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## TRANSCRIPT OF PODCAST

Work with Purpose

EPISODE #49

THE EA JOURNEY

Hosted by Alyssa Broomby, Executive Assistant to the Head of Simplified Trade System Implementation Taskforce and Deputy Chair of IPAA ACT's EA Committee.

# TRANSCRIPT

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David Pembroke:

Hello, everyone, and welcome to Work with Purpose, a podcast about the Australian Public Service. My name's David Pembroke. Thanks for joining me. Today's program features a discussion from the unsung heroes of the Australian Public Service, the executive assistants. IPAA ACT, for many years, has brought together EAs from across the Commonwealth in its EA committee. As most of you know, it is the EAs of the APS' most senior executives that keep the world moving and their bosses running, managing the relentless demands on their time. They are the diary managers, the coordinators, the access controllers, the confidants and the trusted advisors who work long and demanding hours in support of their teams.

David Pembroke:

The host of our conversation today is Alyssa Broomby, who works for Randall Brugeaud who has recently taken up the role's head of the Simplified Trade System Implementation Taskforce. Alyssa is joined in conversation by Martin Elliffe, who is the diary manager for the ACT health minister, Rachel Stephen-Smith, Rhana Crago, Rosemary Huxtable's EA at the department of finance, and Courtney Djerke an EA at the law firm, MinterEllison, who are a longstanding and important partner of IPAA ACT. This is a wonderfully rich conversation, and I'm sure you'll enjoy it.

Alyssa Broomby:

Hello everyone, and welcome to today's Work with Purpose podcast on the EA journey. My name is Alyssa Broomby and I'm the executive assistant to Randall Brugeaud who is the head of the Simplified Trade System Implementation Taskforce. I'm also the deputy chair of IPAA's IPAA ACT's EA committee. I begin today's podcast by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we are broadcasting from, the Ngunnawal people and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the ongoing contribution they make to the life of our country and this region. This Work with Purpose podcast is a special addition brought to you by IPAA ACT EA committee. I will be interviewing a panel of extraordinary administrators to explore what is involved in their roles, what they love about their work and what they've learned on their journeys so far.

Alyssa Broomby:

So, I'd like to introduce our panellists for this podcast. We have Martin Elliffe, the diary manager for Minister Stephen-Smith, ACT minister for health. We have Rhana Crago, executive assistant to the secretary of the department of finance and we have Courtney Djerke, executive assistant at MinterEllison and also one of our committee members of the IPAA EA series. Thank you all so much for joining us today. Now, as we know, the theme for today's discussion is the journey of an executive assistant or an administrator and I'd like to open this conversation with some questions to our panel on their experience on how the role of an EA or more broadly, of support staff has evolved. So, Courtney, I'm going to hand to you to kick this one off. Can you tell us a bit about how your EA career began and what attracted you to being an EA and how your early days as an EA aligned to your expectations of the role?

Courtney Djerke:

Thanks, Alyssa. So, going back nine years now, with the exception of six months of study and then some maternity leave, I still remember applying for my then role of trainee legal secretary which is now executive assistant in the dispute resolution team at MinterEllison. I received the call that I was successful on a bus in the Gold Coast going to Movie World. And to be totally honest, what attracted me to the role was my mum. My

mum had been a legal secretary at the time for 18 years when we lived in New Zealand and she had such a positive experience that she didn't suggest that I go into that role, but listening to her stories, I knew that that was something that I was ready to explore.

Courtney Djerke:

So, I specifically applied for the traineeship as the support and training that MinterEllison provided was exactly what I needed being fresh out of Year 12. Within my first year of working at MinterEllison, I completed my Certificate III in business legal support. My team and I discussed a suitable time that I could lock myself away in an office for three hours a week to complete the units. And as every EA knows, or support staff know, that doesn't always work. So, I would always try to get at least an hour in during the week. So, within the first year, I completed that and I also had a mentor who would assist with my training and someone who that I could bombard with my hundred questions a day to which I still ask her if I have a problem.

Courtney Djerke:

As an executive assistant at MinterEllison, we play a huge role of administration support, specifically in the dispute resolution team. I can, on a daily basis, compile briefs, court documents. There's also the matter management aspect of my role. We have to make sure all the online files are up to date and all the court dates are scheduled. Once a month is one of my biggest tasks which is invoicing, sometimes can take up to seven days with drafting, reviewing, sending them around the team, getting them back, finalising and sending them out and then along with the traditional executive assistant support of diary management, answering phones and supporting the team ad hoc.

Courtney Djerke:

So, my expectations of the role nine years ago, as you can imagine, were very different to now. However, they were very accurate and very positive. The best part of my experience was coming into MinterEllison as a trainee. There weren't massive expectations of me because I didn't know what I was coming into. It was a learning curve for the team. It was a learning curve for me. So, we all learnt how to work together and they would take the time to train me and I would take the time to ask them questions. I was a little bit shy back then, so I would save them all up. But yeah, it worked really well. Yeah, the expectations are different now, obviously and the roles have evolved a lot, but back then, it was an easy transition into full-time employment from school.

Alyssa Broomby:

Yeah, wow. Thanks for sharing, Courtney. That is so incredible and I really like how you touched on how you can design the role and leverage the experience of the people around you to really grow into the role and especially how the role, especially now, isn't what it used to be. So, there's so many other elements to an executive assistant role that isn't the diary and inbox anymore. You are really contributing to the work of your organisation or to your boss and it's really nice to hear that you started that so early on in your career and you've been able to take that through until now and I'm sure as everyone does, we learn more and more every day. So, that's really great. Thanks for sharing.

Alyssa Broomby:

And that's a really nice segue into our next question actually, which is over to you, Martin. I imagine your role in the ACT health minister's office would require a particularly unique set of skills to fulfil such a broad and critical position and a really big range of responsibilities. Can you tell us a bit about how you found your way into your role and what skills you think have contributed to the success of your role so far?

Martin Elliffe:

Yeah, sure. So, I guess I'll just start with just a brief outline of what my role is. So, as the minister's office manager, I am a little bit like her left-hand man, whereas the chief of staff is the right hand. I manage the office inbox. So, I'll sort through all of the correspondence that we receive, send them to the right places where they need to go. I'll also help with actually responding to that correspondence. So, during normal times, when we are not in a pandemic, I would be focusing on helping her to respond to constituent correo, so I would draft those responses and then give them to her to have to finalise. At the moment, I'm also doing a lot in terms of actually responding to the COVID-related correo that we receive. So, all of the emails that we get asking am I allowed to do this, why can't I do that, all that kind of stuff, I get the fun job of responding to those emails.

Martin Elliffe:

Similarly, I also manage the office phone, so engaging with the public that way. It's my job to see through that call to completion and to help that person as much as our office can, though that is often just getting down their details to pass that on to the relevant area of the public service that can actually help them. But I still need to actually have the conversation with them about their story which is not always a fun conversation because people don't necessarily ring the minister's office because their life is going great.

Martin Elliffe:

In terms of the skills that are necessary, obviously, you need to be able to communicate effectively with the public. It's also really important to engage with the team around me. So, building up those relationships with not only people in my office but the people in other ministers' offices that I work very closely with. So, I work very closely with my counterparts in other ministers' offices and I think across the assembly, we have a very strong sense of support and comradery, which is incredibly valuable to all of us. When we immediately went into lockdown, it was very much a huge focus on correspondence. So, we were getting an enormous amount of emails, an enormous amount of calls, and so that was kind of my main focus, and that structure kind of fell apart. And so, I think, yeah, having those kind of coping mechanisms and ability to kind of take control as much as you can within your own workday, I found to be really important, being able to find the joys in your day when it's incredibly stressful.

Martin Elliffe:

One of the worst parts about my job are those conversations that I have with people about how tough things are going for them, about the terrible experience they had in the hospital, about how they can't go and see their elderly mum. And to give you some context, Rachel is also the minister for child protection in the ACT. So, every now and then, I'll get some terrible call about how someone's child's been taken from them. So, those are obviously very emotionally draining and really difficult to get through.

Martin Elliffe:

But I found what gets me through that and what makes those experiences worth it is remembering that I'm getting to help these people, not all the time. Sometimes, unfortunately, I do have to say, "Sorry, there's nothing I can do here," but a lot of the time, there is something that we can do and getting to know that I've made a difference in this person's life, or I've at least helped them to get to the person that can make a difference in their life is absolutely amazing though. Those moments bring me absolute joy, especially every now and then, I'll get someone that actually will email me back or will call me back and say, "Thank you, thank you so much for your help. This problem has now been solved and it's amazing." Or even just I got an email today, which was literally just like, "Thank you for your response." That was like, "Oh my god, that's so sweet. Thank you so much," because that's how low the bar is.

Martin Elliffe:

But yeah, being able to enjoy and appreciate those moments in your day that make your job worth it and make your job so incredibly special and unique and that brings you joy is just a very important skill, I think, for an EA to have.

Alyssa Broomby:

Wow, thanks so much for sharing, Martin. There were so many good messages in that. That was incredible. I really love that you touched on the opportunities that are available. So, particularly the EOI process into your new role and being able to identify opportunities that are going to help you grow in your role. But what I really loved is touching on the fact that your role makes a difference, and it doesn't matter who it's to. It can be to the executive that you work for and you make a profound difference to them every day. It doesn't matter who you are, but also to the people that you don't see every day, and it's such a nice reminder that the impact that particularly an assistant or an office manager, anyone can have just by saying thank you or just by being thanked. It's really, really, really powerful. So, thanks so much for sharing.

Alyssa Broomby:

Now, there's no doubt that the last couple of years have become with a particular set of challenges. We've all experienced lockdowns and remote work that comes with lockdown which has been a joy. And with the EA role and for you, Martin, as an office manager, it plays a particularly important role as a central point of contact and the person who tends to connect many dots and the pandemic has certainly shaken up the dynamic with teams being taken offline and dispersed and with EAs working remotely and especially away from their executives and I'm going to throw this on to you, Rhana. You are here with many moons of experience. Can you share your experience working in a highly autonomous role in a remote environment and some strategies you've implemented to support, change and challenge, not only for you but for the secretary and for the EA work and the broader department as well?

Rhana Crago:

Yeah, well, you know me, Alyssa, you've known me for a little while and I have to say, I have been doing this role for a very long time and I'm not ordinarily the most adaptive or welcoming of change. So, the lockdown last year and this year has kind of thrown a few dinosaurs like myself into the mix and we've had to change quickly and we've had to embrace change. Personally, my own personal experience was that I'm no friend of IT. So, trying to take on a lot more IT, having to communicate through Team sessions, Gov Teams that we use, doing a lot more electronically which I know is the way of the world, having that thrust on us so quickly was a little hard, but there was also a lot of satisfaction in adopting and adapting those processes or adapting to those processes.

Rhana Crago:

So, I think in having to do that, I think maybe to look at a positive of lockdown is that the EA role, it has evolved, as actually Courtney said earlier, it's evolved very quickly in a short amount of time. I've seen the role evolve over my 20-something years that I've been doing this, but there's been a lot of change in a very short amount of time. And broadly speaking, I think that most EAs have adapted extremely well, especially you young ones. You've just grabbed bulls by the horns and done it. But I think it has seen a lot of change for us and a lot of changes that we will take with us when we go back to whatever will be the new normal, business as usual if we want to call it that.

Rhana Crago:

So, in so far as supporting my secretary and the team, the thing that I find very hard is that when I'm in the office, I have opportunities to crash tackle my boss when she walks past me at my desk and it's those opportunities that I think as EAs or office managers, Martin, we need that. We need those chances to be able

to grab our boss for the little things, rather than have to keep a note and then do them in an email at the end of the day or something like that. So, I miss that terribly. I'm sure if you ask my secretary if she misses being buttonholed by me, she would say no. I think she's quite enjoying the peace and quiet from me. EAs, we do a lot of that. There's a lot of the little one on one quick stuff that we need to do and that's one thing that I miss.

Rhana Crago:

I'm much more used to working from home and working remotely now than the first few weeks and especially the first weeks of the last lockdown last year. I think I had two weeks where I thought, "I'm not going to survive this," because of such a quick embrace of the virtual world, but it wasn't so scary after all. And for the most time, most part, it worked. So, I think the lockdown aspect and working remotely, the personal interaction for me is the hardest, but we've managed to keep good communication going through channels like we're using right now with Gov Teams and I know other people use Zoom and WebEx and all those things. I think it's been a very effective method of keeping teams together and touching base and keeping each other informed.

Rhana Crago:

Then our EA network, this is actually, I feel this is actually quite interesting. We've had a few of virtual meetings with my closer EA team, so the EA that support our deputy secretaries, so the immediate team. We went out and asked our broader EA network whether they would like to do a meeting virtually and interestingly, they were overwhelmingly keen to wait until we go back to the office. I don't know whether that's a little bit of virtual meeting fatigue potentially, or whether they just kind of feel a bit like I do. There's that personal interaction and we get more out of that. But having been said, we're all working extremely efficiently under some pretty trying circumstances. So, it's been a very interesting time, not without challenges, but we're EAs and we take these challenges and we run with them.

Alyssa Broomby:

Thanks, Rhana. You've got so many good points always, but yeah, I mean, I especially love that you really highlighted that it's okay to acknowledge that this is hard. It's okay to acknowledge that the change is hard, adapting to different ways of working is challenging because we are that central point of contact, feeling like we're almost responsible for rolling that out or bringing people together, but knowing that it's difficult and that everyone's in the same boat is really helpful, but also knowing that there are workarounds. Everything's possible, everyone feels the same. So, that's really nice. With all of that change around us, we just have to adapt and adapting is key and we do it every day in an executive assistant role anyway and particularly if we move on to new managers or we're in a new environment, we have to adapt.

Alyssa Broomby:

So, I too acknowledge all of the EAs that have worked through this change. It has been enormous and incredibly done. It's really amazing. And obviously, with that change, we have had to kind of re-evaluate our work-life balance and particularly in a working from home environment, and I'm sure there are many, many occasions when the three of you work long hours to support your executives and different things that they have going on, and in the current environment especially, there's a finer line between the balance of work and personal life because there aren't those visual cues of people leaving the office with the lights going off at the end of the day, or going out for lunch in their activewear, things like that. So, we really have to be mindful of time and how we look after ourselves. Now, Martin, I'm going to go back to you on this one to see what strategies you've put in place to maintain a balance of your work and personal life, and how has remote work or working from home impacted that balance.

Martin Elliffe:

Sure. So, that's definitely something that I have struggled with over the last, oh god, a month now, more than a month. So, yeah, the first two weeks of lockdown, well, basically, I didn't get a full day off for those two weeks. I was still working from home over the weekends because we were just getting too many emails. Obviously, that was not sustainable and so I have certainly made much more of an effort to create that balance. I think I am relatively privileged in that, as a parliamentary staffer, I count as an essential worker and I'm able to come into the office when I need to. So, that has certainly helped.

Martin Elliffe:

I suppose going back to what I was talking about before, in terms of creating a structure, I think maybe I'm just a control freak, but those ways of taking control back into your day as much as you can, I've found to be really helpful. Also, cutting yourself some slack in terms of how much you can get done in a day in terms of... Or also being mindful about other people in your team, working from home, and their different circumstances. In our office, we have two new dads and so I need to be aware that they're not going to be as responsive as I might like them to be because they have a baby. Whilst I have been working much later, I've also been allowing myself, yeah, again, a bit of slack in terms of actually when I start work. So, I've consistently been a little bit late to work at the moment.

Martin Elliffe:

I've made the very conscious choice to give myself, I suppose, moments of joy throughout the day, including in the morning. So, in the mornings, I'll try and do a bit of exercise, maybe read a book, that kind of stuff, something fun before I start work, making sure that I have a lunch prepared that I'm going to really enjoy. I had one day where I had a lunch that was very healthy but was not what I needed after a very sad phone call. I was like, "This is not what I need right now. I need something deep-fried and smothered in chocolate, and this is not it." And I guess making sure that you are giving yourself those moments, allowing yourself to have time to recognise, yes, this is really hard as you were saying, Rhana, and allowing yourself little moments to freak out when things go wrong, but then going, "Okay, you've had your moment, let's calm down now and get on with it."

Martin Elliffe:

Yeah, so yeah. So, allowing myself a little bit of slack, making sure that I am getting those moments of pleasure or joy throughout the day, even when things are really hard, that's been really important for me and again, making sure that there is, even so, some kind of structure to my day which I think would be even more important if I wasn't coming into work as regularly as I was or am.

Alyssa Broomby:

Yeah, I really like that, Martin. Thank you for sharing, and it really does highlight the importance of having some kind of structure and people say it all the time, having a bit of a routine and some structure and some things that fill your cup is really important. And I guess without that, it can have an impact on you and it can particularly impact your mental health and conscious of the people around us and how their personal circumstances, how that can impact their mental health as well. So, Courtney, I'm keen to hear some things that you do to help support the mental health of not only yourself but the people who you work with as well.

Courtney Djerke:

Thanks, Alyssa. So, the mental health of myself, I'm currently juggling a three-year-old little boy at home, as well as a full-time executive assistant role. So, something for myself and for him and it's just going back to the roots basically is we go for a walk every day, whether it's 10 minutes around the block or 20 minutes to the park, and it just gets us out. It gets me away from the computer and that really helps with my mental health, well, especially if the sun's shining, unlike today.

Courtney Djerke:

But with my team, I believe that communication is key. You have to check in. My team are constantly checking in on me. I'm constantly checking in on them. One of the main things I do as an EA to help support my team and their mental health is I facilitate a regular team check-in every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for 15, 20 minutes. We talk about work sometimes. We just kind of whinge or we talk about what we're watching on Netflix and it's nice to have that face-to-face communication. I know on the days where we don't have our catch-up, sometimes I can go all day without talking to someone or seeing someone face to face. So, I find that that really helps with the mental health.

Courtney Djerke:

I like to also check in on my team's morale. So, I kind of like to use myself as a bit of an ear on the ground to my team. So, I monitor the staff morale and give feedback to my boss if anyone seems to be struggling as everyone in my team and in fact, everyone at the moment is faced with various different challenges and we just don't know what's going on with anyone at the moment. It's all so different and not being in face-to-face, you don't have those cues on how people are going. So, the video also gives the opportunity to check in on people that way.

Courtney Djerke:

And another thing I like to do is to try and stay on top of important milestones or things that are happening in my team members' lives, like birthdays, people buying houses, exciting little things that we would celebrate in the office. We would go out for coffee. We would have a morning tea, but at home, it doesn't get missed as such, but it's not as celebrated as much as you would like it to be. So, I do like to try to remember those things and make a fuss when I can.

Alyssa Broomby:

That's so great, Courtney. I love that you touched on that and it really highlights the importance of just, yeah, staying connected, using your network and how much those just small little milestones mean to people. A simple happy birthday on a team's channel can go a long way. I know that myself, it's really lovely. And now the last question is for Rhana. We've just heard Martin and Courtney touch on the balance of work and supporting mental health and I know that you have an extraordinary hobby and I assume that's not able to be done right now, but what are some things that you can suggest EA or that you do to unwind stress and support work-life balance and a healthy mental state.

Rhana Crago:

Okay. So, just to clarify the mystery around my extraordinary hobby, it's just stand-up paddling. So, I don't know if I'd call it extraordinary, but it is just so much fun. If you get the chance, go do it. Probably not right now, wait for the sunshine and for the lake to be a little bit clean. But, yeah, but thank you, Alyssa and nice memory. Look, you know what? I agree completely with the points that both Courtney and Martin made, just looking after yourself, making sure that you're taking regular breaks. It is way too easy to fall into the groundhog day trap and certainly, at the start of this lockdown, we were doing that.

Rhana Crago:

So, I'm in a team of three that support the secretary and we were working around the clock almost and weekends became a blur. You weren't entirely sure if it was Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday. And you can do that for a period of time when you have to and at that point, we had to. There were cabinet-level meetings that our secretary was involved in on a daily basis several times a day and they didn't stop on weekends. So, we did get caught up in that, not particularly healthy, but it is what it is and we do it.



Rhana Crago:

But then when the opportunity comes around, you need to take a deep breath. You need to go and get some fresh air and do the things that actually take your mind off work for a little bit. If it's going for a walk... Can I just say more praise to you people that are raising children and working from home and homeschooling and doing all that because I just have a large dog who loves to nudge me as soon as I'm on a video conference. So, that's all I have to deal with, but it's actually a good reminder too because she needs to get out. She can't figure out why Mum is home and not walking her. So, it's a good reminder to go stretch my legs. It's amazing how much it clears the head.

Rhana Crago:

So, hanging onto those things and just remembering that when we don't have to work around the clock, we owe ourselves a life and we owe ourselves to take a breath and then that way we do a better job. We're in a much better space to continue doing the high-level work that we're all doing. Martin, you mentioned something about that you thrive on the positives when you receive an email that thanks you for your work. They're little things, but it's those things that are really important to hang on for your mental health and wellbeing. A lifetime ago, I worked in a minister's office and I dealt with constituents so I know exactly where you're coming from and it's a rare occasion that you'll get a phone call or a letter to thank you.

Rhana Crago:

There are far more negative aspects to the job, but it's important to compartmentalise those and take the positives because they're the things that will give you that job satisfaction. They're the things that will reward you and more importantly, now more than ever is to focus on those and take those because it's way too easy to get bogged down into negativity and that is just not healthy or helpful for you, for your teammates, or the person you're supporting. So, yeah, Martin, I really enjoyed listening to you and the comments you made about how getting that kind of feedback is really important.

Rhana Crago:

And I, for one, have never a binge-watcher of anything ever, but I have found myself, my little joyous moments now include a bag of Darrel Lea Milk Chocolate Liquorice Bullets and binge watching Ted Lasso and if you haven't watched it, I highly recommend it because it's extraordinarily funny and very uplifting. So, whatever puts a smile on your face and takes your mind off the negativity, I say do it.

Rhana Crago:

And also, Courtney, I think you talked about catching up with your colleagues. I'm also doing a similar thing. We're having what I call locktails once in a while with some of my EAs just casually if they're free and they want to join virtually and we'll all have a chat and a download for half an hour. But sometimes reaching out to somebody, it's a two-way benefit there. You can understand what they're going through. Sometimes it can put your own concerns or your own thoughts into a perspective. It gives them time to have a download and I think it's a really healthy thing. So, just to, yeah, reach out and say to a colleague, "Hey, how you going?" Even if it's a, "Yeah, I'm fine. How are you?" And it's a two-minute conversation. There's no bad that can come from it. It's a really positive thing to do, just to keep those connections and the communication going, yeah.

Alyssa Broomby:

Mm, that's such a good point, Rhana. Thank you for sharing and such great advice as always. It's so amazing that we really have to be conscious about everything that we do now, especially those informal connections and just because we're during work time doesn't mean we can't reach out to people in our current network and our broader network as well, people who we've worked with before, people who make our days brighter,

just to be able to make it easier to deal with the current environment. It's so nice and also just giving ourselves time and space which is really important as well. Thank you for touching on that and thank you for sharing. This has been so fascinating. You all have so many incredible messages to share and so much advice for assistants or administrators, office managers who will listen to this now and into the future which is incredible and lucky them.

Alyssa Broomby:

Just to wrap this up, I'm curious to know if you had one word of advice for anyone considering becoming an EA or an administrator or starting their journey in this kind of role, what would it be? We might start with you, Martin.

Martin Elliffe:

Mine's not really, I suppose, a practical piece of advice. It's more, I suppose, related to what we've talked about which is remember why you're doing it, I suppose. Remember that you are here to help people and I think you need to be able to really find the joy in that and find the joy in helping not only in helping your executive, helping your minister, your office to function, but also depending on the role, recognise that what you do has ripple effects and does touch more than just the people in your office. And I suppose my advice would be to always remember that and to keep that in mind when you are having those tough days and I think that will put you in good stead.

Alyssa Broomby:

Ah, thanks, Martin. That's so great. How about you, Rhana?

Rhana Crago:

Oh, Alyssa, you want me to say one word, I'm not a one-word girl. You know me. There are probably two words that I like to use for EAs or EAs that are asking me if they think they should want a career in the field, respect and resilience. I think resilience more now than any time at all. If you can't find that element of resilience within yourself, you're going to struggle doing the job. Look, we're constantly under pressure and the pressures will ebb and they will flow. But when our boss is under huge pressure, we are too just by virtue of the job. We need to dig deep, let things roll off your back and as the saying goes, keep calm and carry on, but dig deep. Find that resilience because you'll just bog yourself down if you can't. I could bang on about that forever.

Rhana Crago:

The other one that I'm really keen to use though is respect. You need to have respect for the person that you're working to, so your executive. You need to have that respect and that's got to be a mutual thing, but you also need to show some respect to the people in teams working under you if you want the best from them. Our job is an assistant. It's right there in the title. We assist. We need assistance to be able to do that. If you want support from your teams, show them some respect, be a little kind and you'll find that you will get a much better reaction and much better support from teams. Steamroller approach, forget it. That will get you nowhere. Be firm, but please take a little bit of... Use a little bit of respect when you're dealing with people and you'll get that back too. I've always found that in my working environments. I like to think that I'm fairly respectful of people that are supporting me because I can't do my job without them. Sorry. There's my one word.

Alyssa Broomby:

Oh, I love that. Thank you for sharing. Definitely worth the extended one word. And Courtney, how about you? What's your advice to EAs wanting to start seen as you pretty much started from the very beginning?

Courtney Djerke:

I think what Rhana and Martin have said is amazing. I think the resilience and respect, a hundred percent I agree. If you are considering a role as an EA fresh out of school, maybe looking to a traineeship because the expectations are a lot lower. There's the support from, well, in my case, my firm and my team and you grow. You learn and you grow and you become an EA that you've moulded yourself into and can make your role your own.

Alyssa Broomby:

Oh, I love that. Thank you for sharing. Thank you all for sharing. And that brings us to the end of the podcast today. On behalf of IPAA ACT and the EA Series Committee, I really want to say a huge thank you to you, Courtney, Rhana, and Martin for so generously sharing your experience and amazing advice. I've learned so much from you today and have such a deepened appreciation for what you do as my assistant colleagues, but just for you as people. You have shared an incredible amount and I know that people will learn from this now and into the future. So, that concludes our discussion today. Thank you again.

Rhana Crago:

Thank you. Nice to meet you, Martin and Courtney.

Martin Elliffe:

No worries.

Courtney Djerke:

Ah, thank you.

Martin Elliffe:

Thanks, everyone.

David Pembroke:

So, there you go. And a very big thank you to Alyssa Broomby, Martin Elliffe, Rhana Crago and Courtney Djerke. Our leaders are certainly in good hands. And I hadn't really considered before listening to the conversation of the important role that EAs play in looking out for people and their mental health, but I guess it makes sense.

David Pembroke:

A big thanks to you, the audience, for giving up some of your time and attention once again to listen to today's important conversation, and we certainly do appreciate it. Work with Purpose is part of the GovComms Podcast Network and if you would like to subscribe to the podcast, which I strongly suggest that you do, you'll find it by typing the name into any of your favourite podcast apps and it will come up. If you do happen to see the social media promotion for this episode in your social media feeds, a like or a share never goes astray and if you do have time for a rating or review, that will certainly also help the podcast to be found by others.

David Pembroke:

Thanks once again, to our great partners at IPAA ACT and the Australian Public Service Commission who have been so supportive in making these important conversations take place, and also to the team at contentgroup who play a role in producing the program each fortnight. I'm David Pembroke. Thanks for joining me. We'll be back at the same time in a fortnight, but for the moment, it's bye for now.

Voiceover:

Work with Purpose is a production of contentgroup in partnership with the Institute of Public Administration Australia and with the support of the Australian Public Service Commission.