs to be focused on acquiring new, self-sustaining qualities, techniques and skills; this is the biggest challenge in an uncertain and dynamic environment. Consider that your role requires:

Critical analytical thinking, global business education, leadership, and management; which leads to systems implementation, technology solutions, and operational strategies.

Of course, another suggestion that I make is that companies will demonstrate their commitment to advanced training and development for their Executive Assistant population, who are among their most valuable and talented employees. If not, why not? In the next Newsletter: **Creating a New Dialogue.**

### READ and RECOMMENDED:

*Against Happiness: In Praise of Melancholy*, Eric G. Wilson (Macmillan, 2009)

*Imperfect: An Improbable Life*, Jim Abbott, Tim Brown (Random House Publishing Group, 2012)

*Just Start: Take Action, Embrace Uncertainty, Create the Future*, Leonard A. Schlesinger, Charles F. Kiefer, Paul B. Brown (Harvard Business Press, 2012)

*The Heart and the Fist*, Eric Greitens (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011)