

Be a Revolutionary Assistant

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Don't just experience the working world's dramatic shifts, says Joan Burge, initiate them

It was exactly one year ago this month that I wrote an article for *Executive Secretary Magazine* called *The Resilient Assistant*. Now, here I am one year later, writing about *The Revolutionary Assistant*. *The Resilient Assistant* was the theme for the Office Dynamics' 22nd Annual Conference for Administrative Excellence, which was a huge success.

The Revolutionary Assistant is the theme for the Office Dynamics 2016 Conference for Administrative Excellence in Las Vegas this October. Because of this, I have delved into what it means to be revolutionary, why it is important to disrupt the status quo, and the steps it takes to think differently and make radical changes in yourself and your workplace.

It's no secret that our world is changing faster than anyone thought possible. As an assistant in the modern workplace, it can feel practically impossible to keep up with the ever-evolving landscape of technology, innovation, and connectivity. Yet you have an opportunity to shift from passive observer to active participant — to not only experience the dramatic shifts of the modern working world, but to initiate them. You have the power to take the lead and revolutionize your role, your organizations, and yourself, from the inside out. In doing so, you become an indispensable strategic asset now and in the future.

What does revolutionary mean?

Let's start by looking at the characteristics of being revolutionary. Can you relate to any of them? Be careful, because it's not just about making little changes or coming up with a minor twist to something you are already doing. The revolutionary I'm describing scares you a bit; it's risky; sometimes it's a lonely road.

- Markedly new (markedly means distinctively or noticeably)
- Introducing radical change
- Turning things around
- Groundbreaking
- Visionary
- Pioneer
- Game-changer
- Trailblazer (innovator or initiator)



I recently hosted a free webinar on this topic and some of our attendees asked me to define trailblazer, game-changer, and markedly new. Well the best story I had is when I started my training company for assistants 25-plus years ago. In 1990, no public company was providing in-depth training programs and information for assistants only. Yes, there were a few big seminar companies holding one-day workshops here and there, but nothing of any real meat. And none of them just focused on administrative and executive assistant training. That is exactly why I started Office Dynamics! There was a huge gap. I created something basically out of nothing other than my 20 years' experience working in the field for several companies. I was a trailblazer. I created a path where there was no path. Because I took a huge risk, there are numerous programs and professional development opportunities for assistants today.

So, how can you be a trailblazer? What can you create that does not currently exist? Where are the gaps? What is lacking? Or maybe you can be a game-changer, meaning you come up with an idea that saves money for the company and completely changes the game of your business.

Why is it important to be revolutionary?

- Create opportunities for yourself.
- Minimize career risk.
- Taken more seriously by management.
- Create security within yourself. Security does not lie within your company. It lies within you. If you embrace that philosophy, you will learn

something every day. You will add to your bag of skills on a regular basis. Then if something should happen either because you initiate or it's forced upon you, you will land on your feet. I recently received an email from a seasoned assistant who said, "After 34 years with the company I worked for, my position was eliminated on my 34-year anniversary with them." Ugh! Can you imagine that happening to you?

- Self-satisfaction (you never know what you are capable of accomplishing if you don't stretch yourself).
- Business demands it.
- You can take a more influential role within your organization.
- Become an indispensable strategic asset now and in the future. One of my favorite sayings is, "You are interviewing for your job every day." You must continue to prove you are an asset, especially with companies merging, downsizing, and more managers sharing an assistant.

How do you execute being revolutionary?

If you are revolutionary, you don't wait for others to create change or generate ideas. You keep your eyes open and look for areas of the business where you can make a difference.

1 Take intelligent risks, instead of fearing uncertainty. As Tara-Nicholle, former Founder & CEO of Rethink Multimedia says, "While inaction might seem comfortable and even wise, with every course of inaction incurs possible opportunity costs."

a. Understand that there are only two outcomes possible. "And no — they are not success and failure. Every time you take a risk in pursuit of your dreams, one of two things will happen: either you will succeed at your mission, or you will succeed at getting an education." Either way, you win!

b. Appreciate that critical point where the risk of inaction > risk of action. "When considering whether or not to move a dream or vision forward, whether it be a new product line or a career path pivot, failing to evaluate both the risk of action *and* inaction is a decision trap that leads us to the often-false belief that staying still is safer." I love this one. How many

times do you not act on something? Consider what is the loss by you not taking action?

c. **Right-size the risks of your worst-case scenarios.** “Some of us get fixated and avoid even smart risks because we’ve envisioned our worst-case scenarios, and they have paralyzed us into staying still rather than doing anything to endanger the success we’ve already achieved.” What *is* the worst-case scenario? Is it *really* as bad or tragic as you think? We often blow things out of proportion.

When I speak on thriving on change, I talk about the fear of losing. Many people do not want to lose what they have in order to possibly achieve something better or improve the quality of their life. Even if a person is not in the most ideal situation, they will stay where they are – such as an assistant who works for a less-than-nice manager. I’ve talked to these

assistants. They tell me they would rather stay where they are, even though it is not ideal, rather than risk stepping out. However, you have to lose once in a while in order to win!

2 Challenge the comfort zone, instead of being complacent. This is easy to say, but not so easy for assistants to do. For 25 years, I have been pushing and pulling assistants out of their comfort zones. I do it in baby steps, so they hardly notice it is happening — but they do notice a big difference in themselves when they get to the other side. Here are my strategies for making stepping out easier.

- Recognize there *is* a box! You first have to realize you are thinking in or see the world with a limited view. There is no box other than the one we place upon ourselves.
- Talk to successful “expanders”.
- Take the necessary training.

- Find an accountability partner.
- Incorporate your ideas with those of others.
- Trust your instincts.
- Be a team player. Engage yourself in projects that will make you grow.
- Focus on positive outcomes.
- Remember, practice makes perfect.
- Set aside time for self-analysis.
- Practice in a “safe” setting.

3 Engage in courageous communication, instead of hiding from difficult conversations. As you mature in the business world, you have to learn how to have those less-than-fun conversations. I can’t begin to tell you how many administrative professionals tell me they do not like having tough conversations. And several tell me that they would rather email someone than talk to them when in a situation. The truth is these types of conversations should never take place in an email.

4 Advocate for change and improvement, instead of resisting it.

5 Seek innovative solutions, instead of dwelling in problems.

6 Leverage emerging technology, instead of ignoring or fighting it.

7 Step up to obstacles, instead of hesitating or running away. Obstacles are just a test of your commitment. I have learned more from the barriers and obstacles in my work and personal life than my successes. The reason is because when I hit a road block, I reach out to people I normally would not reach out to. I search for answers and so I learn in the process. I think deeper. My creativity is stimulated.

8 Create opportunities, instead of waiting for them to appear.

To help you keep the revolutionary concepts in your mind, you can download and print your free 8 1/2” x 11” poster to place at your desk or work area. Just go to

<http://officedynamicsconference.com/revolutionary-concepts/>

REVOLUTIONARY

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- **Create opportunities**, instead of waiting for them to appear.

about the author



Joan Burge is known as the red-lipstick-wearing “Rock Star” of administrative and executive Assistant training and a successful entrepreneur who created a unique niche in 1990 by founding a training company that would provide sophisticated, robust educational programs and information to administrative professionals. Joan is an accomplished author (8 books), professional speaker, consultant and corporate trainer. She is the creator of: *Annual Conference for Administrative Excellence*™; *World Class Assistant*™ Certification course; *Star Achievement Series*® Certification and Designation course; 30+ customized workshops, 200+ educational videos, 150+ articles and 900+ blogs for executive and administrative Assistants. Her company, Office Dynamics International, is a global industry leader which offers a broad range of solutions and provides high-performance, sophisticated executive and administrative Assistant training and coaching. For more information visit www.officedynamics.com. Receive Your Free “Clarification of Tasks” assessment. Download at www.bit.ly/clarificationoftasks.

