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April 5, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

**HUMANA**  
Guidance when you need it most

For more than a decade, Joan Burge has led the way in articulating and implementing a new vision for one of the most vital and overlooked professions in American business - the executive assistant. As president and chief executive officer of Humana Inc., a large health benefits company, I can testify to the importance of the executive assistant role and to the value Joan has brought not only to the profession as a whole but to the many Humana executive assistants who have grown, changed and successfully assumed expanded responsibilities through her Star Achievement Series program over the past ten plus years.

Joan teaches what it takes to become a value-added partner - for the supervisor and for the enterprise as a whole. This is ultimately what any good boss wants from his/her executive assistant: someone who personifies the characteristics of the now-discredited word "secretary." The original meaning of secretary was not "someone who answers the phone and types 80 words a minute." It was "someone who could keep secrets" a person so alert, well-trained, well-spoken and attuned to a manager's needs, that he/she could be trusted with strategic information that was crucial to success. It is this sense of trustworthiness, born of key skills and the right personal qualities, that lies at the heart of Joan's concept of becoming a successful assistant.

Within the Star Achievement Series curriculum, Joan's program is loaded with practical, step-by-step guidance on how to achieve the standards she sets for the next-generation executive assistant. There is a detailed road map to success, including descriptions of 12 competency areas designed to make the executive assistant a key player on the management team. There is an appropriate emphasis on the basics, because some things never change. And - typical of Joan - there is emphasis on the sheer fun you derive from your work when you have earned and are recognized for your status.

I don't know of anyone better than Joan Burge to guide executive assistants into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With her trademark combination of hard-minded research-based advice and her unparalleled respect for the profession's importance, she instills - with wit and enthusiasm - the courage to excel. I believe that administrative assistants have more horsepower than the organizational charts reflects. Joan is a visionary striving for and demonstrating success. Her passion in life is to lead, guide, mentor and teach people to believe in themselves and develop teams that work in the professional world of administrative assistants.

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