

Becoming a Strategic Business Partner with Management

By *Joan Burge, founder & CEO, Office Dynamics International*

You have heard it a hundred times: You don't work "for" someone. You work "with" someone. That is the way it should be. But do you truly feel like you are a business partner with your executive? Are you included in the decision-making process? Do you attend your executive's staff meetings and not just to take notes? Does your executive take you seriously? While you have probably learned a great deal on how to become more valuable to your executive, this article focuses on how to be a strategic business partner. The information I'm sharing with you is taken from my high-end boot camp for administrative professionals called World Class Assistant™. **

Before I can address the how, I want to explain the difference between just a partnership and a strategic partner.

When an assistant and manager work in partnership they work in tandem with each other to achieve team, department and company goals. They have a clear understanding of the tasks at hand, enjoy working with each other, have good communication, and accomplish goals.

The word strategic means planned, tactical, deliberate, intentional and calculated. When an assistant and manager have a strategic partnership together they view the future, develop a plan and take deliberate action. They understand complete alignment and the importance of ongoing communication. They proactively road map and the assistant is part of the plan.

When an assistant works as a strategic partnership, she (or he) understands the why of things; not just that something has to be done. When you understand the why you can initiate action and be more proactive. You see how the pieces of the puzzle fit together and you see the big picture of what needs to happen. This will lead to greater opportunities right within your current

position. You will be taken seriously and valued as an important team member. This is not even to mention the sheer pleasure you will derive from being a part of the success.

So, how can you become a strategic partner? Here are a few steps to get you started.

1. Get engaged in the scope of your business partner's work. This is not the same as the work your manager does. I'll use myself as an example to explain the difference. The scope of my work is to:
 - Improve the quality of work life for administrative professionals.
 - Advance the administrative profession and have it viewed as a career of choice.
 - Educate managers and leaders on the changes in this profession and to maximize the time and talents of their admin.
 - Be a leader in the training industry for administrative professionals.
 - Get companies to see that they need to invest in developing their admins.

I accomplish my scope through training, speaking, writing, and consulting. Do you see the difference?

2. Contribute to team objectives. A fully functional team displays the following behaviors. How do you and your manager rate?
 - Decisions are reached by general consensus.
 - People are free to express their feelings.
 - Criticism is comfortable.
 - Atmosphere in which people are involved.
 - Members listen to each other.

3. Align your professional goals with company and departmental goals. When I teach my World Class Assistant workshop, I notice many attendees have a hard time with this activity. Let's say that one of your organization's goals is to be a leader in their industry. Then you need to think about either how you can help them be a leader by being a walking "billboard" or thinking of ways that you can be a leader to others.
4. Become involved in decision-making processes. I imagine you already make several decisions a day. I want to challenge you to think outside the box. If you think and look really hard, there are other areas that you can get involved in.
5. Maintain information flow to your business partner. Your manager relies on you to keep things flowing. You have access to volumes of information all day; make sure you

are not a bottleneck. When reviewing information, really think about what you are seeing. What could it mean? Who might be involved? How might it affect your manager? Is there someone else who should see this information? Should this be delegated to someone on your manager's team? Are you communicating clearly and accurately? Do you need to clarify your manager's communications? And so forth.

Good luck!

***World Class Assistant™ is held in Summerlin, NV. Class is limited to 20 attendees. You can also purchase a live recording of this dynamic workshop at www.OfficeDynamics.com in our Store.*

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About the Author

Joan Burge is known as the red-lipstick-wearing "Rock Star" of administrative and executive assistant training and a successful entrepreneur who created a unique niche in 1990 by founding a training company that would uniquely provide sophisticated, robust educational programs and information to administrative professionals. Joan is an accomplished author (8 books), professional speaker, consultant and corporate trainer.

She is the creator of: Annual Conference for Administrative Excellence™; World Class Assistant™ Certification course; Star Achievement Series® Certification and Designation course; 30+ customized workshops, 200+ educational videos, 150+ articles and nearly 1,000 blog posts for executive and administrative assistants.

Her company, Office Dynamics International, is a global industry leader which offers a broad range of solutions and provides high-performance, sophisticated executive and administrative assistant training and coaching.