Life as an EA – an interview with Ariana

We had the pleasure of interviewing Ariana, an Executive Assistant in Canada. It was a very insightful interview, and Ariana was kind enough to share her experience and professional journey with us.

Ariana’s journey to being an EA began with her having a background in psychology and sociology. She started out with Customer Experience roles as she loved facilitating positive experiences for people and is very passionate about psychology.

The COVID brought a lot of changes for people and businesses, for Ariana, it was when she pivoted to being an Executive Assistant supporting executives and handling different projects. It did not come without a lot of challenges. Being a new field for her, she had a lot to learn. She taught herself invoicing, learned to make mistakes and learn from it, as well as leaning on people who are doing it right. She was also able to apply her psychology experience, as it helped her understand human behaviour and how to work with different personalities.

Some of her greatest fears as a beginner, like for a lot of people, were making the ask for projects needing sponsorship, pitching ideas to potential sponsors on how sponsoring the projects would be beneficial to them. Even more daunting was having to reach out to municipalities in projects involving the government. However, as she recounts, once the first contact is made, it is no longer as scary. You would realize that the people you were scared of are people too, and nice ones at that.

As an EA, one of the many things you would have to do is schedule meetings. You need to constantly communicate, multitask, double-check the availability of your executive and whoever they are seeing. You also need to be open to pivot because things are known to not always go according to plan, that includes your executive’s schedule.

Throughout Ariana’s day, she has to communicate with different people in her organization at different levels especially as someone who also supports the board of directors in her organization. According to Ariana “communication is number one”. It is critical to being a successful Executive assistant. You need to focus on how to develop your communication skills as it will help you gain experience and improve your work.

As an EA, Ariana dedicates time to learning, reading articles, LinkedIn newsletters to keep her updated. Learning is a part of her life, not just for her work but as a whole life experience. Whether it is psychology, new and more efficient ways of administration, new technology, she is keen on familiarizing herself with new trends and technology that makes her more efficient.

There are a lot of tools that make us more efficient in our work as administrative professionals. In her learning journey, Ariana started by playing around with HoneyBook to learn invoicing. Now, the common tools she uses for her work are QuickBooks, Google Drive, which she uses to share her work with her executives and higher ups in the organization to keep them on track with projects, and Google Calendar as it is preferred by a lot of people she works with. As a digital marketing specialist, she also uses the social media management platform, Later. As an EA, you should be ready to learn to work with different software and platforms as needed by your organization or clients.

What we can learn from Ariana experience is that you do not need to have an administrative background to thrive as an administrative professional. You only need to learn to apply the knowledge and experiences you already have. More importantly, you should be curious and eager to learn new things, take initiative and in Ariana’s words “put yourself out there as much as you can whether it is on LinkedIn or in-person”.