

Chapter Six

Powerful Partnerships

***Coming together is a beginning;
keeping together is progress;
working together is success.***

~ Henry Ford

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One of my most successful partnerships is with my loving husband, Rene'. We've been blessed with a marriage that has withstood the test of time for 29 years. Our greatest blessings are our four amazing children, our two fabulous daughters-in-law, and our four incredible grandchildren. Rene' and I have been together longer than we've been apart and I can't imagine our lives without one another. There is nothing I treasure more than my family.

My husband is my best example of what it means to have a successful partnership. When you've been together for nearly thirty years, trust me, you've seen some incredibly human and vulnerable moments. We've been there for each other through the good times and the bad. We've seen each other at our best and our worst. There have been times when we felt the only person we had in our corner was the other one, and at that moment, the only thing we needed was each other. In fact, when we were married, we didn't have a lot of people in our corner and our theme song was, "Ain't no stopping us now" by Brothers Johnson. To this day, when we hear that song, it still brings a smile to our faces because we knew then what we know now . . . if we have each other everything else is going to be alright.

Ironically, many of the same factors that create a successful marriage are the same factors that create a successful business partnership. First, and foremost, it takes trust. Without trust, there is no foundation. Secondly, you must realize you are better together than you are apart and you rely on one another for your success. Thirdly, when you go through a challenge together and help each other get through it; your bond becomes stronger than ever.

No matter how great your current partnership is with your executive, there is always room to improve. When you understand how impactful a powerful partnership is on your career, you'll be motivated to learn how to manage the relationship to get the highest possible return.

What is a Synergistic Partnership?

The first time I experienced a synergistic relationship was with a Vice-President, the partnership started out with him recruiting me, which is a pretty fantastic way to start. He told me had an opening for an Executive Assistant and I was the perfect person for the position. He told me my strength in leading teams, my professionalism, and interpersonal skills were exactly what he needed. He made me feel very valuable. He had a clear goal and purpose for me. He also gave me complete authority and freedom to act. He valued my opinions and thought of me as a professional, a leader, and a partner. We became a united team and mutually respected and trusted one another. Our goals and values were aligned, and our styles complimented each other. We experienced successes and overcame challenges together, and we mutually enjoyed working with one another. This is the type of partnership every assistant should have the opportunity to experience!

I want you to experience what it is like to:

- Feel valued and respected.
- Have a clear goal and purpose.
- Have authority and freedom to act.
- Be thought of and treated as a professional, a leader, and a business partner.
- Be part of a united team and have your goals aligned with your executive.

The definition of a synergistic partnership is when the result is greater than the sum of their individual effects or capabilities. To me, synergy is where the

result of the efforts of two or more people is greater than individual results. Synergy is the ability of a group to outperform even its best individual member. A synergistic partnership may be difficult to express, however, when you experience synergy, you feel it before you can see it or describe it. Whether you are the executive or the administrative assistant, once you experience a synergistic partnership, you'll never want to settle for anything less.

There are many benefits to having a strong partnership, some benefits are:

- Empowerment
- Increased productivity
- Less relationship management
- Trust and communication
- Shared values
- Common goals
- Getting each other to give his or her best for the benefit of the partnership
- Bringing out the best in each other
- Humor
- Fun
- Celebration
- Camaraderie

Developing the Partnership

There are three basic ways to develop a partnership:

- Understand who the partners are and their styles.
- Understand their roles and priorities.
- Establish routine communication.

I've worked for a variety of manager's who were as diverse as you can possibly imagine. They each had their own unique style and way of doing

business. Each had his or her strengths and weaknesses, as well as quirks and hot buttons. It would be a mistake to assume all executives would want to manage their offices the same. You'll need to ask some strategic and critical questions in order to find out everything you need to know about your executive. The key is to learn as much as you can. Think about it this way, how can you support someone you don't know?

Setting the Foundation

During your first week, find out how your manager prefers the office and the workload to be managed. While asking questions, offer your office management experience by providing suggestions. Working together, determine the best method for managing your office.

Here are a few of the questions you'll want to ask:

1. Would you like an open door policy? Or, would you appreciate the role of a gate keeper to limit and/or screen the drop by visits?
2. Are you a morning or afternoon person? What time do you usually arrive at the office and leave the office?
3. Would you like me to answer your phone or would you prefer to do so? Would you like me to screen your calls? Are there certain callers who you want to get through no matter if you are in a meeting or otherwise busy when they call?
4. Is there a preferred time for a daily meeting? Would you like to have it at the beginning of the day or the end of the day?
5. When is the best time to approach you regarding a sensitive subject?
6. When is the best time to schedule high level meetings?
7. What are your pet peeves and quirks?
8. What are your expectations regarding how email, voicemail, and incoming mail are handled?

9. What is your expectation regarding tracking deliverables?
10. What are your expectations regarding how the administrative assistant acts independently and on behalf of the executive?

Moving Past the Basics

Once these basic questions are answered, you can move past the basic partnership level by finding out what's important to your executive. Talk to him/her about roles and priorities. Let it be known you want to do all you can to help create success. Ask for a copy of his/her goals and have a conversation with him/her centered on those goals. Align your goals to those goals.

Find out what your manager thinks and worries about. To assure your manager's success, you need to know what your manager is accountable for and what is measured. Once you have this information, find a way to help your manager deliver! I promise you, if you help your manager reach one of his/her goals, he/she will value you tremendously.

These are strategic questions to help you form your partnership. With answers to these questions, you'll be aligned with your executive and be able to manage the day-to-day operations. You will also be able to increase your level of interaction with his/her direct reports and earn his/her respect because he/she will know you are in the know at a strategic level. You'll be armed with information to provide you insights and judgments which will help you determine what actions to take and when to take action, as well as how to manage your executive's time, calendar, and priorities.

Communication is Key

Communication is essential in developing a powerful partnership. Communicate clearly, openly, and often. You can communicate in person,

email, text, written notes, or whatever medium works best for the given situation. All the executives I have worked for have stated the hardest part of their jobs is communication. There is a huge amount of information coming into an executive's office. Decisions are made based on that information and then information is shared. Often the information needs to be massaged before it can be shared. The political landscape needs to be considered. Together, you and your executive need to determine who will need what level of information and what background needs to be provided with the information. Your ability to handle the communication on behalf of your executive is worth its weight in gold! This is an area where you can really save your executive time. When you master this area, you'll be able to draft messages on behalf of your manager, before you and your executive even discuss what messages are needed. Over time, your executive will defer to you to handle those messages.

Most of us support very busy people. Because of this, it is imperative you don't leave the daily meeting with your manager to chance. Instead, schedule time with your manager. As administrative professionals, we control our manager's calendars. It is our job to make our managers more effective and more successful than they could be without the support of an administrative professional. Your meeting with your manager is crucial to his/her success because you are managing the executive's calendar, triaging email, tracking deliverables, obtaining information to prepare your executive for meetings, gathering and writing talking points and getting all the details about upcoming events. When you meet with your executive, make the best use of his/her time by being thoroughly prepared and having all the information you need at your fingertips so you can quickly and concisely answer any question he/she may have. To do so, you must be in the know and have an understanding of what is happening today, tomorrow, and in the future.

I've heard administrative assistants say their managers don't want to meet with them and don't see value in the daily meeting. I'm always perplexed

because I've never had a manager say this to me. I know, without any doubt, the information I give to my manager in the daily meeting isn't provided in any other meeting. My manager could likely obtain a portion of the information I provide, if he wasn't in meetings for most of the day, which is why triaging email is such a key part of the role of the administrative assistant. I know I am saving him time and he knows it as well. Our managers are often in meetings and haven't had time to review email the entire day. When we meet with our managers and alert them about emails, deliverable due dates, and gather information based on upcoming meetings, we save them time. Demonstrate your value by making it your mission to save your managers time and facilitate their success.

Most days I have a long list of things I need to discuss with my executive. I arrange items in priority order to assure what I must cover, gets covered. I pay close attention to my executive to make sure he's still "present" and hasn't drifted off because of the many obligations on his plate. If I feel he's "checked out" and is no longer able to take in the information or have the discussion regarding the things on my list, I pause and state, "That's it for today. The rest can wait until tomorrow." Every once in a while, he will urge me to continue reviewing the remaining material. Most of the time, he says, "Thank you. You know me too well."

Playing the role of an advisor is another key role of an administrative assistant. I've learned to allow room to discuss what my executive would like to cover, instead of only being focused on my list of "to do's." Often, when I ask him how things are going, or what's on his mind, he'll open up and share something with me he wants to discuss. It's during these times the administrative assistant becomes the advisor and a stronger partnership develops. The door is opened to a deeper level of dialogue and brainstorming begins as the executive asks for advice regarding an approach or an idea he /she is considering. This sharing of ideas allows your executive to see how well

you know the organization and all the players. When you help your executive see another view point and offer another approach, it helps the executive consider many other aspects of a given situation. These are the types of conversations where trust is paramount as well as the ability to hold information in confidence. This interaction defines what it means to work “with” someone versus working “for” someone. You have moved from the typical administrative assistant role into the role of a business partner.

One of the best ways to help your executive is to use the art of strategic questioning. For instance, your executive has agreed to provide a presentation to someone who isn't directly tied to his/her priorities. By agreeing to this activity, his/her schedule is now tied up and no longer available for something more strategic that does align with priorities. You can guide your executive back to what is most important to him/her by asking strategic questions, such as: “I realize you agreed to provide a presentation to ABC Group. Help me understand how this fits into the big picture and relates to your goals and priorities.” When you use strategic questioning effectively, your executive will be guided back to what is really important.

Once you experience this level of partnership, you realize what a powerful role you have as an executive assistant. It is essential for administrative assistants to realize the power they have and respect the power as well. If you misuse the power, you'll likely only have the opportunity to do so briefly before your executive knows it and that opportunity will come to a screeching halt! Administrative assistants are in key positions to influence our executives. Many times, we are their advisors, confidants and encouragers. We hold them in the palm of our hands. We can use this power to encourage them and pull them forward to greater success, or we can misuse our power for our own agenda. When you respect the power you have and understand your job is to help others be more successful with you than they are without you, you'll be respecting the power appropriately. Respect and realize the powerful role you have! I hope you re-read this paragraph and embrace it.

Understanding your Partners Style

In order to partner well with others, you need to know their personality styles. Life would be easier if we all communicated the same and had the same thinking patterns. However, that is certainly not the case. We each have our preferred method of communication and due to these differences; we can find ourselves in the middle of a conversation or a meeting where the communication just isn't working.

Interestingly, our behaviors are predictable. The way we interact with others... our preferred method for communicating becomes a habit. We have probably used the same method since we were very young and have developed a pattern in our interactions with others. Sure, we've matured and have a different vocabulary. Most of us have learned we can't throw a fit and get away with it.

Mankind has been studying variations of four basic behavior patterns for 2500 years! Hippocrates identified four basic temperaments in 460BC. In the 1920's, Carl Jung developed a concept he called the intuiitor, thinker, feeler, and sensor, which are the foundation for the Meyers-Briggs Type indicator.

There are many interpersonal style models available. I've learned several: Meyers-Briggs, Social Styles, Colors, Animals, DISC, and more. Most interpersonal profile testing uses a model with four quadrants to describe the various styles. Through all the books I've read and all the research I've done, I've learned no style is better than another and most people have the ability to express elements of all four styles. The question that always comes up when I do interpersonal style training is, "What is the best style for an administrative assistant?" Again, there is not one best style. No matter what your preferred style is, you can be successful as an administrative assistant. It's important to note these interpersonal style profiles indicate your preferred communication style, not your communication capabilities.

Personality type assessments can be extremely costly and complicated, so I decided to create my own based on the various models I've researched and applied. My model is very simplistic, easy-to-use and understand, and easy to remember!

Here's my Personality Profile Model. Notice each quadrant has a picture which illustrates the style as well as a strength and a limitation. This allows you to quickly glance at the model and recognize each style.

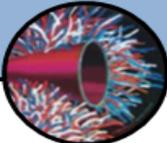


The more you know about your style and that of your executive, the more likely you will be able to form a powerful partnership. I encourage you to study your executive's behaviors and communication style. Observe how he/she interacts with others. Find out if he/she is prone to focusing on "people" or on "tasks." Recognize how he/she speaks. Does he/she speak in terms of "telling" or "asking?" Make it your mission to know what makes your executive tick.

I'll provide you a little insight into each of these styles through the strengths and limitations summary below. The best way to experience this information is through a workshop which includes a personality profile assessment and applied learning activities. This workshop is consistently one of my attendee's favorite sessions.

Strengths/Limitations Summary

<u><i>Enthusiastic/ Overbearing</i></u>	<u><i>Goal-Oriented/ Distant</i></u>	<u><i>Personable/ Timid</i></u>	<u><i>Thorough/ Perfectionist</i></u>
Risk Taker Inspiring Open and Direct Pursues Change Socially Skilled Persuasive Competitive Confident	Practical Orderly Very Direct Self-determined Organized Traditional Goal-oriented Dependable	Team-oriented Caring Devoted Trusting Sensitive Enthusiastic Helpful Accessible	Exacting Meticulous Practical Thorough Factual Reserved Calm Has High Standards
Impatient Manipulative Pushy Intimidating Overbearing Restless Abrasive Reactive	Rigid Unapproachable Distant Dogmatic Stubborn Critical Insensitive	Impractical Vulnerable Hesitant Too Other-oriented Indecisive Subjective	Withdrawn Dull Sullen Shy Slow to get things done Perfectionist Passive






Throughout my career, I've worked for all different types of managers. Some were easier to work with than others. Some were pretty difficult. No matter what the situation was, I learned from each of them and am grateful for the experience.

Some of the managers I've worked for were so goal-oriented, it was as if they had blinders on and couldn't see anything else but the goal. I remember one executive who didn't even realize one of his direct reports was pregnant until she was out on maternity leave! I've also worked for a manager who didn't recognize the importance of thanking the staff, so I took on the task of telling staff thank you for the work they had done. It wasn't that he didn't appreciate the work that had been completed; he simply didn't feel the need to thank staff for doing what they were hired to do.

One of the best things you can do for your executive is to fill the gap. Know your manager's strengths and limitations so well that you set him/her up for success by utilizing your strengths to fill the gap in one of the areas of weakness. If you don't possess the strength your executive needs in a particular situation, team him/her up with someone who does. For example, if your executive is an Enthusiastic/Overbearing type of individual and is so excited about a particular topic that he/she doesn't allow for others on the team to talk, provide him/her feedback and make a suggestion.

"Mr. Executive, when we were in the meeting earlier today and you were so excited to share the news about the XYZ project, I made a few observations I'd like to share with you. I saw Mr. Direct Report trying to make a comment, did you notice him? I've noticed when you get excited about something, sometimes it makes it difficult for anyone else to talk. Would you like me to give you a signal in the future to help you allow for staff to make a comment?"

I've used this technique before and it works well when your executive knows you are doing all you can to assure he/she is successful.

This type of partnership won't happen overnight. Some partnerships form quicker than others, some partnerships are better than others. All powerful partnerships take effort and time. It takes time to develop, time to build, and time to maintain a partnership.

Adapt to Their Style

In our roles as administrative assistants, we need to be flexible, nimble and highly adaptable to our environments and those whom we support. When I ask executives, "What is the most important skill in the role of the executive assistant?" The most common response is, "Flexibility."

***“Blessed are the flexible,
for they shall not be bent out of shape!”***

In one of my workshops, we were discussing flexibility. One of the attendees said flexibility is one of the four corner stones for having a successful administrative career. He laughed and said he wasn't sure what the other three corner stones were, but he knew flexibility holds up all the rest! You can be the most competent administrative assistant on the planet and if you aren't flexible, you will not be successful.

When Styles Clash

Frustrations often come when we work with someone in an opposite quadrant from our quadrant. For example: The “Enthusiastic / Overbearing” who has a tendency to be pushy, expressive, likes risk and change – compared to the “Thorough / Perfectionist” who likes consistency and the status quo, is

reserved, and dislikes aggressiveness. Imagine the natural clash with these two communication styles. At the core, these communication styles are complete opposites. The way each of these styles prefers to communicate instantly rubs the other style the wrong way.

When you are in this situation, you'll probably notice a shift in the energy between you and the other person. You can feel the invisible wall come up and the communication is stifled. You may even notice the negative energy before either of you speak, because we speak with more than words. Our personality and communication style is expressed in our body language as well as in our verbal communication.

If you find yourself in this situation, I have a few tips for you:

Dial your style down. When you notice you aren't communicating effectively, use your self-awareness skills to determine if you are coming across too engrained in your own style for the other person to relate to you. For example, if you are an "Enthusiastic / Overbearing" type and you are talking with a "Thorough / Perfectionist," you may be too animated and too expressive for their level of comfort. By "dialing down" your preferred enthusiastic approach, you'll find the tension begin to ease and communication begin.

Genuinely appreciate your differences. When you have a better awareness of the diverse styles, you'll understand how each style contributes to the success of the team. Once you internalize the fact there is no right or wrong style, and no style is better than another, you will be more apt to truly appreciate all styles.

Learn as much as you can about your style and the style of your executive. Knowing more about yourself will help you be more flexible so you can deal effectively with your executive and put your unique traits to work for you, instead of against you.

Mirror their style. When people perceive you to be like them, they are more comfortable talking to you. When you mirror others, you are a reflection of them. If they are standing, stand. If they are seated, sit. If they are smiling, smile. If they are reserved, be reserved. Use their same behaviors. Use the same rate of speech and posture. This makes the other person feel comfortable because he/she perceives you to be like him/her, which enables communication. This is not to say I'm advising you to be fake; it simply means to modify your communication style to allow your communication to be more effective.

When you use these methods, you are speaking their language which allows others to hear you and understand you. This does not mean you need to change and become someone else. It simply means, in order to communicate more effectively and develop a powerful partnership; you may need to make some adjustments to your preferred method of communication.

Maintaining the Partnership

Once you've established the partnership, you'll need to continue to nurture it. You can nurture the partnership in a number of ways. First and foremost, by performing at your optimum level and doing so consistently, your executive will know he can trust you to perform consistently and can relax, knowing you've got all the details handled.

Another key aspect in maintaining the partnership is keeping confidential information held in confidence. Doing so builds trust. When your executive trusts you as a confidant and as a high performer, you've got the foundation for a powerful partnership.

Show recognition to your executive for a job well done. The saying, "It's lonely at the top" is very true. I've learned that most executives appreciate being cared about as a person, not just as an executive. Demonstrate compassion for

the difficulty of the position and the weight upon their shoulders. Most executives aren't recognized or thanked often enough, especially in light of everything they do. Make a point of finding ways to genuinely recognize your executive when they've done a great job.

“Mirror your partner's dreams; the relationship will grow.”

Emulate a strong professional code by being known as someone who under promises and over delivers. Do 10% more than what is required, requested, or expected. One of the essential elements of a powerful partnership is accountability and follow through. What happens to a relationship when someone doesn't follow up? What about the opposite? What happens when someone delivers quicker than expected and with more information than requested? The latter is the behavior you want to emulate. No one wants to work with a whiner or a “can't happen” kind of person. Most of us don't want a relationship with these types of people. In fact, we avoid these types of people. Be known as the one who always follows through, is dependable, reliable and accountable.

Collaborate with others and help others succeed. The serendipitous part about this is that it will build your self-respect and confidence. Help people find a way to get things done.

Lead by example. You and your executive are a team which means you both must “walk the walk” and “talk the talk.” When you are working for the manager who is making the decisions, you no longer have the right to blame management, You are a team and you both need to support one another. Be the person you want to look up to.

The Power of Feedback:

When you work with someone closely day after day, you will be in a situation where you need to provide feedback. The situation might be as small as telling your executive he has a dirty nose before walking into an All Staff meeting. These types of feedback conversations may be uncomfortable and awkward but fairly easy to do. Your executive will appreciate the kind approach and will know you had his back and saved him from an embarrassing situation.

There will be other times when the situation is much more impactful and can be highly political. These conversations are downright scary. This is where the trust you developed early on in the partnership will carry tremendous weight. Be confident and courageous enough to offer feedback and have the difficult conversations. The last thing your executive needs is another “yes” person. Executives need someone who they trust to tell them the truth. This isn’t what they want to hear or what will make them feel better; these are the conversations that are designed to make your executive better. This takes guts, confidence, judgment and caring enough about your executive’s success that you are willing to take the risk. I’ve had these types of conversations with executives and, every time, I was scared, yet each and every time my executive was grateful for the conversation and thanked me for my open and honest feedback.

Years ago, I learned a method for giving feedback called “SBI.” This method will work for giving feedback up, down, and across the organization.

1. S= Situation
2. B= Behavior
3. I= Impact
4. Close with message

For example: You have someone on your team who is disruptive in meetings. He is having side bar conversations and interrupting the meeting. Here's how to handle it.

- **Situation:** "In our meeting earlier today."
- **Behavior:** "I noticed you were having side bar conversations."
- **Impact:** "This behavior interrupted our meeting. The team lost focus on the topic and confusion followed."
- **Message:** "In the future, please keep sidebar conversations to a minimum, so our meetings will be more productive. Will you do that for me and the team?"

When receiving feedback, first and foremost, assume the person providing feedback has positive intent and cares enough about you to help you succeed.

- **Listen** with an open heart and open mind. It might not be warranted, but you won't get far without it.
- **Ask questions** and assume the message comes from a place of goodwill and generosity. Skepticism doesn't help you hear.
- **Reflect** on the message and consult a mentor to help process the information and determine changes you may make.

Setting Boundaries

When you've had a powerful partnership with an executive, it can be difficult to know the importance of setting boundaries. One way to assure you don't cross the line is to treat him/her with respect and dignity, always remembering first and foremost, your manager is your boss. Be careful about becoming too familiar and too casual with the person you support.

When I was first starting out as an executive assistant, I didn't understand this as well as I do now. There are some situations I wouldn't advise, such as

having a drink alone with your manager. If your job requires you to travel with your manager, setting boundaries is even more important. The best way for me to say this is bluntly: Do not put yourself or your manager in a compromising situation. Enough said.

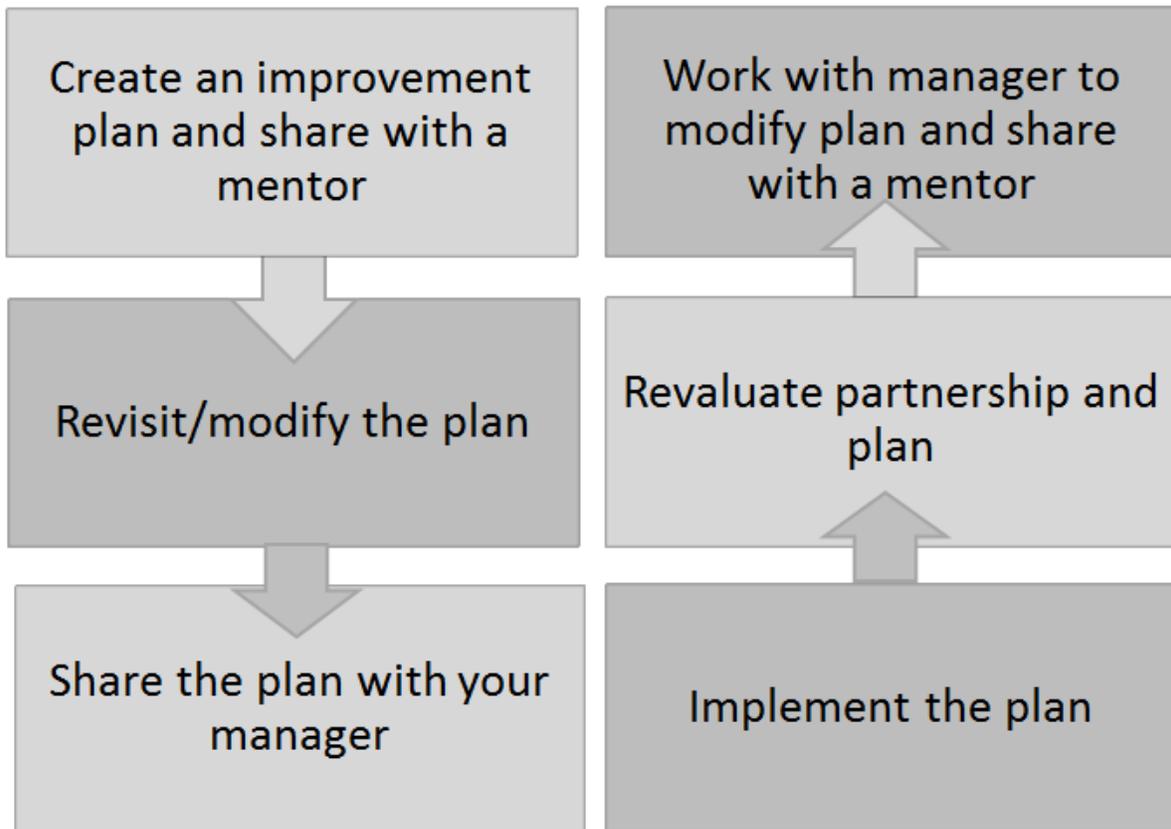
What if the partnership isn't working?

If you find yourself in a situation where the partnership isn't happening, the first step is to assess the partnership and identify what isn't working. Focus on the facts and remain objective as you ask yourself these questions. Do your best to avoid becoming emotional.

1. Where are the gaps?
2. Where are the challenges?
3. Where are the strengths?
4. Am I aware of their style and putting that knowledge to work in my day-to-day interactions?
5. What haven't I tried?
6. What's stopping me?

Now that you've assessed the facts about the state of the partnership, you are ready to create an improvement plan. This plan isn't only for partnerships that are broken; every partnership can benefit from an improvement plan and result in taking it to the next level.

The Improvement Plan



The first step is to schedule the meeting. Say something along the lines of: *"I scheduled a meeting for us to talk about how we manage the office. The meeting is scheduled for 1 ½ hours, however, it should only take us 45 minutes. I wanted us to have plenty of time to discuss this topic."*

Taking this action will demonstrate to your manager that you are actively engaged in creating a successful and productive partnership.

Walk through each of the steps in the Improvement Plan. Communicate professionally by discussing the facts and keep emotions in check. Talk about what is working, what could be improved upon, and together determine the next steps. Ask your manager for suggestions and offer your ideas. Keep the discussion focused on developing a highly efficient, productive environment.

***“Whenever you’re in conflict with someone,
there is one factor that can make the difference
between damaging your relationship and deepening it.
That factor is attitude.”***

~ William James

The point of the meeting is to improve the partnership and to get buy in on a new approach, not to assign blame and rehash past issues to determine who was right and who was wrong. Keep your manager’s style in mind. Don’t take things personally if your manager isn’t overly enthusiastic about the new plan and approach. Just be prepared to follow through with what is agreed upon.

If you’ve done all these steps and given it enough time to change, it might be time to seek a new partnership. If this is the case, know that:

- The partnership failed. This doesn’t mean you failed.
- Because you took all the right steps and invested time and effort into the relationship,
you can leave without regrets.
- Stay professional along the journey of finding a new position and without burning any
bridges.
- Find a new position and exit gracefully.

Have I done this? Yes! Several years ago, I worked for a great company. I had a great job. I was successful, had increased responsibility, a growing salary, a change in job titles, and was doing really well except in one area. The CEO and I had a difference in values. Over time, I came to realize the CEO wasn’t going to change his values, so I had two choices. I could stay and buy into those values or I could leave. I chose to leave and it was absolutely the right choice for me.

Powerful Partnership Memories

I am so grateful for the powerful partnerships I've had throughout my career. I made a conscious decision to align my goals with my executive's goals and find ways to have our styles complement one another. It was my goal to become a united team with mutual respect and trust. I've had the opportunity to develop powerful partnerships and know without a doubt I made a difference in my executive's success.

“Our success has really been based on partnerships from the very beginning.”

~ Bill Gates

I can recall times when I was the chief confidant and advisor and together we figured a way through a challenging situation. I've helped brainstorm possible solutions and talked through all the details to arrive at a path forward. I've been able to remind my executive of a message he wanted to deliver, provided information at a key moment, and quickly wrote a note and quietly passed it during a meeting to help him share the information he wanted to share with his team, which not only helped my executive but helped the entire team.

Knowing I've made a difference is what keeps me going and contributing at a high level. This is especially true when you are working for the top executive. There is an entire organization depending on your executive to deliver so each of them remains gainfully employed. What a huge responsibility, and we, as administrative assistants, are part of that equation. We are often the ones holding everything together in the middle of a crisis or chaos.

“Never doubt what a key role you play as an administrative assistant.”

I've been an administrative assistant for long enough I've not only experienced leaving a company, and having my executive leave, I've also experienced the death of an executive. One of the most humbling and respectful moments was when a past executive's wife asked me to speak at his funeral. We were in a simple back yard filled with friends and family. There were tears and laughter. A few members of the former core team spoke and shared humorous stories as well as paid our respects. Our stories defined his character and integrity. As each of us spoke, we realized his family wasn't aware of many things he had accomplished and overcome, in his role. We had worked together for several years and the stories were numerous. Watching his family and friends light up as the stories were told was a moment I will always cherish.

“The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is the knack of getting along with people.”

~ Theodore Roosevelt