



2018

# State of the **EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT** Report

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**SNACK**NATION

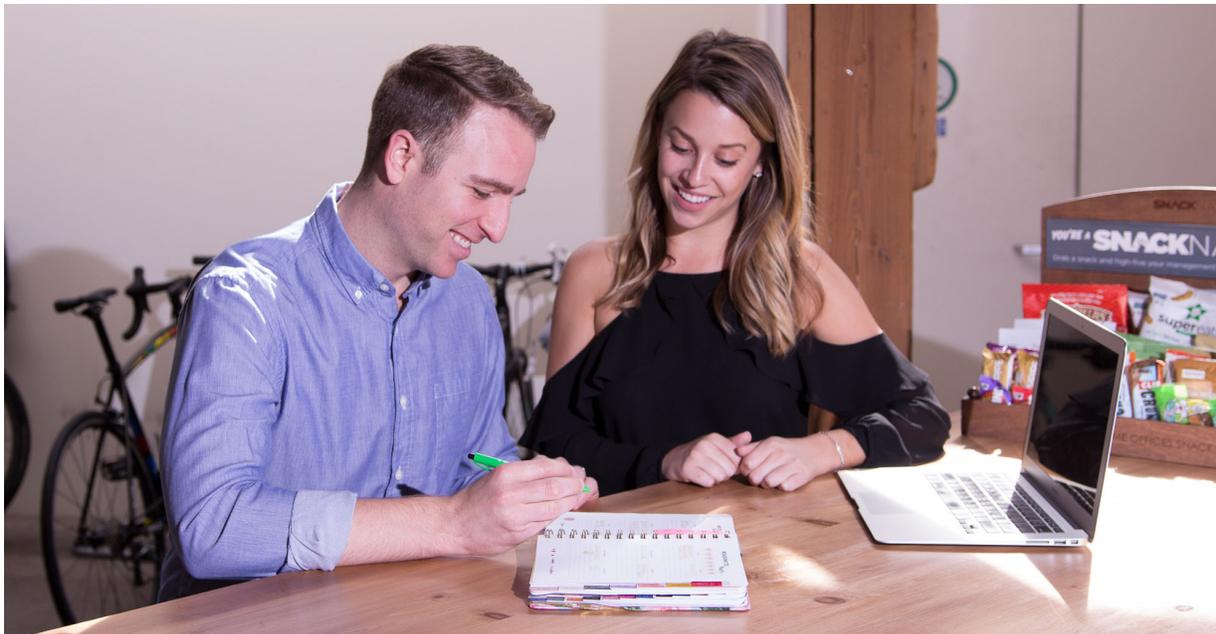
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# Introduction

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The modern Executive Assistant just might be the C-suite's secret weapon.

The average Executive Assistant has to be a professional problem solver, a master of organization, a trusted confidant, and a strategic advisor - all rolled into one.

That doesn't mean everyone gets it. A few frustrating mis-perceptions persist.

The most common is that the Executive Assistant role is primarily an administrative one. This is the outdated image of the Executive Assistant as "gatekeeper," "traffic cop," or someone who merely schedules meetings and books travel.

But if these stereotypes were to be believed, the Executive Assistant should have become obsolete years ago. A plethora of cheap and effective calendaring solutions, travel sites, note taking apps, outsourced admin services, and other tools means that execs should be more than capable of handling these functions themselves.

In fact, "experts" have been predicting the death of the Executive Assistant every time a new workplace technology gains mainstream adoption. But the fact remains - Executive Assistants aren't going anywhere. If anything the need for quality Executive Assistants is stronger than ever.

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# Introduction

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So what's going on here? Simple. The role has expanded considerably.

For today's Executive Assistants, calendaring and scheduling are just the tip of the iceberg. Executive Assistants are now expected to provide strategic counsel, perform high level problem solving, and implement new processes that provide a measurable efficiency boost. Many even handle tasks that used to be the exclusive realm of HR, finance, or operations - things like on-boarding new employees, IT, and managing perks and other cultural activities.

We're not the only ones who think so. [USA Today](#) called the Executive Assistant Silicon Valley's "power job" due to its interdisciplinary nature, proximity to executive leadership, and opportunities for growth. In fact, it's not uncommon for Executive Assistant salaries at tech companies to range north of six figures.

Executive Assistant trainer and expert [Adam Fidler](#) came up with a formulation that captures the newly elevated importance of the role. With more than 30k views and counting, his viral "Executive Assistant's Manifesto" proclaimed:

*"I'm a neutral and independent advisor to my Executive who enables the day-to-day management routines that enhance the effectiveness of my boss, and the organization as a whole. I operate as a business manager in my own right - and I am an integral part of the management team."*

There's a reason this resonated with so many Executive Assistants - it's true. Today's Executive Assistants contribute to the high level strategy and operation of the organization.

A role like this requires an advanced skillset. To be an effective Executive Assistant in 2018, these are just a few of the skills you need -

1

### Big Picture Thinking

Your executive seeks your counsel, which means a holistic understanding of your business is an absolute must.

2

### Ruthless Prioritization

Executives are almost always stretched too thin. A big part of your job is to steer them away from distractions and help them focus on their highest leverage activities.

3

### Supernatural Anticipation

You need to be able to know what your executives want before they do. This requires both the foresight to envision how particular scenarios might play out, and also an intimate knowledge of all the idiosyncrasies of how your boss works best.

4

### Expert Level Communication and High Emotional Intelligence

In addition to your boss, you're interfacing with everyone from board members and investors, to CEOs at other companies, to employees at virtually all levels within your organization. A penchant for clear, direct communication, a thick skin, and the ability to read people all have to be part of your skillset.

All of this is to say that the Executive Assistant is more challenging and more pivotal to the organization than most people realize.

## Why This Report?

We know Executive Assistants.

Since managing office perks like snacks has become one of the many facets of the Executive Assistant role, we have the privilege of working with quite a few of you, and have gotten to understand what makes the position so unique.

We've also noticed that there aren't a ton of resources that understand the nuances specific to your role. Whether it's in big longitudinal studies or just in common parlance, **Executive Assistants, Office Managers, and Administrative Assistants often get lumped together.**

Of course, you and I know that these jobs are very different.

Here's the easiest way to understand the difference - **Office Managers serve the office, Admins might serve an office or a large team, but Executive Assistants primarily serve executive leadership.** That might seem like an obvious distinction, but it means that Executive Assistants need an altogether different skill set.

Another big difference - as our data will demonstrate, **OMs and Admins are much more prevalent at smaller companies, while Executive Assistants are mostly found at bigger enterprises.** Again, this means you need different skills in order to be successful.

In our view, there just isn't enough data on just the Executive Assistant role itself. You really can't find large scale studies that treat Executive Assistant data separately from Office Manager and Administrative Assistant data. That's why we set out to create this report - a first of its kind study focused squarely on the Executive Assistant role in modern business.

One of the top traits for successful Executive Assistants is the **ability to take decisive action.** With that in mind, we've recommended action steps based on our findings, things you can do to at your company to capitalize on the insights we've gathered here.

But enough preamble! Time is always of the essence for an EA, so let's dive right in. Here are the top takeaways from the 2018 State of the Executive Assistant Report.



**Join our private FB Group for Executive Assistants, where you can connect with other high performers around the country, get questions answered by the community, and get access to tons of valuable resources and content.**

**[Join Now](#)**

# TOP 10 LESSONS FROM THE 2018 STATE OF THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT REPORT

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1

## EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS ENJOY BETTER THAN AVERAGE SALARIES, BUT FEEL LIKE THERE'S A GLASS CEILING

The average Executive Assistant earns \$63,349.31 each year - well above the national average wage of around \$48,000 (according to the [Social Security Administration](#)). Executive Assistants still want to make more money (who doesn't?), and see negotiating for a higher salary their top challenge in the next twelve months.



2

## EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS ARE A LOYAL BUNCH

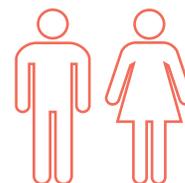
More than a third (34%) of respondents have been working at their current company for more than 5 years. According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the average American worker has been at their current job for 4.2 years, and this number drops to just 2.8 years when you segment for workers aged 25-34.



3

## MOST EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS ARE DOING THE JOB THAT ENTIRE TEAMS OF ASSISTANTS USED TO DO

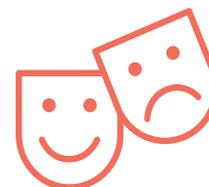
52% of respondents directly support 3 or more executives, and the vast majority don't have a team to whom they can delegate.



4

## CANDOR IS ESSENTIAL, BUT DIFFICULT FOR EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS

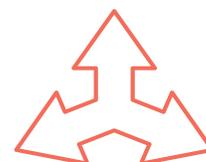
Executive Assistants said that one of the most effective ways to deal with a difficult or demanding executive is to "be upfront with them and communicate your frustration" (32%). However, feedback is still a challenge. 32% still don't feel comfortable giving their boss negative feedback.



5

## THE SCOPE OF THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ROLE HAS EXPANDED.

While calendaring, scheduling, and organization are still a fundamental part of the job, being an Executive Assistant in 2018 now means performing tasks formerly relegated to IT, Operations, and even HR.



# TOP 10 INSIGHTS FROM THE 2018 STATE OF THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT REPORT

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6

## EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS AREN'T TAKING ENOUGH VACATION.

Executive Assistants that take more vacation reported being less stressed out and happier at work, yet a full 40% take just 10 or fewer vacation days per year - well under the average allotment.



7

## THE TOP SKILL TO DEVELOP IS MULTI-TASKING.

Executive Assistants reported that the “ability to multi-task” (26%) is the most important skill to master, followed by “communication” (20%).



8

## EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS LOVE THAT THEIR WORK KEEPS THEM ON THEIR TOES.

When asked what part of their job they enjoy most, the top answer was “new challenges” (33%).



9

## EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS ARE NOT GETTING ENOUGH FEEDBACK, BUT NOT FOR LACK OF FACETIME.

30% said they only get feedback on how to improve at work once a year, yet 56% of respondents have a face-to-face meeting with their boss every week



10

## EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS ARE ALWAYS ON CALL.

Respondents told us that “disconnecting outside of work” is the most difficult thing to do in the role compared to 2-3 years ago. 52% of Executive Assistants are expected to be on call outside of work hours. Executive Assistants who are expected to be on call outside of work hours are nearly 12% less happy with their bosses than Executive Assistants who are not expected to be on call. 28% of respondents said their boss contacts them outside of work hours or on weekend with requests at least twice per week.





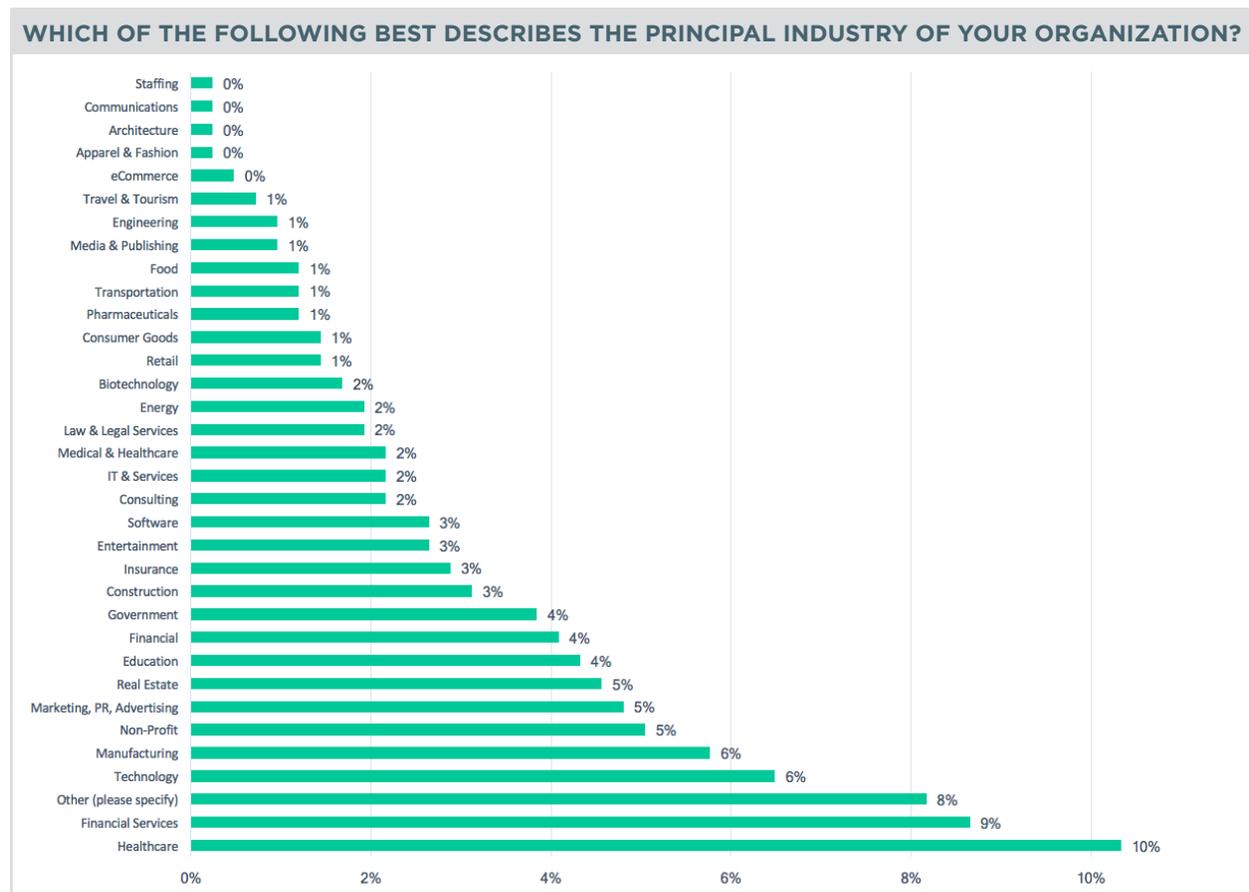
# The **PARTICIPANTS**

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# THE PARTICIPANTS

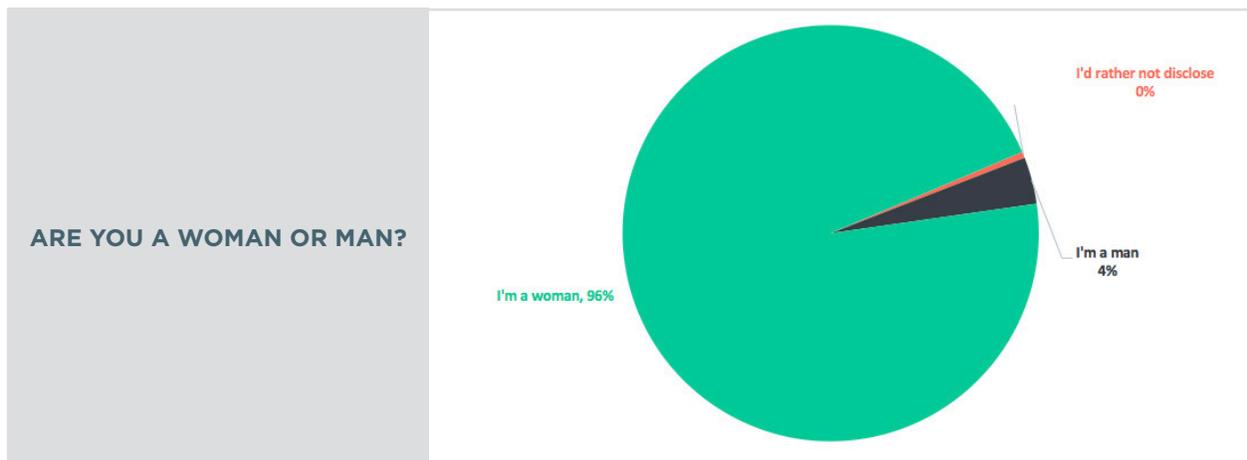
So who are the multi-faceted, ultra-strategic, super savvy professionals who occupy the Executive Assistant role? We dug into the data to find out.

We received responses from 757 Executive Assistants hailing from around the globe, but decided to focus on US-based respondents for this report. That left us with 417 Executive Assistants representing a wide and diverse array of industries. The most common were Healthcare (10%), followed by Financial Services (9%), Technology (6%), and Manufacturing (6%). We also fielded responses from Executive Assistants who worked in Consumer Goods, Media and Publishing, Energy, Transportation, and many more - 34 industries in all.



We also found that the role is mostly women (and it's not even close). Nearly 96% of respondents were women.

# THE PARTICIPANTS



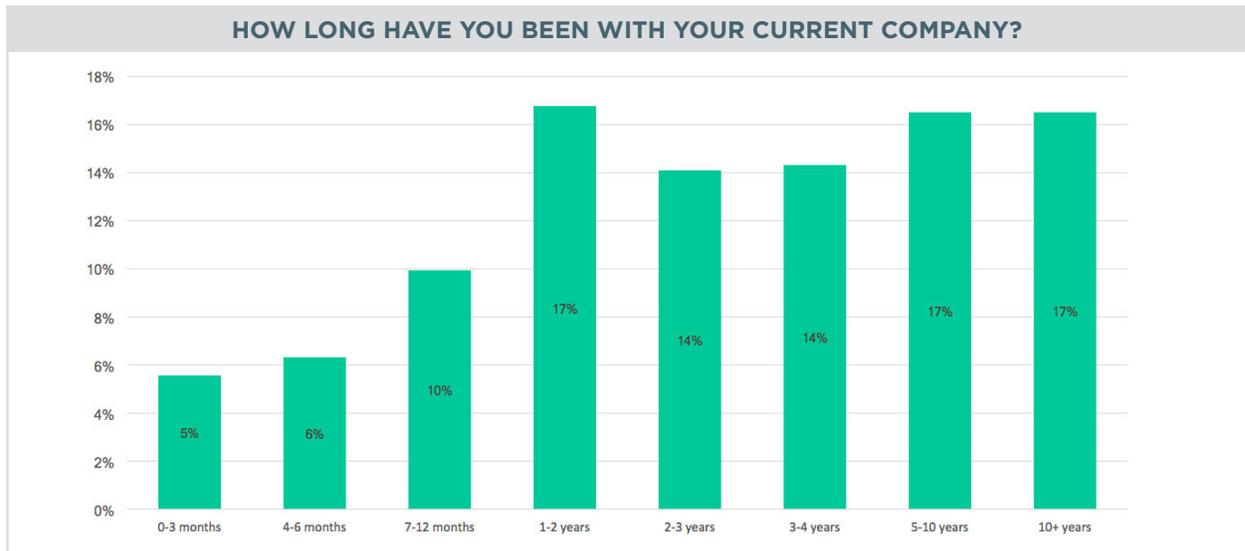
Executive Assistants are mostly a phenomenon of larger companies. While we had small, medium, and larger businesses represented, the largest segment by far were Executive Assistants who worked for companies with more than 1,000 employees (33%).

Compare this to data from the [U.S. Small Business Administration](#), which found that small businesses (defined as companies with fewer than 500 employees) make up more than 99% of the U.S. economy.



On the whole, we found Executive Assistants to be a loyal, experienced bunch. When we asked how long our group had been with their current company, more than a third (34%) had been at the same place five years or more, and 17% had been there more than ten years.

# THE PARTICIPANTS



Executive Assistants are a loyal bunch. 34% have worked at their current company for at least 5 years

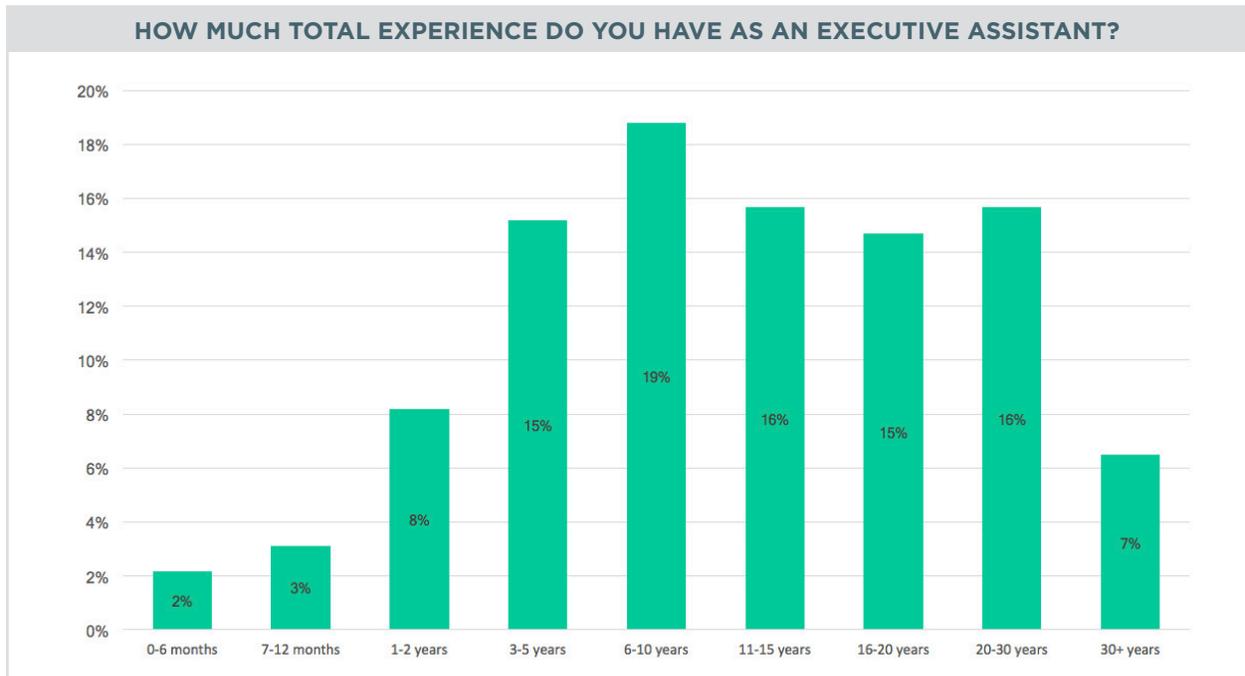


This finding was a bit surprising in our era of job-hopping Millennial employees. [According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the median employee tenure in 2016 was just 4.2 years, and has been in steady decline for a while. When you look at just Millennial aged employees, this number shrinks to just 2.8 years.

Of course, this doesn't mean that companies should take their awesome Executive Assistants for granted. While most aren't actively looking, 59% are open to a change.

Executive Assistants also beat the average when it comes to total work experience. Since 2015, Millennials are now the predominant generation in the workforce, who by definition have at most 10 years of experience.

# THE PARTICIPANTS



Work experience for our respondents was much higher. More than half (54%) had 11 or more years of experience, and 23% had 20 or more years under their belt.

So what does all this mean? Well, despite some mis-perceptions, **the Executive Assistant role is decidedly not an entry level position**, nor is it a stepping stone to other positions. For many, being an Executive Assistant is a career path and a calling in its own right.



# The **EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ROLE** In 2018

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# THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ROLE IN 2018

## What's in a Name?

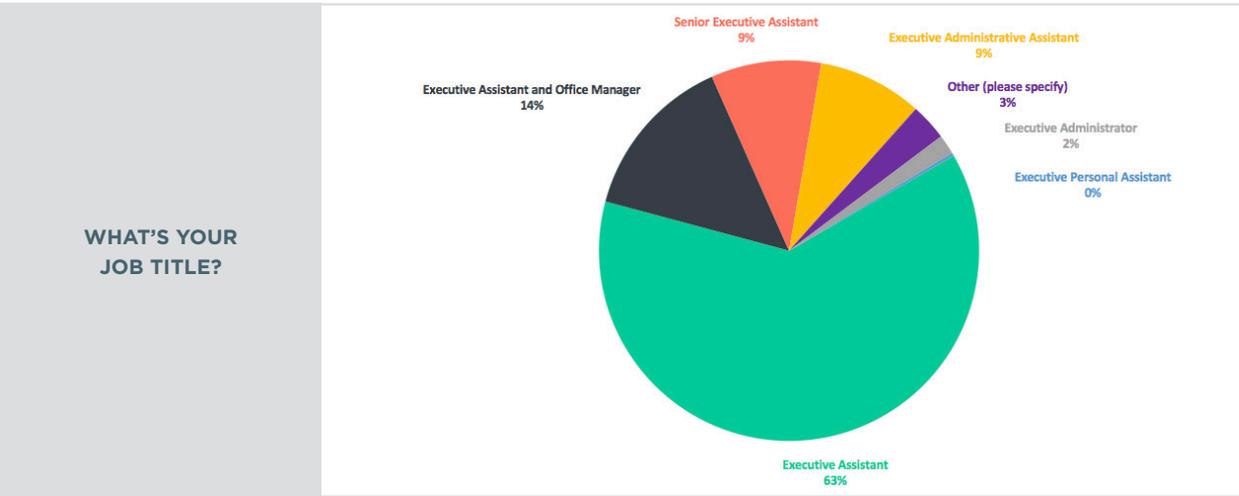
Quite a bit, actually.

What people choose to call themselves (or how their organizations choose to label them) often provides insight in terms of how they perceive their work or how the role has changed over time.

For instance, many orgs have replaced the term "Sales Rep" with "Account Executive" to emphasize the relationship building that many sales roles now require. Companies are also calling Office Managers things like "Vibe Manager" to highlight the position's role in maintaining office culture.

The Executive Assistant role has had its own nomenclatural journey. When the role was created in the early 1940s, Executive Assistants were called "Executive Secretaries." But the word "secretary" fell out of fashion in the mid 1990s when companies began to acknowledge that this wasn't quite accurate - the people in this role were contributing a lot more than the basic duties of typing, filing, and taking messages.

When it comes to their title, the majority (63%) of our respondents held the standard title "Executive Assistant," while nearly all (95%) had some variation of those two words. A significant portion (14%) indicated they had a dual role, holding the title "Executive Assistant Office Manager."

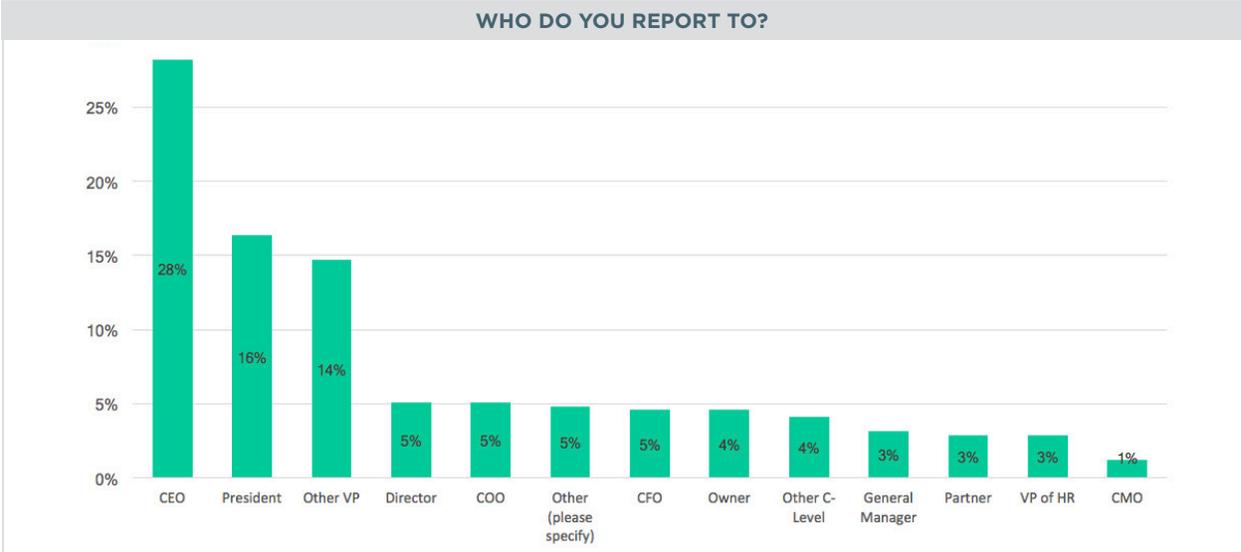


**\*\*Notably, none of these titles contained the word "secretary."**

# THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ROLE IN 2018

## Most Executive Assistants Support Higher Level Execs

We also found that most Executive Assistants report to top brass. When asked “who do you report to?” CEO was the most common response (28%), and C Level execs accounted for 43% of responses. Chief Marketers, however, are the least in need of Executive Assistant services, as only 1% of respondents told us that they reported to a CMO.



Analysis from the Harvard Business Review's Melba Duncan helps illuminate why the highest level execs are the most likely to have an assistant - and it's not just seniority. As she [deftly points out](#), executive assistants provide the highest ROI for the highest skilled (and salaried) positions.

“At very senior levels, the return on investment from a skilled assistant can be substantial. Consider a senior executive whose total compensation package is \$1 million annually, who works with an assistant who earns \$80,000. For the organization to break even, the assistant must make the executive 8% more productive than he or she would be working solo—for instance, the assistant needs to save the executive roughly five hours in a 60-hour workweek. In reality, good assistants save their bosses much more than that.”

Apparently, companies are trying to stretch that ROI as far as it will go. According to our respondents, more than half (52%) serve three or more executives, and most (81%) are not managing a team to whom they can delegate. In other words, most Executive Assistants are doing the work of three or more people by themselves. (81%) are not managing a team to whom they can delegate. In other words, most Executive Assistants are doing the work of **three or more people by themselves**.

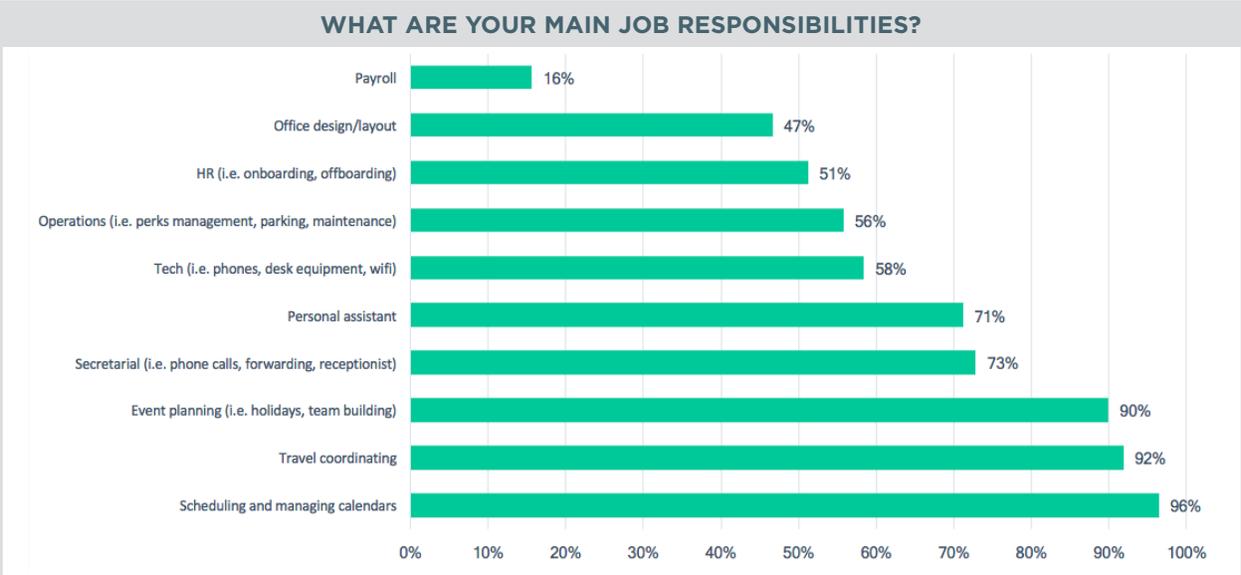
Executive Assistants are doing the job that entire teams of assistants used to do - 52% serve 3 or more executives

 [Click to Tweet](#)

# THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ROLE IN 2018

## More Than Just Scheduling

Need proof that the Executive Assistant role goes well beyond the common stereotype of “Chief Scheduling Officer”? Take a look at what our respondents said when we asked about their main job responsibilities

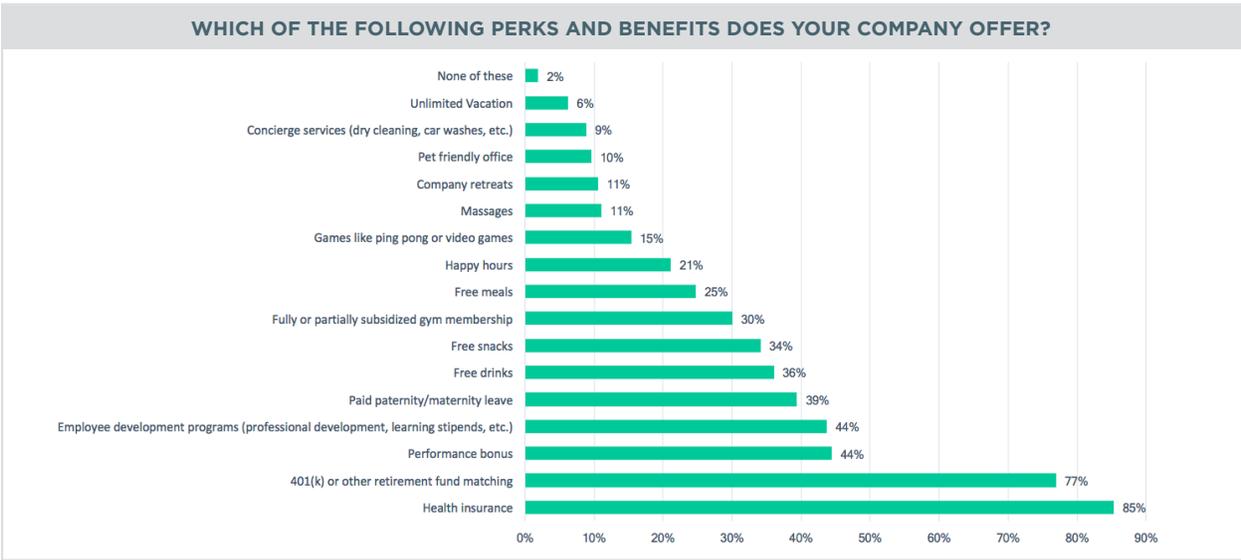


Yes, scheduling, managing calendars, and coordinating travel are still a part of the job for nearly all the Executive Assistants we surveyed, but that’s really just the baseline function. For most EAs, their core responsibilities include a lot more.

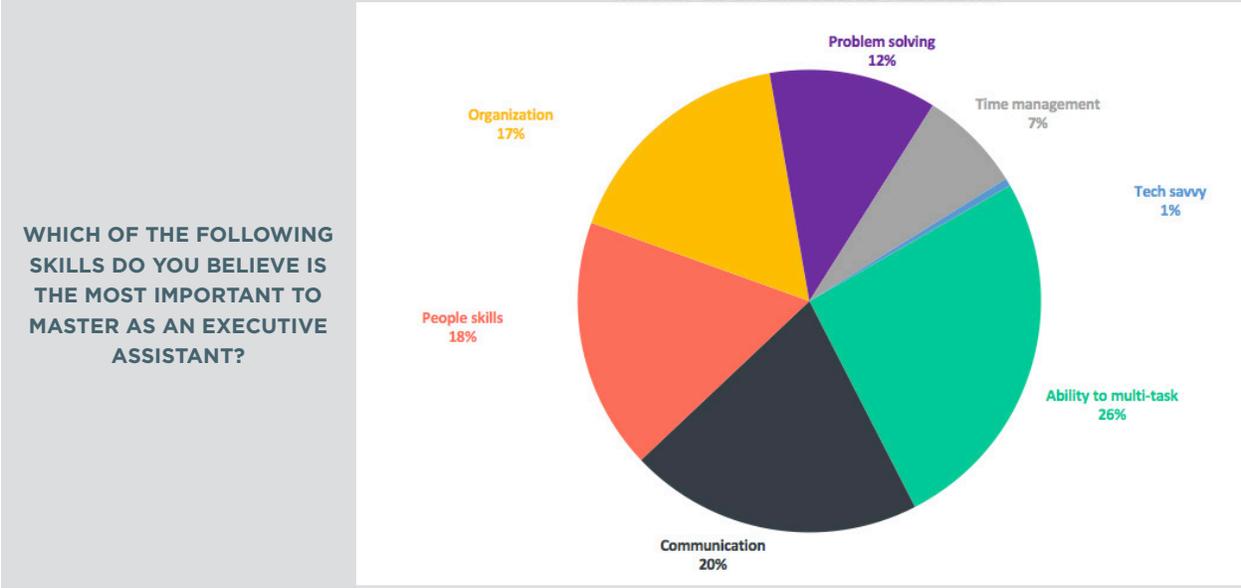
Consider that a whopping 90% reported that event planning fell on their plate. This means that in addition to the daily task of prioritizing an executive’s busy schedule, the vast majority of Executive Assistants are doing things like planning company holiday parties and team building activities. More than 70% of respondents also perform personal assistant duties, meaning that the support they provide their bosses extends beyond the bounds of the workplace.

Most Executive Assistants also perform a variety of functions that used to be handled by other departments. More than half of respondents executed duties as varied as onboarding and offboarding (an HR function); setting up phones, wifi, and computers (IT); and parking, maintenance, and perks management (Operations). The most common perks that Executive Assistants now manage include free snacks (26%), meals (19%), and offsites like happy hours (19%).

# THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ROLE IN 2018



The only category that the vast majority of Executive Assistants didn't touch was payroll - only 16% told us that this was part of their main job responsibilities. So in a job with challenges as varied as this one, what's the most important skill?



Want to become an extremely effective Executive Assistant?  
 Master strategic multi-tasking and communication

 **Click to Tweet**

# THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ROLE IN 2018

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Multi-tasking took the top spot, with 26% of respondents saying it was the one skill most crucial to their success. This was followed by communication with 20%.

## ACTION STEP

### Learn About Your Business

Today's Executive Assistants are expected to offer strategic counsel. Learn about your business so that you can give your executive advice they can use.

Audit classes at a local university, take an online business course from Coursera, or check out this [list of top business books](#) at your local library.

Better yet, leverage the expertise in your company with a tactic that's a lot more fun - lunch!

- *Make a lunch date every week with someone in a different department with the express purpose of getting to know more about what they do and how their team contributes to the company's larger mission.*
- *Really dig in. Ask questions like, what has been your team's biggest wins? Biggest challenges? Which of our competitors keep you up at night? If you had a magic wand, what would you change about the company overnight? The industry?*
- *After your conversation, write down the two or three biggest takeaways from your conversation. Keep these in a spreadsheet for easy reference.*
- *Not only is this a great way to network within your company, but before long you'll have built the foundational knowledge you need to provide valuable insights to your boss.*

# THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ROLE IN 2018

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## ACTION STEP

### Practice “Strategic Multitasking”

Strictly speaking, “multitasking” is a myth. Our brains just aren’t wired to perform more than one high level task at a time.

But Executive Assistants aren’t wrong in saying that multitasking is one of the most important skills to master. This apparent contradiction speaks to the fact Executive Assistants are almost always working on multiple projects simultaneously, and managing them concurrently is key to their success.

The trick is to practice what we call “strategic multi-tasking,” and there are two parts to it

- **First**, combine lower level tasks. Remember how we said that performing two high level tasks at the same time just isn’t possible? That still stands, but lower level tasks - the kind that don’t require constant focus or critical thinking - can be performed simultaneously.

*These are things like waiting on hold, sending confirmation emails and calendar notifications, or filing. Pairing these tasks together helps you get more done and frees up time and energy for higher level tasks - the one’s that require singular focus.*

- The **second** part is all about switching between projects. Start by identifying your most important projects - usually either the timeliest or the ones that will have the biggest impact on the business. Because these are usually higher level activities, you’ll have to dedicate focus time to them.

Once your priorities are set, use task management tools like [Trello](#) or [Asana](#) to move seamlessly between projects. These flexible platforms enable you to jump from project to project while keeping all the relevant details, stakeholders, deadlines and information accurate and organized.

# THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ROLE IN 2018

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Limiting distractions is also a huge factor when it comes to strategic multitasking. [Chelsey Wagemaker](#), who has more than 16 years experience combined Assistant and Admin experience, shares this tip for managing multiple projects:

*I actually have a sheet at my desk listing my top 5 priorities. Then it's just figuring out where people fall.*

*If [colleagues] come to me and they say,*

*"I've got this project," then I can reference the sheet and show what I'm doing today... [I can tell them], "This is my first priority. You're going to be somewhere here. I'll get to you either right this afternoon, end of day, end of week."*

*That way they know what's going on, so nobody's stressing about things that haven't been done.*

*A lot of it for me is just that communication with the team too, so while I'm trying to prioritize they need to know my priorities as well.*

## Use The Right Tools to Make The Basic Functions a Breeze

Scheduling and arranging travel are still part of the job. Make those as easy as possible by taking advantage of all the apps and tools that simplify these functions. Here's a list of our favorites:

- [Calendly](#) - one click scheduling and calendar management
- [YouCanBook.me](#) - simple online scheduling and a favorite of hot startups like Box, Prezzi, and Shopify
- [TripIt](#) - a great way to book travel, make itineraries, and access them wherever you are
- [Concur](#) - makes expense reporting and reimbursement a breeze
- [Expensify](#) - their tagline says it all - expense reports that don't suck!
- [Trello](#) - flexible, easy to use task management software
- [Boomerang](#) - automated email scheduling
- [Onelogin](#) - password management made simple
- [Google Drive](#) - collaborate with colleagues on documents, reports, spreadsheets, and more



# CHALLENGES & PRIORITIES

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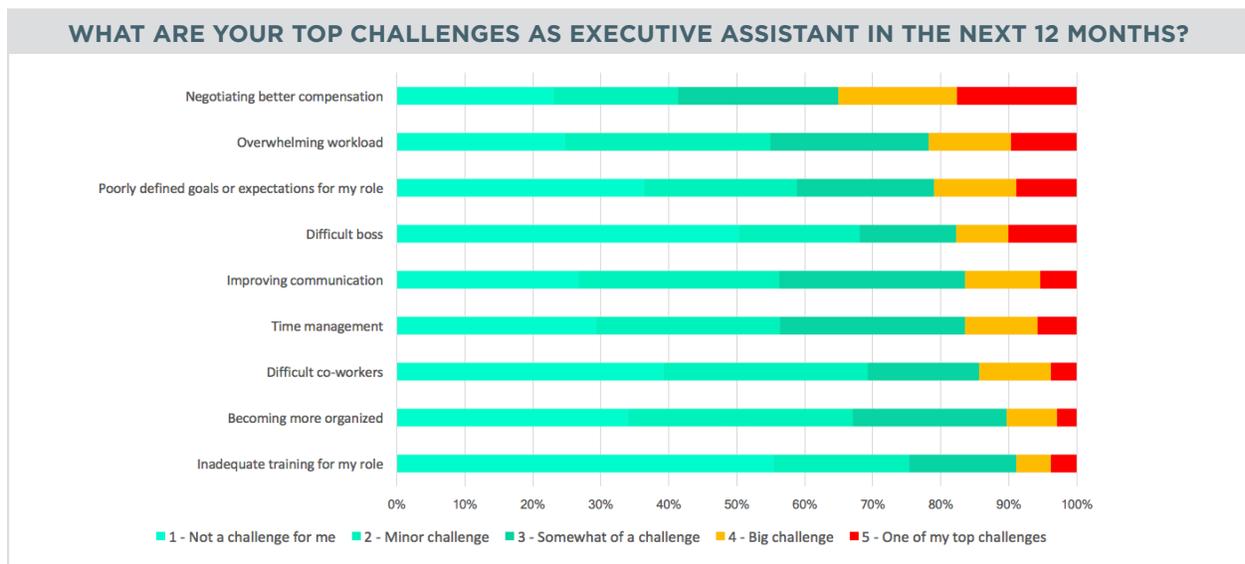


# CHALLENGES & PRIORITIES

Looking ahead at the next year, we found that the top challenges reflected both the changing scope of the job and the changing job market.

According to our respondents, Executive Assistants rated “negotiating better compensation” their top challenge. This might sound strange considering that as a whole, Executive Assistants are a relatively well compensated bunch (more on this in the Compensation and Benefits chapter below).

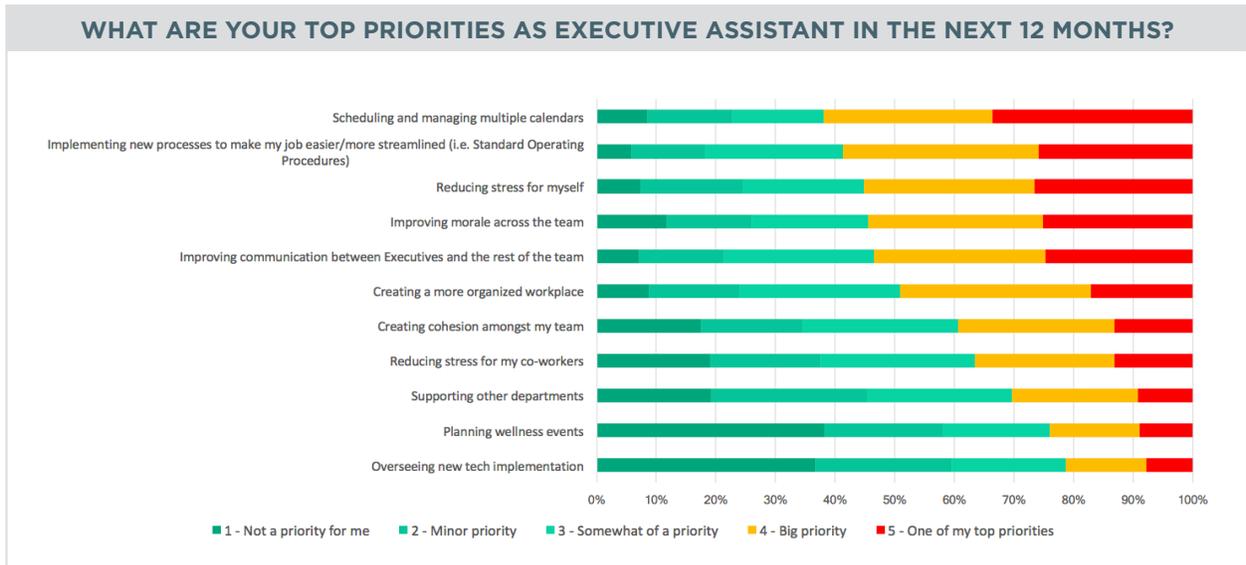
When you consider this fact in context, it’s not surprising. A dip in the number of new Executive Assistant jobs means that individuals in the role are at a disadvantaged negotiating position. Instead of raising salaries to keep talented EAs, companies can hire from the influx of available talent - or simply assign a vacant position to an existing EA.



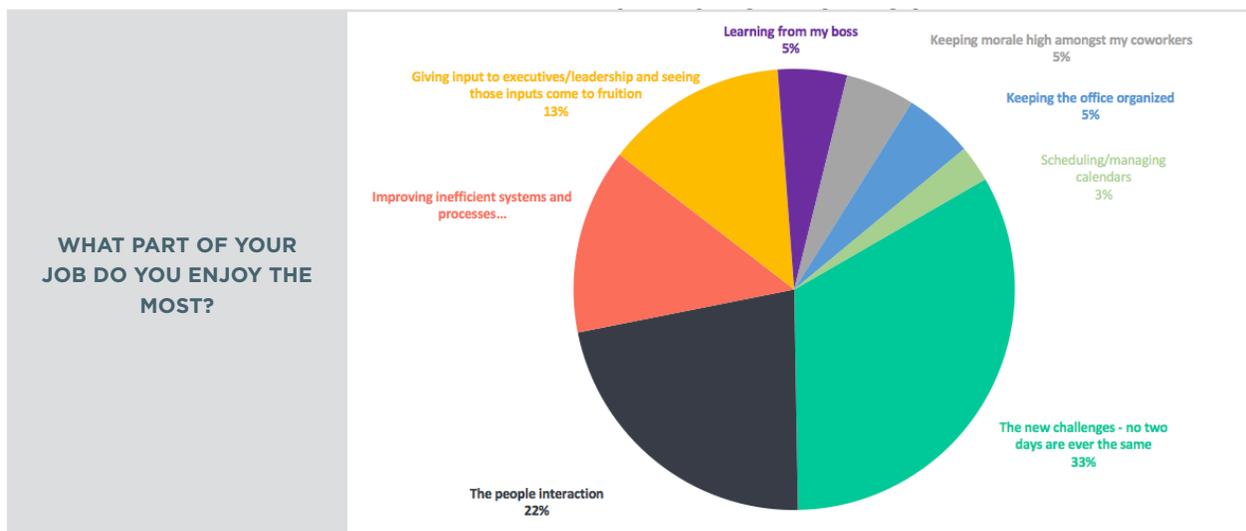
Which leads us to the second biggest challenge - an overwhelming workload. Again, this isn’t totally shocking given both the role’s expanded footprint within the organization, and the trend of assigning three or even four executives to a single assistant. More responsibilities plus more bosses equals overwhelm for many EAs.

Priorities moving forward reflect this new reality too. When asked to name their top priorities, our Executive Assistants answered “scheduling and managing multiple calendars,” and “implementing new processes to make my job easier/more streamlined.” Again, these priorities reflect a need to mitigate the challenges of multiple bosses and the potential for overwhelm.

# CHALLENGES & PRIORITIES



Here's the thing - as long as they don't become overwhelming, Executive Assistants thrive in challenging conditions. When asked what they loved about their job, most responded that it was "the new challenges - no two days are ever the same." The Executive Assistant role is dynamic, fast-paced, and challenging, and it's a big part of the reason that so many Executive Assistants love it.

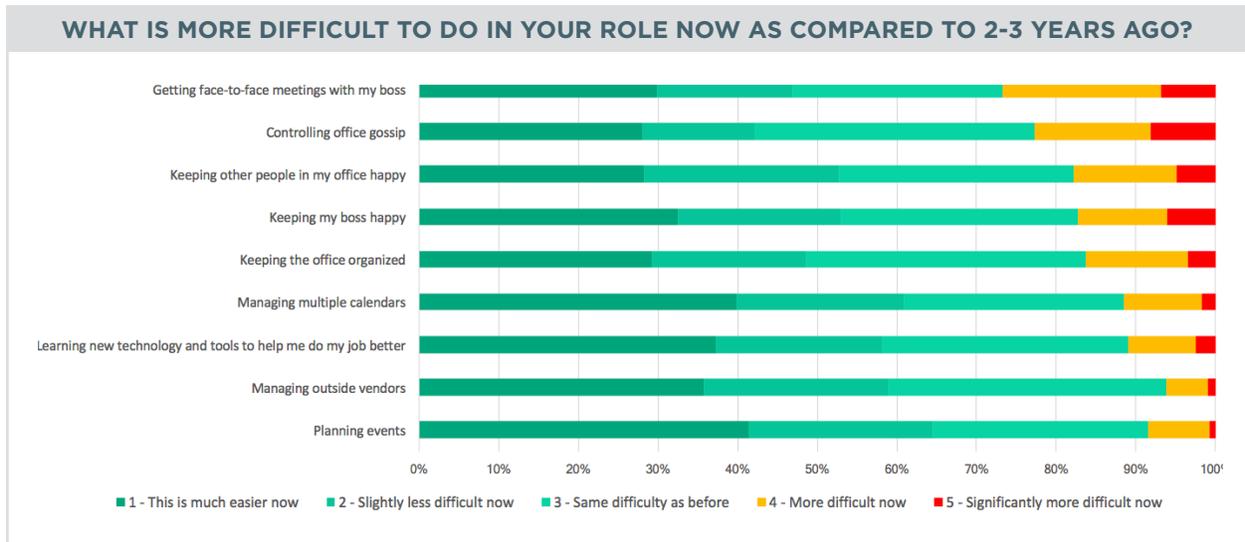


Why do Executive Assistants love their job? No two days are ever the same :)

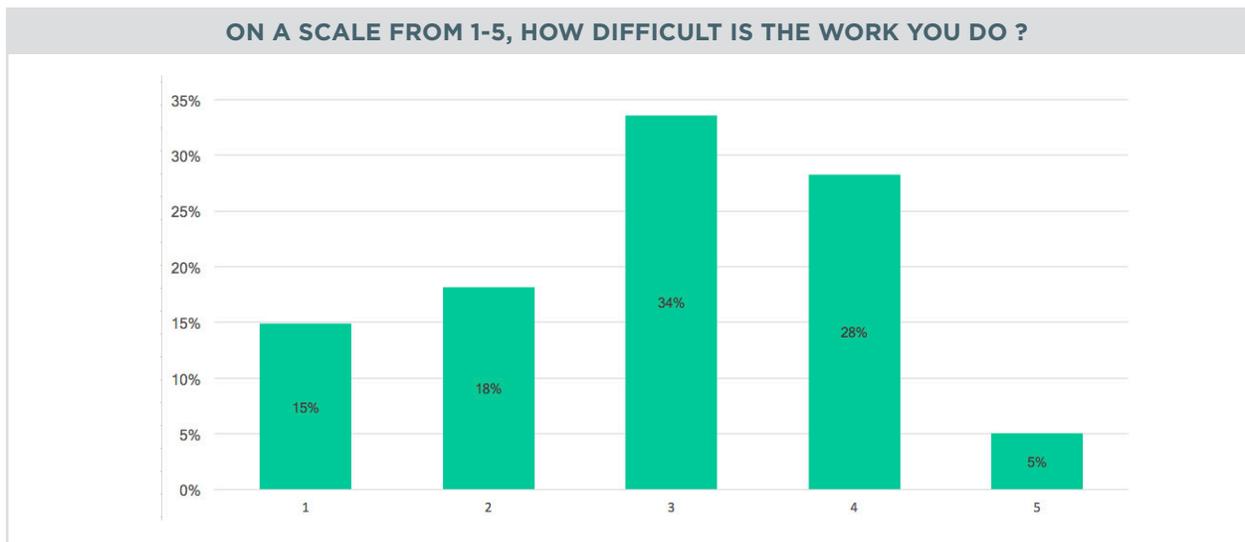


# CHALLENGES & PRIORITIES

What's different than a few years ago? Executive Assistants today are more connected than ever before, and it's hard to turn it off. When asked which aspect of the job they had the most difficulty with today compared to just 2-3 years back, "disconnecting outside of work" was the number one response.



Despite the variety of functions that Executive Assistants perform and the challenges they face, most Executive Assistants don't find their work particularly difficult. When asked to rate the difficulty of their work on a scale of 1-5, most (34%) rated it a 3. Only 5% rated their job a 5 out of 5 on the difficulty scale.



# CHALLENGES & PRIORITIES

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## ACTION STEP

### 1. Learn to “Manage Up”

One of the many ironies of high-level leadership is that in order to perform, executives need to know how they’re being perceived, yet the higher up the ladder they go the less likely they are to receive honest feedback.

It’s one of the reasons that Executive Assistant role can be so important. You might be one of the few people who your boss can look to for candid feedback.

Of course, this can be daunting. Here’s how to “manage up” without rankling your boss.

- **Ask first.** *Unsolicited feedback can be off-putting and might set the wrong tone. To avoid this, ask if your boss if she might be open to feedback before giving it. You can say something like “Would it be helpful to you for me to give you feedback at certain points in this project?” or “I’m likely to have a unique perspective on what we’re doing, would you like some feedback about how the project is going?”*
- **Frame your feedback positively and pro-business.** *Make sure your boss knows your intentions are to help your team hit its goals. Communicate your feedback in a way that shows how it will positively impact the organization.*
- **Don’t sugarcoat it.** *In the long run, ignoring the truth to spare your boss’s feelings or to avoid an unpleasant reaction is actually handing your boss more problems. All you’re doing is prolonging - and complicating - the inevitable.*

This article from the [Harvard Business Review](#) has additional tips for managing up.

# CHALLENGES & PRIORITIES

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## 2. Negotiate Like a Boss

Negotiation is an art that will serve you well in all areas of life. For Executive Assistants, of course, these skills will help you earn more at work. [This podcast from SnackNation CEO Sean Kelly](#) has practical tips so that you can optimize outcomes on both sides.

## 3. Counter Overwhelm by Upping Your Efficiency

The best way to deal with the feeling of being overwhelmed is to get a better handle on your team. Here are some quick tips:

- **Plan your week in advance.** *Start each Monday off with intention by laying out exactly what you need to accomplish.*
- **Eliminate Distractions.** *The smartphone is perhaps the world's most perfect distraction machine. Set your phone to grayscale, turn off push notifications, and even put it in your desk when you can. You'll see your productivity skyrocket.*
- **Don't sugarcoat it.** *In the long run, ignoring the truth to spare your boss's feelings or to avoid an unpleasant reaction is actually handing your boss more problems. All you're doing is prolonging - and complicating - the inevitable.*

For more ideas, check out our article on [time management tips](#).



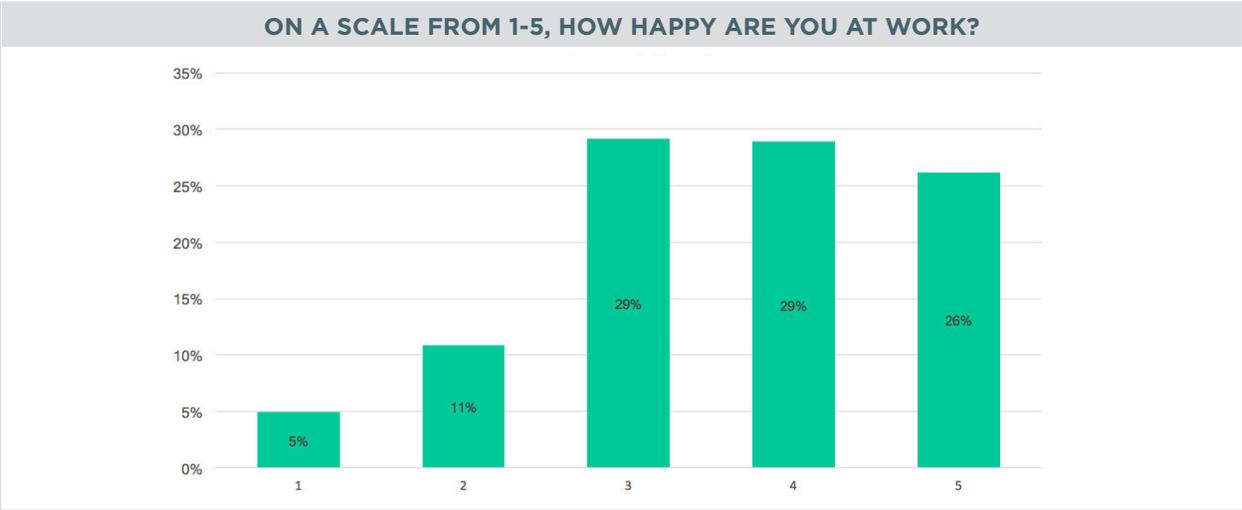
# **HAPPINESS & ENGAGEMENT**

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# HAPPINESS AND ENGAGEMENT

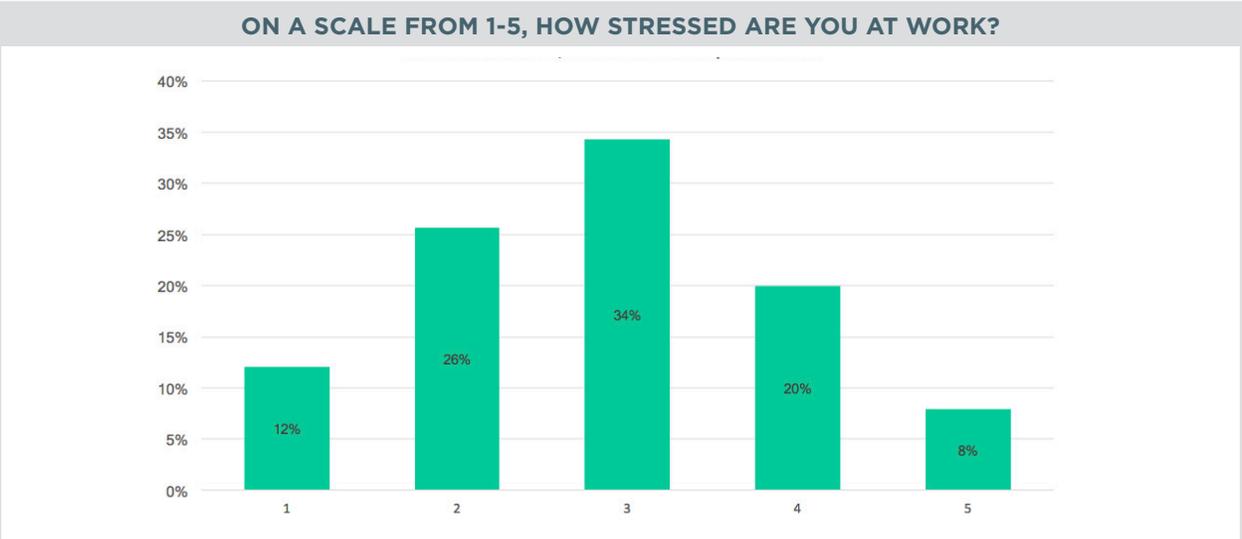
Multiple bosses, high level execs, an overwhelming workload - there's no doubt that Executive Assistants have a tough job. So how is this affecting their morale?

We asked Executive Assistants how happy they were at work, and the results were encouraging. A majority (55%) reported being "happy" "or very happy." Only 12% rated their happiness below a 3 out of 5. In terms of stress and work/life balance, Executive



Assistants likewise mostly have things under control.

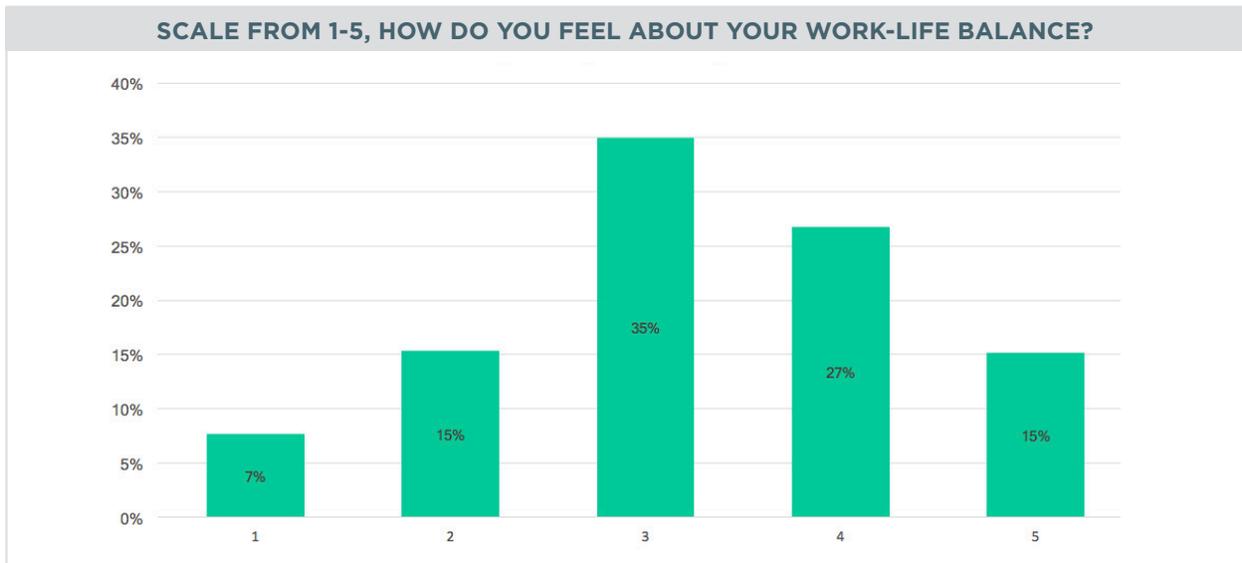
When asked to rate their stress level, most Executive Assistants appear to be operating at healthy stress levels, responding with a 1, 2, or 3 out of five 72% of the time. However, 28% rated their stress level a decidedly unhealthy 4 or 5.



# HAPPINESS AND ENGAGEMENT

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Most, however, felt like their work life balance could be improved. 58% rated their work-life balance was a 3 or lower out of 5. Only 15% gave their work life balance a perfect rating of 5 out of 5.



This all leads us to the question of engagement. While not synonymous, employee happiness and engagement are definitely linked.

What's the difference? Employee happiness is just that - how happy someone is in their current work situation.

Employee engagement, on the other hand, is the extent to which your employees are personally involved in the success of the business. Engagement determines how likely an employee is to donate her discretionary time (i.e., voluntarily put in extra hours), and can be measured by how willing she is to recommend her workplace to a friend.

An engaged team can be a major competitive advantage. [Studies show](#) that companies with high engagement consistently outperform their competition in a number of categories, including profits, productivity, and retention.

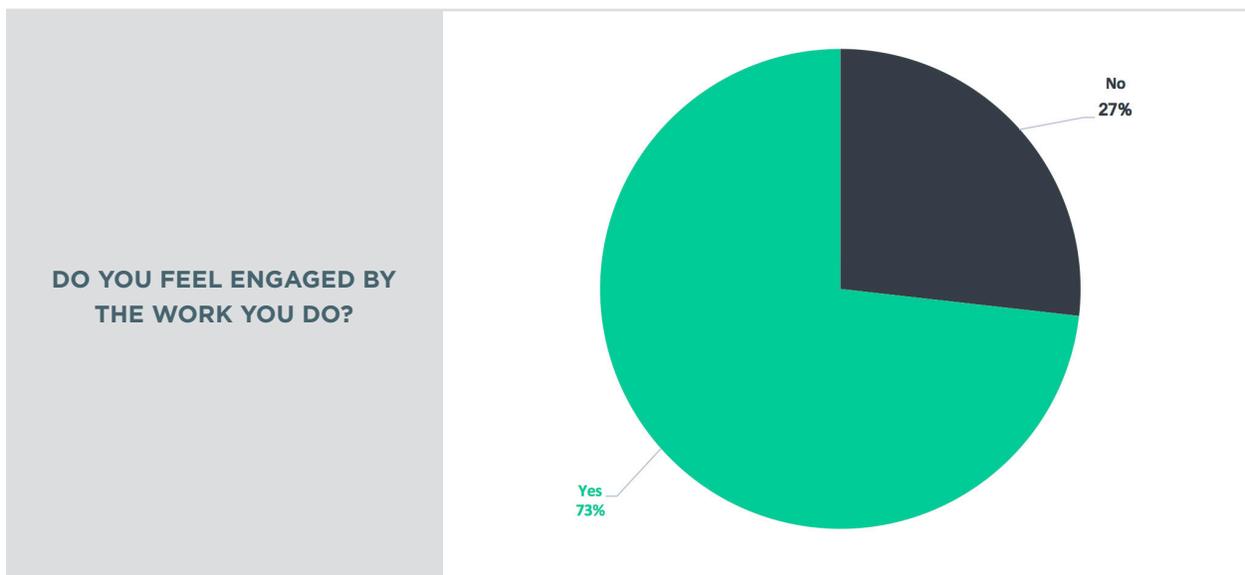
# HAPPINESS AND ENGAGEMENT

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Happiness is also one of the driving factors for engagement, and is usually a good barometer for how engaged a workplace is. But while engaged employees are almost always happy, happy employees aren't necessarily engaged. Here's a quick example that illustrates the difference:

Consider the well-paid employee (call him Bartholomew) who waltzes into the office at 10:30 am every day, spends the day surfing the web and chatting with friendly co-workers. Bartholomew eats the free snacks and drinks the free coffee, and does maybe an hour of actual work before departing at 4:45 pm on the dot. I'd be willing to bet that Bartholomew is happy (giddy even!) with his job, but under no interpretation could you call him engaged.

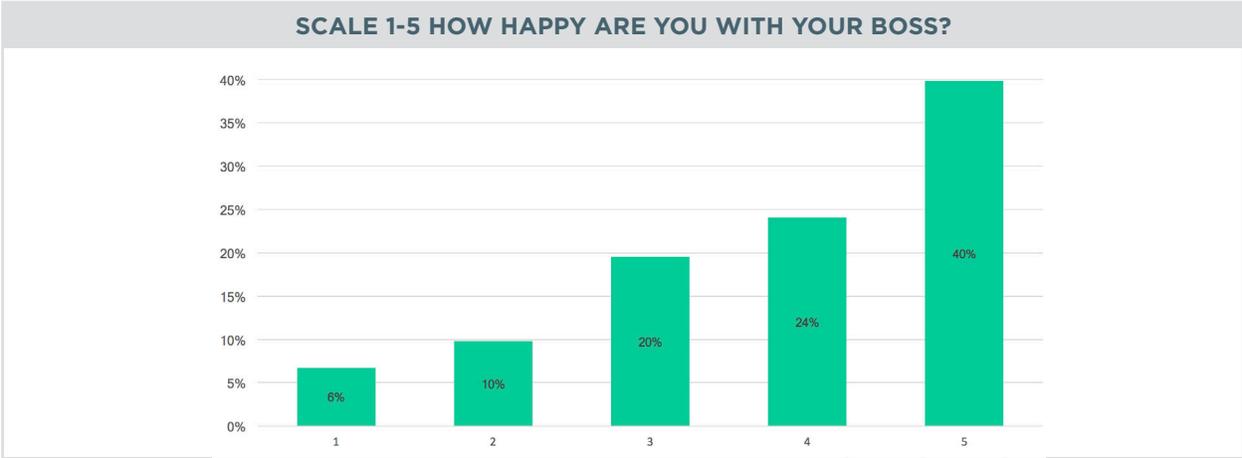
How do Executive Assistants stack up? Executive Assistants turn out to be an engaged group as well. When asked if they felt engaged in their current role, nearly three quarters responded affirmatively.



What's driving this? Good bosses, for one thing.

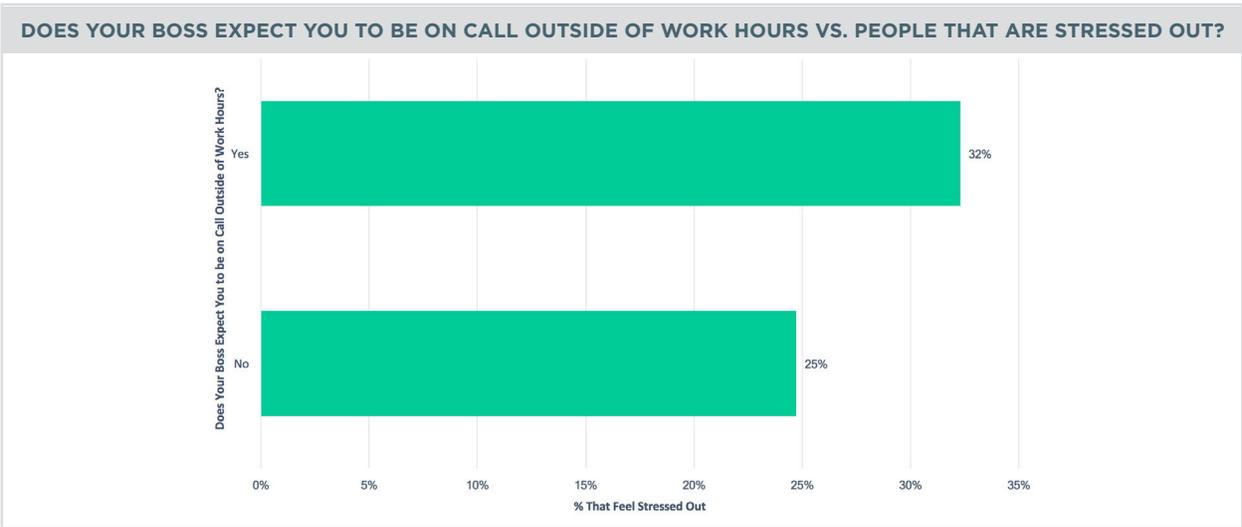
Executive Assistants work closely with their bosses - probably more than any other role in the org. A bad relationship with your boss can make for an unhappy day-to-day.

# HAPPINESS AND ENGAGEMENT



Luckily, most Executive Assistants are extremely happy with their bosses. 40% rated their happiness level a perfect five out of five, and 64% rated it above average.

The ability to disconnect from work had a big impact on how Executive Assistants felt about their bosses. Recall that 52% of Executive Assistants are expected to be on call outside of work hours. We also found that Executive Assistants who are expected to be on call are 28% more likely to report feeling stressed out than Executive Assistants who are not expected to be on call.



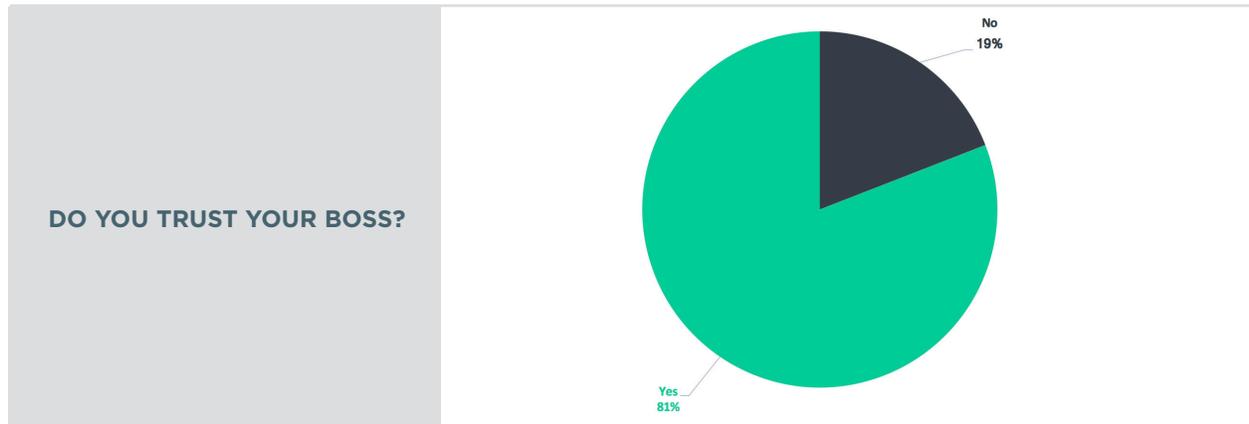
EA's with bosses who expect them to be on call outside of work hours are 28% more likely to feel stressed out



# HAPPINESS AND ENGAGEMENT

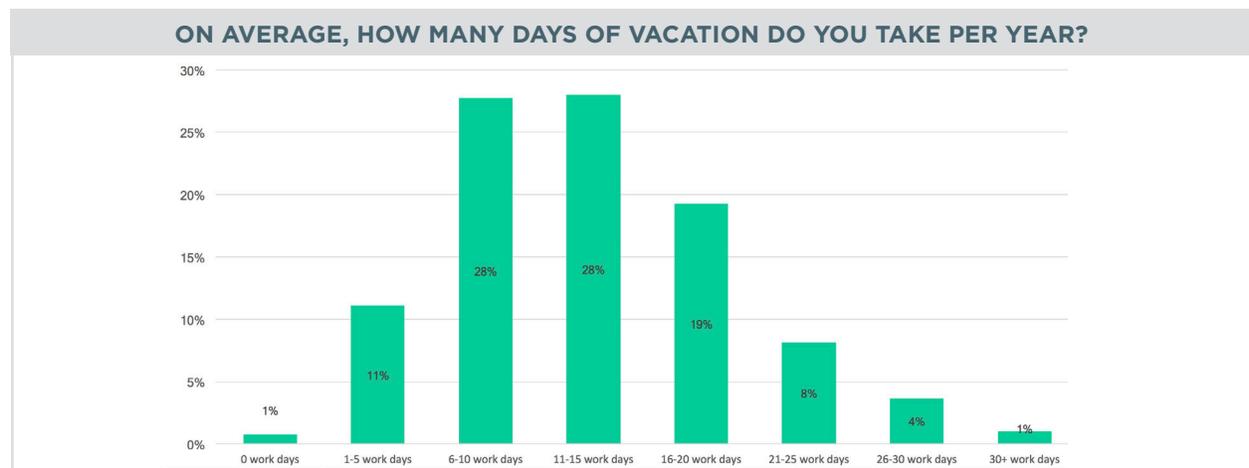
Trust is another factor. In working relationships, trust is an indicator of respect and competence, and helps engender positive feelings towards work.

An overwhelming majority of Executive Assistants (81%) told us that they also trust their bosses.



We've also seen that Executive Assistants enjoy a challenge, so it might not come as a surprise that the difficulty of their work factored into engagement. The more difficult the work, the more likely our Executive Assistants were to feel engaged by it.

With all the pressure of the Executive Assistant role comes a huge potential for burnout. You'd think that Executive Assistants would take full advantage of their vacation, but a full 40% take just 10 or fewer vacation days per year - well under the average allotment of 16.



Which is a shame. In our survey, those Executive Assistants who took plenty of vacation reported being less stressed and a lot happier at work. The least stressed and happiest were those who took 21 - 25 days off annually.

# HAPPINESS AND ENGAGEMENT

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## **ACTION STEP**

### **Seek Challenges**

Our respondents told us that they are happier and more engaged when they're challenged by their work. If you're not challenged, tell your boss! Get to know more about your business, either by setting meetings with other departments, or by reading up on your industry. Identify projects you think would benefit the business and come up with a plan to execute against. Not only will you impress your boss, you might just fall back in love with your job.

### **Make the Case for Unlimited Vacation**

Only 6% of our respondents said that unlimited vacation was an option for them. But unlimited vacation - a results-driven policy that grants unlimited paid time off as long as goals are met - is becoming more and more popular at places like Netflix, LinkedIn, and Hubspot.

Taking the necessary time off to actively rejuvenate your mind and spirit will result in a happier, more productive you. And because extra time off is contingent upon goals being met, your boss will rest assured that productivity won't suffer.



# COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

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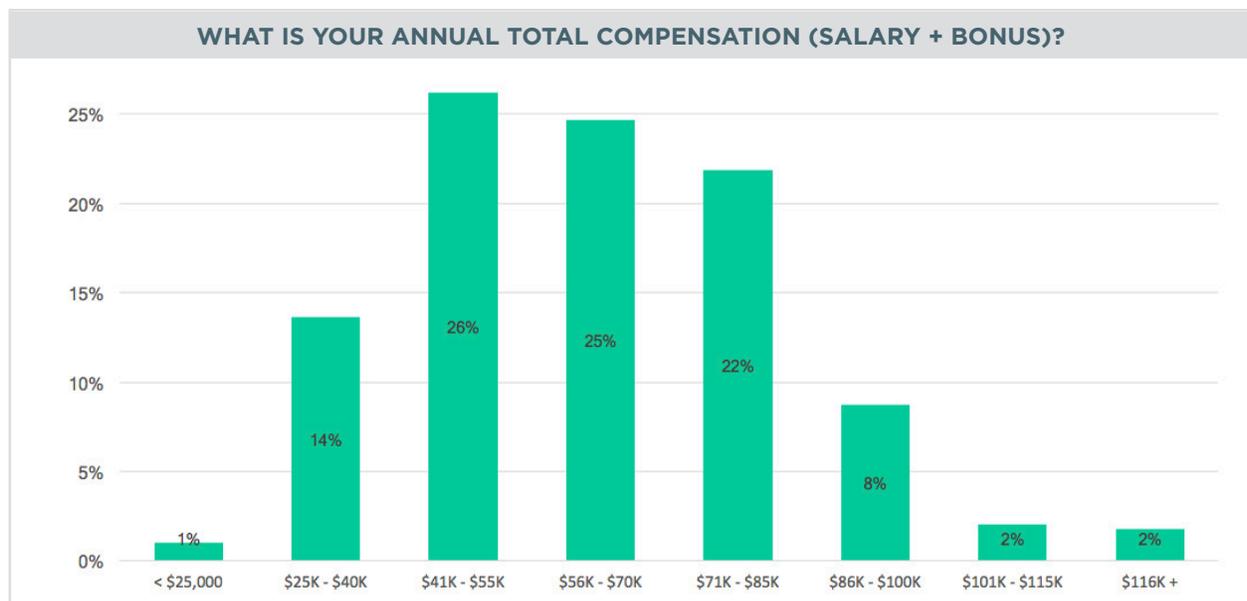
# COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

So far we've found that Executive Assistants are highly skilled pros in a demanding role.

The good news is that they're rewarded with relatively higher pay. According to our data, **the average Executive Assistant earns \$63,349 each year** (salary and bonus). That's nearly 32% higher than the national average of \$48,098 ([according to the Social Security Administration's most recent average wage index](#)).

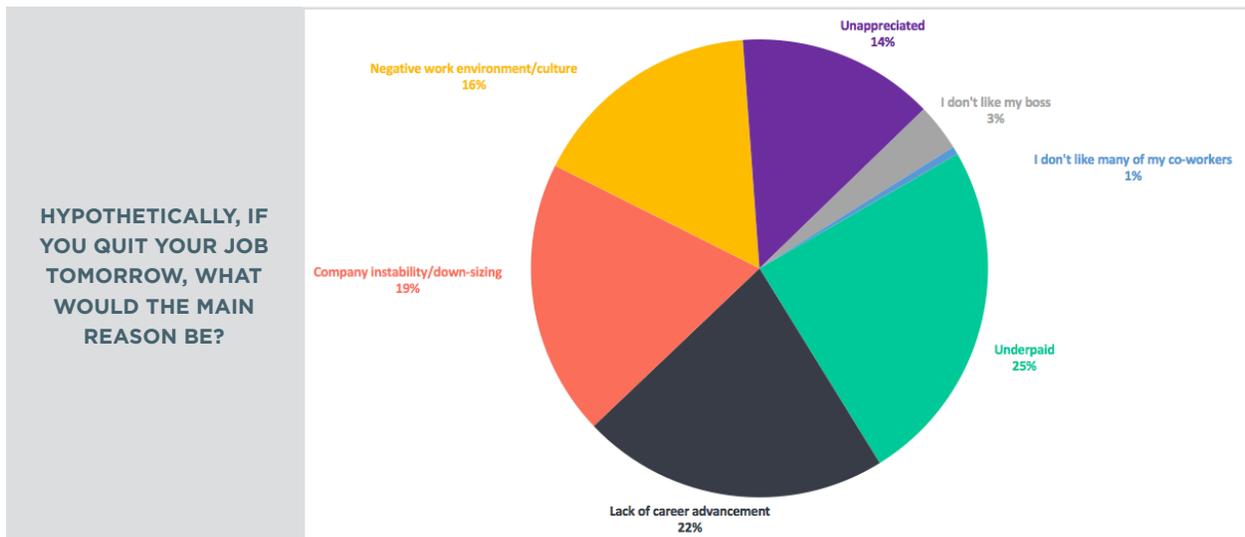
The biggest segment of responses were in the \$41-55K range (26%). When asked if they believed they were being paid fairly, most (62%) said that they were.

Don't worry if you're scratching your head about the fact Executive Assistants simultaneously believe that they're paid fairly and that negotiating for higher pay is the biggest challenge they face. This only seems like a contradiction - the perception of fair pay actually makes it harder - not easier - to ask for more money. If you already think your pay is fair, you might risk looking ungrateful if suddenly bring up the idea of a higher salary. That's not to say you don't deserve, it just means negotiating for it might be a little more challenging.

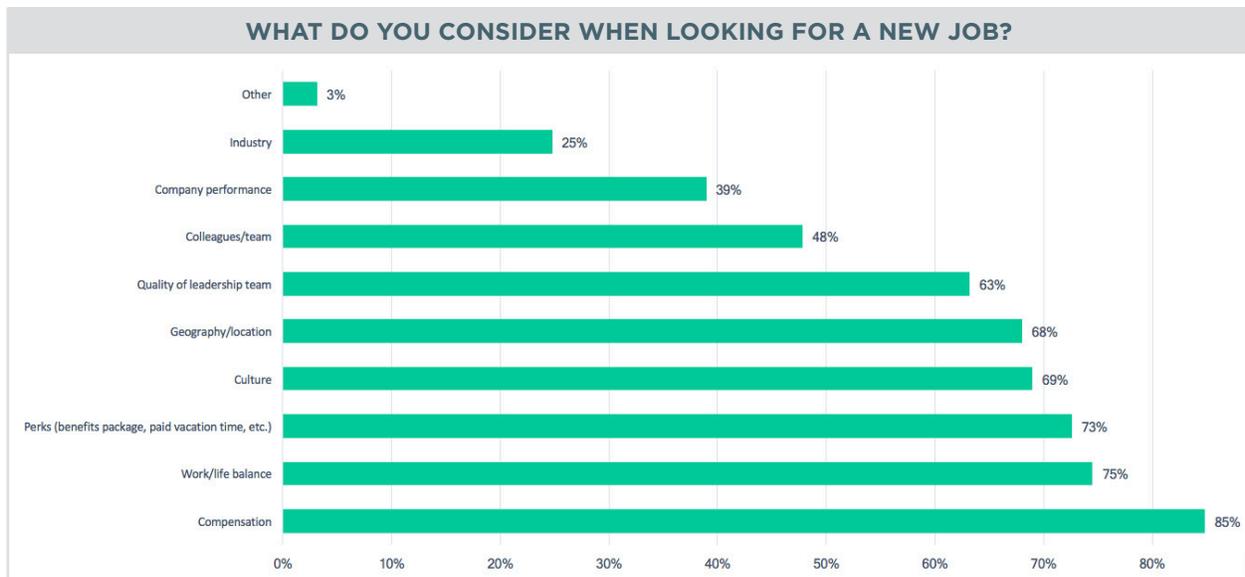


It's a good thing too. When asked why they might look for another job, compensation topped the list with a full quarter of respondents naming it the main reason.

# COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

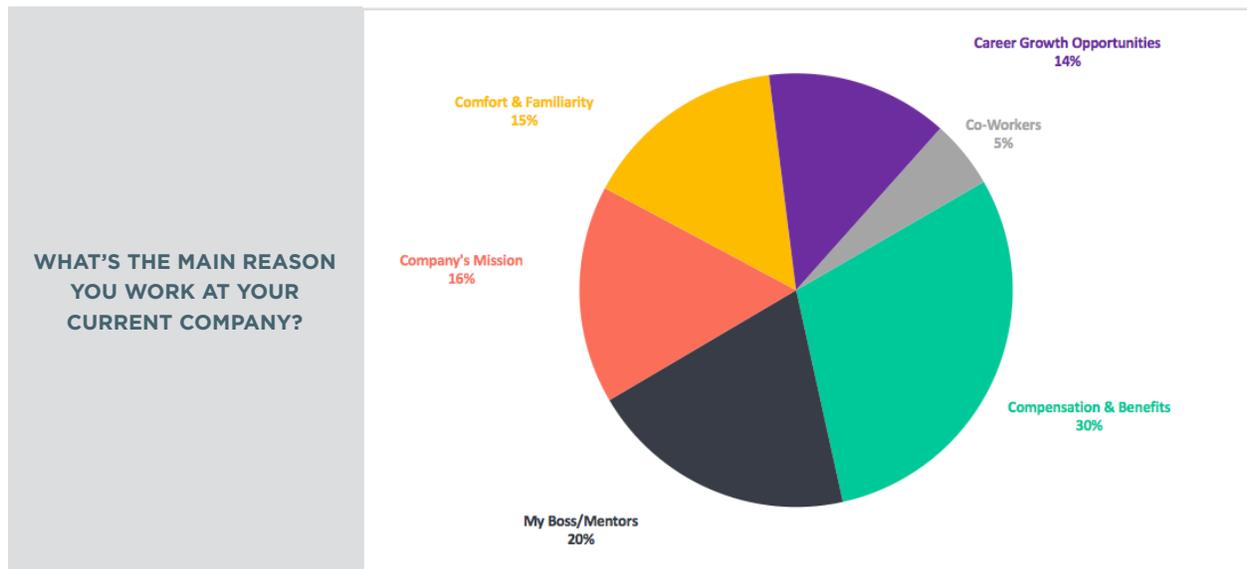


Compensation was also the most common response when it came to evaluating new opportunities, with 85% of Executive Assistants naming it a factor. This was followed by work/life balance (75%), and perks and benefits (73%). Company culture also featured high on the list of factors, with 69% of respondents reporting that they considered it when looking for a new job.

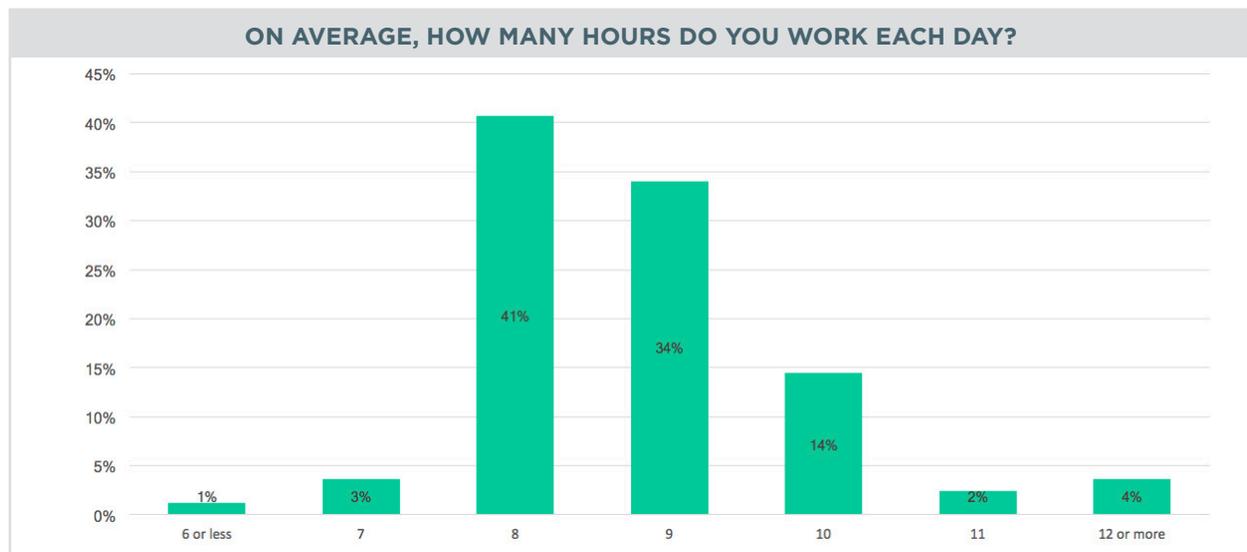


And while things like boss, company mission, and familiarity figured high on the list, compensation and benefits was the number one reason Executive Assistants work at their current companies.

# COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

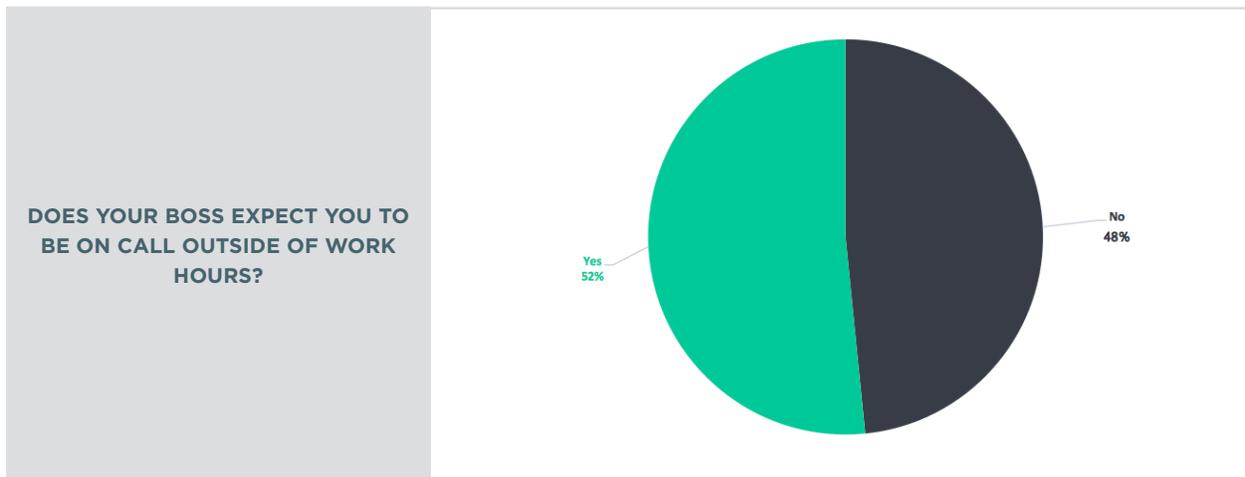


Work hours mostly fell within in the standard work day, but a large percentage are putting in extra time. Most respondents worked eight (41%) or nine (34%) hours every day. However, one in five reported working ten or more hours each day.



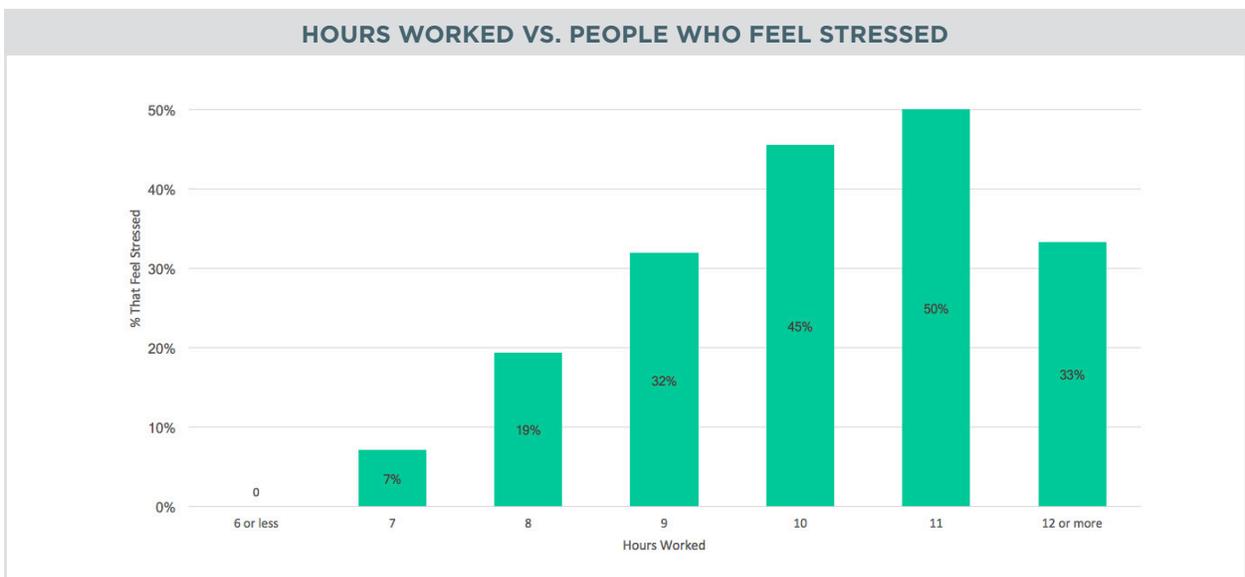
A majority (52%) also told us that their boss expects them to be on call outside of work hours, effectively extending the workday and making it harder to separate work and home life. 28% of respondents also said that their boss contacts them outside of work hours or on weekend with at least twice each week.

# COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS



On top of that, 41% of Executive Assistants commute more than 30 minutes one way every day. An alarming 11% commuted more than an hour. Compare that to the average one way commute of 26 minutes.

For the most part, there was a direct correlation between hours worked and how stressed our Executive Assistants were - the more they worked, the more stress they experience. The one exception were assistants who worked 12 or more hours each day, which can perhaps be attributed to the fact that these Executive Assistants have more time to check things off their to-do list.



# COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

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## **ACTION STEP**

### **Disconnect at Least Once a week**

Make a deal with your boss to designate at least one day a week technology free. This might be on the weekend, but could also be a weekday if you emphasize focus.

Set firm boundaries and defend them. Executives are usually A-type personalities, and they will encroach on your personal time, even if they don't mean to. But only if you let them! Remind them that burnout is bad for both of you in the long run.



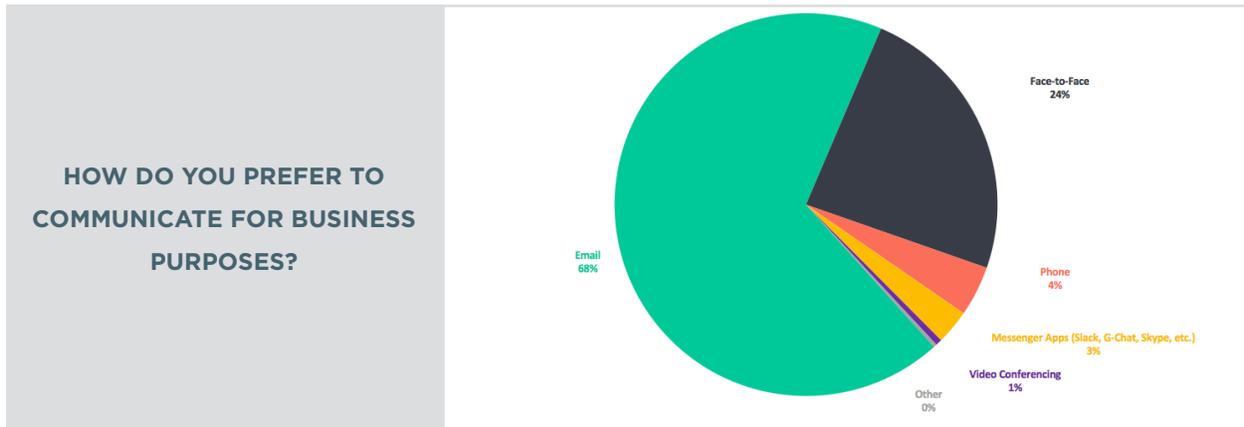
# COMMUNICATION & FEEDBACK

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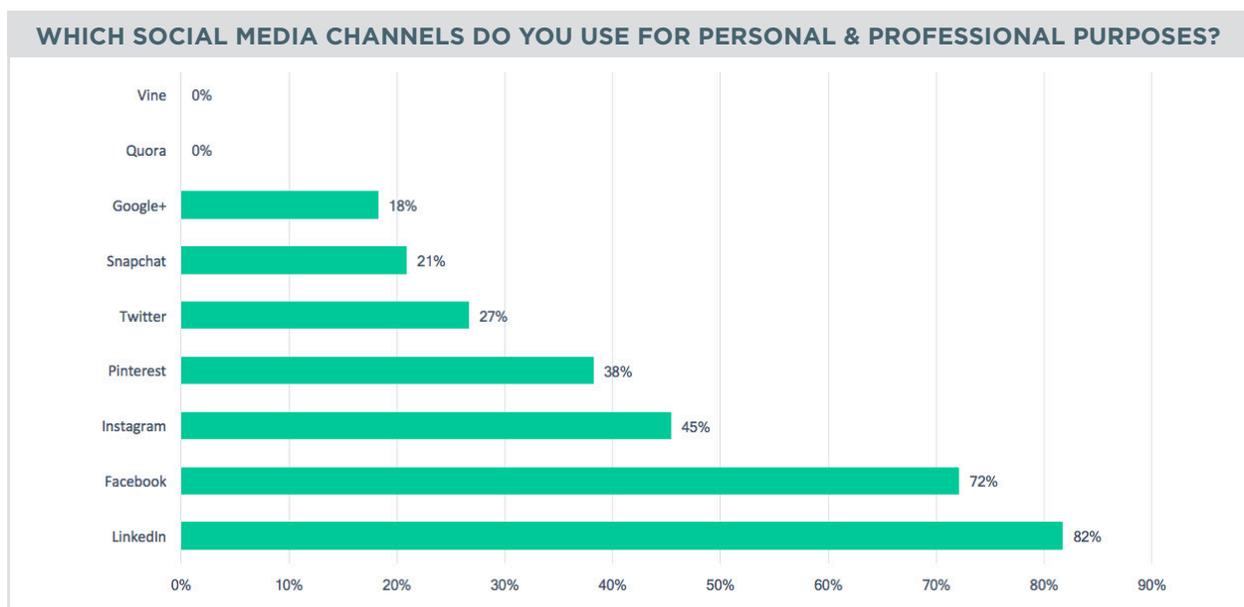
# COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Communication is an essential Executive Assistant skill. In fact, 20% of our Executive Assistants told us it was the most important skill to master, making it second only to multi-tasking in overall importance.

When it comes to preferred methods of communication, email still rules the roost: 68% of Executive Assistants named it their number one choice for professional communication. Face-to-face communication came in a distant second at 24%. Enterprise messenger apps like Slack appear to barely make a dent in the Executive Assistant world, with just 3% of respondents preferring them over email.



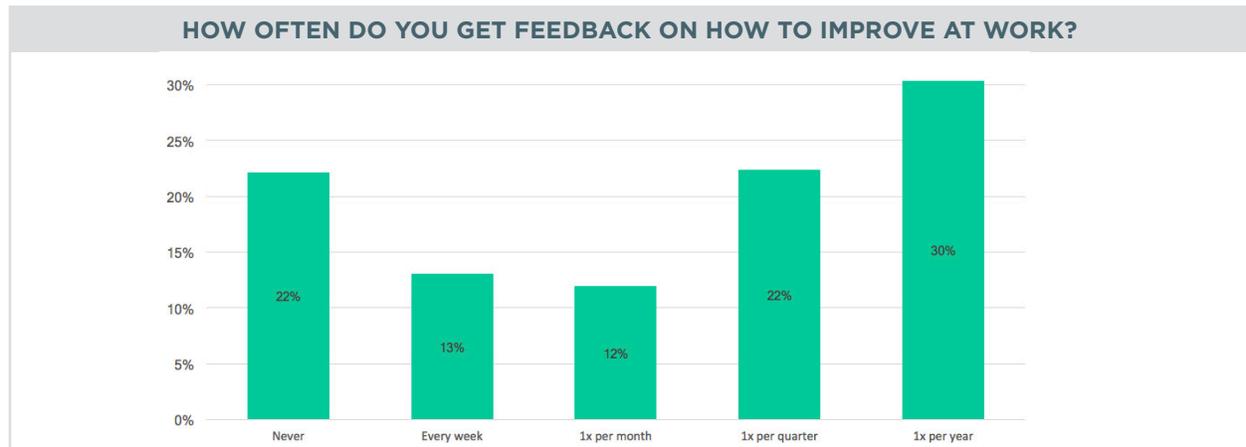
LinkedIn was by far the most ubiquitous social platform, with 82% naming it their preferred channel for both personal and professional use. Facebook wasn't far behind (72%), but Google+ was the least used with just 18% of Executive Assistants choosing it over other platforms.



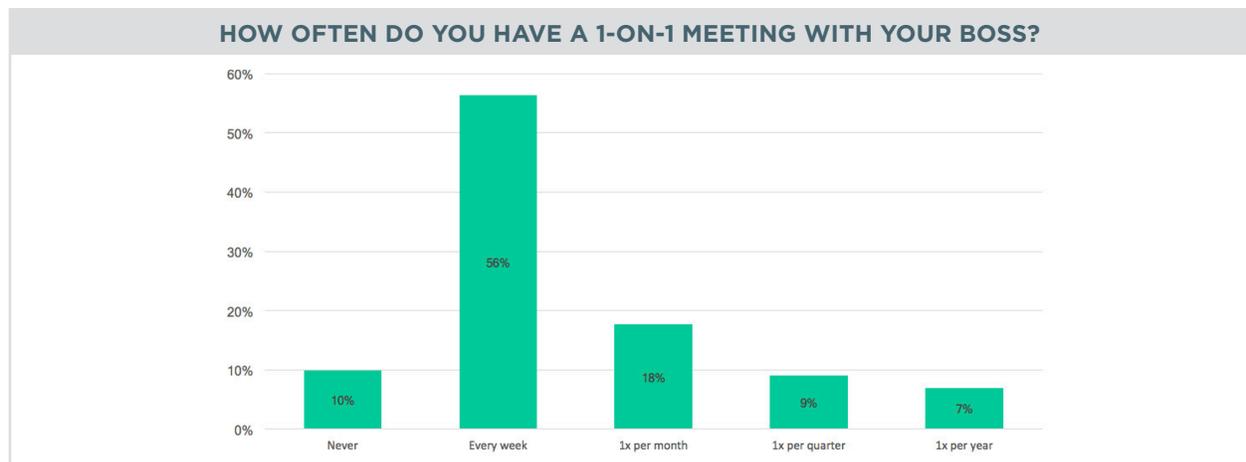
# COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Despite the emphasis on communication, giving and receiving feedback turned out to be a complex subject for Executive Assistants.

Executive Assistants told us they weren't getting enough constructive feedback.



When asked how often they received feedback on how to improve in the role, the most common response was once a year (30%) - most likely in their annual review. More than one in five reported that they never receive feedback.



This was true despite the fact that there were ample opportunities for this feedback to take place. A clear majority (56%) of Executive Assistants meet with their boss every single week.

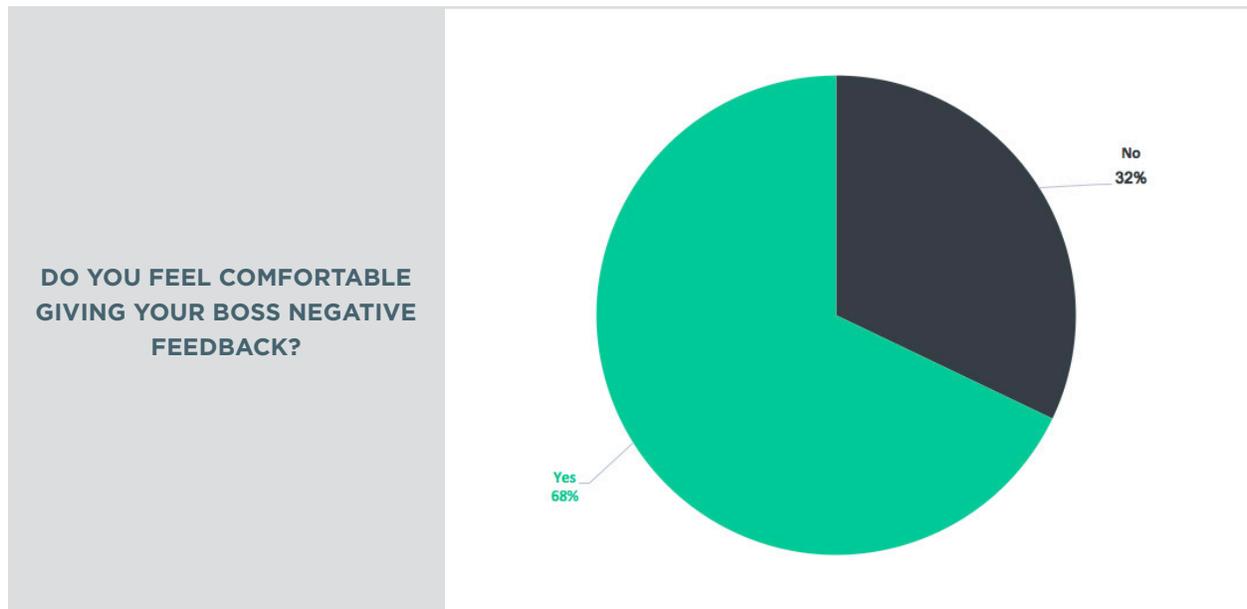
Big opportunity for Executive Assistants: Ask your boss for consistent feedback on how to improve



# COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

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Despite high levels of trust and happiness, and ample face time with their boss, 32% (nearly one in three) of respondents said that they don't feel comfortable giving their boss negative feedback. (For tips to get over this challenge, see our section on Top Challenges and Priorities.)



## ACTION STEP

### Push for Regular Feedback Sessions

Again, feedback will only come if you ask for it. Let your boss know that you want to improve by asking for quarterly or monthly feedback. More than likely, she'll be impressed at your initiative and desire to get better. Plus you'll become a better professional for it.

# COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

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## **Step Up your Social Media Skills**

LinkedIn is by far the most important platform for Executive Assistants, but most people don't maximize the platform's capabilities. Here's how to make the most out of LinkedIn and Facebook:

### **1. Join a LinkedIn or Facebook Community**

LinkedIn Communities are a great way to expand your network, crowdsource ideas and solutions, or just up your craft with new knowledge. There are communities specific to just about every role, including Executive Assistants. [Here's the link again to join our private Facebook Group.](#)

### **2. Complete Your Profile**

You'll be more likely to connect with people outside your network if you have a profile that showcases how awesome you really are.

### **3. Write a Post or Two**

LinkedIn has successfully transformed from a place to look for jobs to a marketplace of ideas. Pay your knowledge forward by posting an article to their publishing platform. It's easier than you might think!

# BIGGEST OPPORTUNITIES

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As we've seen, the Executive Assistant has expanded considerably. Today the role has taken on increased importance and new responsibilities. It requires new skills and comes with new challenges. But one thing remains constant - the position is an Executive function. You're serving the business at the highest level, and success in the role requires you to be thoughtful, engaged, energetic, and of course, highly organized.

Because Executive Assistants are men and women of action, here are top recommendations for Executive Assistants you want to thrive in the role now and in the future:

- **Learn about your Business.** We can't stress this enough. The best Executive Assistants don't just schedule meetings, they're called upon to provide strategic counsel and advice. If you want to add value in this way, you have to know your industry, your competitors, and your company inside and out.
- **Strategically Multitask.** You're juggling a lot, but don't do ten things poorly at once. Combine lower level activities to get more done, and prioritize your focus-intensive work. Use task management software to track and seamlessly switch between these higher level projects.
- **Learn and implement the newest tools of the trade.** Take advantage of all the administrative apps and tools available to the modern Executive Assistant so you can save time and energy on the hard stuff.
- **Learn to negotiate.** The value that Executive Assistants provide is without question, but negotiating for higher salaries is still a big challenge. The good news is that Negotiating is a skill anyone can learn.
- **Speak Your Mind.** Part of the value you add comes in the form of advice. Don't sugarcoat any situation. The truth is always the shortest path to the right solution
- **Take Vacation.** Burnout won't serve you or your boss. Take your full vacation time, or even advocate for unlimited (results-based) PTO.
- **Seek Challenges.** Executive Assistants thrive when the role is challenging. If you're bored or stuck in a rut, take on a new project and fall back in love with your boss.
- **Push for monthly or quarterly feedback.** We learned the Executive Assistants don't get enough feedback, despite all the facetime they get. Explain why feedback is important and you'll get better at your job and impress your boss.

## DISCOVER THE SIMPLEST WAY TO GET EXCITING, NEW DELICIOUS SNACKS DELIVERED TO YOUR OFFICE

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While curating and delivering snacks is what we do, there's really a lot more to it than that. We're dedicated to helping people become better versions of themselves by supporting increased health, productivity, and happiness, starting at the workplace.

We also know that perks matter when it comes to creating an engaged culture, and **making your job easier** is a key tenet of our core mission.

If you enjoy this content, be sure to [check out our blog here](#) and join our mailing list by clicking the Subscribe button on that page. We write constantly about workplace culture, employee engagement, and other issues and concerns specific to the Executive Assistant role. We also plan on making this a yearly occurrence so that we can track how the role evolves over time.

Keep being the amazing EA that you are!

P.S. Make sure you request to [join our Private "State of the Executive Assistant" Facebook Group](#). Lots of additional resources, tips, and tricks in there.

