



Maintaining A Positive Relationship With Your Head of School

The Importance of Relationships

“Relationships with management are the top factor in employees’ job satisfaction, which in turn is the second most important determinant of employees’ overall well-being.” – McKinsey & Company, [The Boss Factor study](#)

Successful Relationships

- In this session, we analyzed the relationship between Miranda and Andy in *The Devil Wears Prada* movie.
- Successful relationships involve communication, respect, and trust.

[EA Survey Results](#)

(<https://www.nais.org/learn/knowledge-center/toolkits/nais-toolkit-executive-assistants/>)

- Seventy percent of EA respondents have been in their position for over 4 years; about 6% are new to the position (less than a year)
- The majority of EAs that responded have over 10 years of experience in their roles (65%). A large percentage (32%) have over 20 years of experience. EAs are presumed to be largely competent in their roles. They have made a career out of support work and hold a plethora of knowledge about the ins and outs of office management and administrative support work.
- The majority of EAs (54%) feel they struggle most with time management – having too much to do or pulled in too many directions. Nineteen percent (19%) struggle with taking meeting minutes; 10% feel the work is not challenging enough, and 9% feel the biggest struggle pertains to improving their relationship with the head of school.
- Most EAs (63%) plan to continue working in the job they currently hold in the next 5 years. The EA-Head relationship is one worth investing in.

Tips to Strengthen Your EA/HOS Relationship

- Keep the lines of communication open.
- Have regular check-in meetings.
- Trust one another and maintain confidentiality.
- Understand that the community may make a mental connection with the EA and the HOS. Together you represent the head’s office.
- Seek and accept constructive feedback from one another.
- Have a good attitude toward work.
- Give credit where it is due.
- Remember you are partners working toward a common purpose. Make sure your goals are aligned.

How an EA can assist a new leader

- Provide insights into school culture and traditions.
- Outline current practices and processes.
- Identify stakeholders.
- Set up calendar (there will no doubt be many meetings in the first few months of school).
- Provide context for sticky wickets.



How the HoS can ensure an EA's success

- Be clear about goals & objectives and the EA's role in supporting them; prioritize needs.
- Delegate effectively; answer questions fully. Understand what is already on the EA's plate.
- Give EA opportunity to learn about all aspects of the school.
- Make sure the school community sees the trust you place in your EA – to be effective the EA must have real authority in the community.
- Give stretch assignments.
- Provide timely feedback.
- Celebrate successes.





What causes the relationship to fail

- EA misreading school culture.
- Not asking questions (this applies to both parties).
- EA agreeing to take on too much or not adhering to deadlines.
- HoS not delegating effectively or prioritizing work.
- HoS not trusting EA or undermining authority.
- EA not building appropriate bridges in school community.
- EA not keeping confidences.
- HoS not providing feedback grounded in examples.



Working as partners



An effective relationship will:

- Keep your morale up, affecting attitudes and emotions both inside and outside of work.
- Increase productivity and efficiency.
- Allow the head to identify areas of strength and interests which can lead to professional development and new opportunities for the EA.
- Anticipate potential problems and offer a chance to act before issues become crises.



The most successful leaders have solid support and work as a team with their EAs. You should be partners working toward a common purpose. Make sure your goals are aligned. Remember that you don't work *for the HOS*, you work *for the organization*. You work *with* your head of school; the tasks you work on should be aligned with the goals and the tasks the head spearheads. The partnership should be rich and rewarding for both of you.