

Strategic Leverage: The ROI You're Overlooking in the C-Suite

No other role contributes seven-figure value on a five-figure salary

In high-stakes business environments, executives are among the most valuable investments an organisation can make. Senior leaders earning \$500,000 or more annually are expected to return five to ten times their salary in business impact. That's not theory-it's commercial reality. Whether through revenue generation, risk mitigation, strategic execution, or operational optimisation, high-level executives are responsible for delivering tangible value to the enterprise.

No executive can deliver at that level without leverage.

That leverage is found in the calibre of their support structure, particularly the Executive Assistant.

Consider this: last year, ASX filings showed that Shemara Wikramanayake, Chief Executive of Macquarie Group, received a salary of \$30 million**. Shemara wasn't appointed CEO to deliver just \$30 million of value to Macquarie Group. Shareholders expect a return of at least five to ten times that figure, equating to \$150 to \$300 million in business value.

If a high-performing Executive Assistant increases Macquarie Group's CEO's productivity by just 10% (a conservative amount), the potential business uplift could reasonably range from \$15 to \$30 million. Perhaps that also suggests the Executive Assistant enabling that level of performance is worth far more than a traditional support salary. If they are contributing that scale of value, could that imply an EA salary of *a million or two*?

At the very least, it demands a rethink of how organisations value the people who multiply leadership impact.

***On a side note for our international readers, these are Australian Executive pay scales. We know our US readers are giggling at how these rates compare to their US counterparts.*

From Support Role to Strategic Asset

The traditional framing of the EA as a task-oriented administrative function is long outdated. Today's high-performing EA is a strategic operator: a force multiplier who enables their executive to spend more time focused on high-value work and less time on low-leverage activity.

An exceptional EA doesn't just manage diaries and logistics. They:

- Redirect executive time and energy toward high-value, high-impact tasks
- Prioritise what matters most and protect executive focus
- Shield the executive from avoidable distractions and decision fatigue
- Triage incoming information and reduce noise

- Manage stakeholder relationships on the executive's behalf
- Provide operational continuity across projects, teams and time zones
- Optimise workflows using technology and automation

And increasingly, they do all of this while harnessing intelligent tools, such as AI assistants, workflow automations, and digital dashboards, to drive speed, clarity, and responsiveness.

20% More Productive = 5–10x More Valuable

Executives at the top of their game rarely have capacity issues. What they have are constraint issues: limited cognitive bandwidth, fragmented schedules, and competing demands.

A world-class EA removes friction across the board. If that enables the executive to operate at just 20% greater effectiveness—not in effort, but in quality decision-making, forward planning, and strategic execution—the downstream impact is exponential.

This isn't about recouping 10 hours a week. It's about:

- Accelerating business-critical decisions
- Protecting commercial opportunities
- Preserving stakeholder trust
- Ensuring flawless operational execution

That kind of enablement doesn't just save time. It magnifies results. Suppose a high-performing executive is worth \$2.5 million to \$5 million annually to the business. In that case, the EA who enables that performance becomes one of the most cost-effective strategic investments the organisation can make.

If you want better performance from your Executives, train their EAs.

If your Executive's output matters, focus on the person managing their input.

If the value of leadership is measured by its impact, how do you amplify that impact every day?

AI, Automation, and the Amplification Effect

The modern EA is no longer just efficient, they are intelligent systems thinkers. They understand how to remove repetition, standardise execution, and leverage emerging tools to reduce latency in decisions and delivery.

When an EA automates routine work, both for themselves and for their executive, they create margin for higher-value work. That margin allows the executive to think more clearly, act more decisively, and lead more effectively.

In this way, automation doesn't replace the EA. It elevates their role—and, by extension, elevates the executive's impact.

The Commercial Imperative for EA Development

Organisations frequently invest tens of thousands annually in executive coaching, leadership programs, and strategy retreats. Yet these same organisations will underinvest in (or even ignore) the people who enable the daily execution of that leadership.

Developing an EA's strategic, technical, and communication capabilities has a direct link to executive performance. It is not a peripheral initiative. It is a high-ROI intervention.

If an EA makes their executive 20% more effective, and that executive is responsible for \$5 million in annual business value, the EA is contributing \$1 million of value to the business, often for a salary that is less than one-tenth of that.

That is not overhead. That is leverage.

No other role contributes seven-figure value with a five-figure salary

Ready to Quantify and Amplify Your EA (& Executive) ROI?

Professional development equips high-potential Executive Assistants with:

- EA & Executive Alignment
- Tools for intelligent automation and prioritisation
- Strategic communication skills
- The mindset to transition from support to leadership enablement

For organisations serious about maximising the value of their executive leadership, this is no longer optional. It's essential.

To learn more or discuss in-house delivery options, visit: ExecutiveAssistant.com