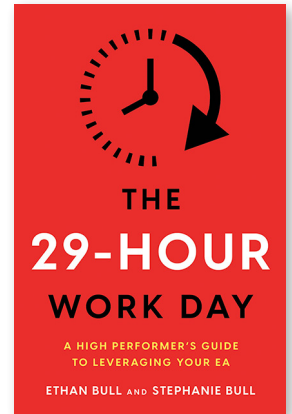


# The 29-Hour Work Day

A High Performer's Guide to Leveraging Your EA

by **Ethan Bull and Stephanie Bull**



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## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

If you are a busy executive, you may find yourself hiring executive assistants to try and fill the void that comes with the tasks at hand. In many countries around the world, executive assistants feel many of the same frustrations – the executive doesn't know what to do with them, leaders and HR do not know what assistants really do, and that they are thinking of quitting because they feel undervalued and bored. The biggest problem is that executives don't realize the real value of the executive assistants they hire and underutilizes their talents.

In *The 29-Hour Work Day: A High Performer's Guide to Leveraging Your EA*, Ethan Bull and Stephanie Bull make a rock solid case for how executives no longer need to do everything themselves. When they hire an executive assistant (EA), there is much to learn about how to leverage their strengths and use them to one's advantage instead of trying to take on everything themselves. Through the book, the authors discuss how to find, utilize, and even the overall performance benefits of working side by side with your EA to their full capacity.

## IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to unearth the superpowers of your executive assistant.
- How to find the executive assistant to drive your success.
- What to do when you find the right executive assistant.
- The importance of training and partnership with your executive assistant.
- The performance multipliers of utilizing your executive assistant's superpowers correctly.

### Introduction

Whether you are the CEO of a large corporation or a former executive doing consulting or philanthropic work will sitting on boards, it is impossible to manage and grow your business yourself. In the story of a high-level actress, whose assistant ran city blocks to find her raspberry jam and got her to her hair and makeup appointment on time – it is a true testament of the dedication that an executive assistant has for their employer. Finding the right executive assistant who can provide the support needed in any circumstance can bring more benefits to your role as an executive. Statistics show that 51% of a good EA's job is concerned with soft skills – communication, service, emotional intelligence, and trust. The other 49% are hard skills – technology, calendar, data management, and organization. 100% of the time, an EA serves as a hospitalian, doing their jobs with finesse and aptitude by using their superpowers, so that an executive can achieve more.

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### Executive Assistant Superpowers

For many executives, learning to turn to and trust an executive assistant can be hard – especially if the relationship between the two lacks communication. Some executives will trust their EA from the beginning, making it easier to adapt. However, sometimes this trust is earned by using their EA superpowers and showing the executive just how capable they are at making their lives easier. There are four superpowers that an executive must pay particular attention to when working with an EA – ESP, synchronization, omniscience, and translation. These powers go above and beyond and provide the maximum amount of benefit, especially when growing for the future.

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### Finding “The One”

Before you can begin finding “the one,” it becomes imperative to understand exactly what you need first. If you don't know what your needs are, it is next to impossible to find the EA that matches up with your needs. One of the best methods for finding the EA that completes your skillset requirements is a recruiter. Recruiters take care of all the legwork, screening applicants and finding the right fit for you to discuss your needs with. Recruiters require a fee, but if you are not looking to pay someone to find the EA that meets your needs, another option is searching through LinkedIn.

First impressions count when looking for an executive assis-

tant. Executives should be looking at the way the candidate expresses themselves on paper and through other avenues like social media. Some big red flags can be gleaned from these sources – especially inconsistencies that may come up across these avenues. Although looking at their skills as they pertain to your industry might be relevant, the truth is that most EAs are chameleons with a slew of foundational capacities that may not be evident to the naked eye. However, seeing that they have remained in their current roles for more than a year speaks volumes of their dedication within a role.

In the end, it is your gut that will tell you what you need to know – as an executive, you have to trust your own judgment when selecting who will fulfill the role of your executive assistant. Once you have chosen the one, you need to fulfill your due diligence - checking references, background checks, etc. Once all of your ducks are in a row, then you can make the offer – but ensure you are paying them what they are worth. Now that you have found the one, you need to make sure you are using the one to their full executive assistant powers.

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### When You Have “The One”

The perfect EA brings about a mixture of hard and soft skills that will benefit you in your day-to-day tasks and help you fulfill the roles that you need assistance with. Communication with your EA is the only way to ensure that clear instruction and expectations are shared across the board. They are also hospitable; they are receptive of your needs and often fulfill them before you ask. When you are working in sync with your EA, be sure to work together, answering questions and providing communications back and forth that will further your business goals as well as take some of the extras off your plate.

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### Training And Partnering With Your Executive Assistant

The relationship that you create with your EA is important – from the beginning. If your EA does not have clear expectations set from the beginning, the relationship is doomed to fail. This is not fair to them, and it is not fair or beneficial to you or your business when the outlined needs are not addressed, or feedback is not given. It is unlikely that your EA will walk in and be well versed in all of your needs from the start, which is why it is important to not only train your EA, but to bring them in as a partner for the overall

betterment of the goals at hand. When training, sharing as much of your knowledge with your EA will be vital in their assistance to you. Once you are well on your way to performance multiplier status, it is important not to become a micromanager – you have trained your EA to handle things as you would – allow them to do so.

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### Performance Multiplier #1: Business Partner

When an executive looks at their EA as a business partner, it doesn't mean that you should sell half of your company and divide up the assets with them – instead, you should look at your EA as a partner who shares your concerns, knows how you think, and is loyal to representing your vision. When you look at your assistant through that lens, you'll discover a variety of ways you can team with them and have them take on some of the responsibilities a business partner would handle. You can empower your executive assistant in this role by equipping them with the background and information necessary so that they can sit in for you at the board meetings, fundraising functions, and even the occasional team meeting. Although they will not make decisions for you, they can be your eyes, ears, and sometimes your mouth so that you can make the decisions when you are able.

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### Performance Multiplier #2: Chief Of Staff

In a traditional sense, a chief of staff is hired at the direct report level to sit on strategy and C-suite meetings. They are expected to track progress and push toward quarterly and yearly goals. They know what KPIs to measure performance, who controls what, and what levers to push or pull to ensure expectations are met. This is not the chief of staff that you would be employing with your EA – instead they would share the same type of knowledgebase that a traditional chief of staff would have. They can track, guide, and ensure that progress is made – a more logistical and immediate role, less strategic. Instead of flooding your inbox or voicemail with contacts, you can use your EA as a gatekeeper for the information. They will cut out many hours spent handling these contacts and calls by screening them ahead of time and handling the relevant ones to you personally – that is what your EA as a chief of staff can do for you.

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### Performance Multiplier #3: Project Manager

Project managers are often responsible for taking a viable project and moving it through the production process. Many of these project managers hold degrees in project management and are familiar with Sigma Six or Lean manufacturing process tools. This does not mean that your EA will have the same role as the project manager, but they do have the ability to take ownership of a project or even to help you. For example, if your company is planning a retreat, you can employ your EA to take care of all the finer details of the trip, allowing you to enjoy it with your board members. In a project manager role, the EA can take on annual events, creating successes and can be your point person throughout the process.

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### Performance Multiplier #4: Assistant/Scheduler

The more successful an executive comes in their role, the more responsibility falls on their plate. As much as you may want to do all or the majority of the work that comes your way, using your EA to schedule can help you stay on top of everybody and every project that comes across your desk. In this role, your executive assistant takes on the role of a traditional assistant, managing time slots, and doing whatever is necessary when things come up. Time engineering requires detailed, precise scheduling, and using their superpower of ESP, they can log pertinent information on your calendar invites or in an email you want to link a calendar invitation to. You have shared your priorities and goals with your EA and they know exactly what you need – making it easier to organize your day-to-day activities and doing so in a way that makes it easier to tackle everything that falls on your plate.

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### Performance Multiplier #5: Personal Assistant

The definition of a personal assistant varies depending on the needs of the executive. In general, this assistant helps to manage life outside of work and are closely tied to family, grocery, appointments, and other errands that make day-to-day life outside of the office feasible. Having already fulfilled multiple duties within the business structure, using an EA to help facilitate roles in life can be a refresher for some executives. Sometimes personal errands can blend with the workplace, like buying gifts for employees or arranging a

lunch for a business meeting – these are all things your EA is capable of handling for you and may have more inside knowledge on what someone would like than you would in an executive role. It is important to use discretion when assigning personal assistant roles to your EA, this being said, it is best to evaluate your relationship with your EA before assigning more personal tasks that may be sensitive.

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### Conclusion

As an executive, you have to be open-minded enough to do a little self-examination. Great leaders are humble and self-deprecating, and they use that to their advantage to make people below them feel comfortable expressing their ideas, thoughts, and opinions. When you do this with your EA in a proper way, you enable them to set their superpowers free. You create a safe space between the two of you to encourage them to be a performance multiplier. Whether you use your EA to boost your project management or as a personal assistant, leveraging their skills can help you work within the scope of a 24-hour work day instead of trying to work a 29-hour work day.



**Stephanie Bull** is ProAssisting's co-founder and former EA for J. Crew's CEO and the CEOs of two multibillion-dollar hedge funds. She proved herself an expert in the field and a vital addition to the C-suite by fulfilling a variety of roles, including chief of staff, estate manager, and investment liaison.

**Ethan Bull** is a longtime Executive Assistant and CoFounder of ProAssisting, a remote EA firm in the U.S. He has great advice for working remotely, managing multiple executives, and more.

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