THE PLAYBOOK

The Scorecard

How to measure and report the value of work that is invisible when it is done well. For assistants and operators, and for the people who decide what they are paid.

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OPENING

The better you get, the less they see

There is a structural unfairness at the centre of this profession and it is worth naming before anything else.

Good operational work produces absences. The meeting that did not overrun. The client who never found out there was a problem. The deadline nobody had to move. The week that felt unusually calm for reasons nobody could quite identify.

Absence does not appear in a performance review. It cannot be counted, it leaves no artefact, and the person who benefited from it experienced it as a quiet week rather than as your work.

So the better you get at this job, the less evidence of it exists. Meanwhile the colleague who visibly rescues a crisis every fortnight looks indispensable, and some of those crises were preventable by someone doing what you do.

This is not a complaint. It is a design problem, and design problems have solutions. If your value is invisible by nature, then making it visible is part of the job rather than something separate from it, and it has to be done deliberately because it will not happen by accident.

What follows is a way to do that which is honest, takes about twenty minutes a month, and does not require you to become the sort of person who talks about themselves constantly.

ONE FINDING WORTH STARTING WITH

The American Society of Administrative Professionals surveyed over 3,700 administrative professionals in 2025. Among those who received a performance-based raise, 51 percent tied that increase to completing external professional development. Whatever else you take from this playbook, note that documented growth is the thing most often converted into money.

CHAPTER 1

Why counting your activity works against you

The instinct, when asked to demonstrate value, is to count what you did. Emails handled. Meetings scheduled. Trips booked. Tickets closed. It feels like evidence and it is the weakest case you can make.

Three reasons, and each one damages you differently.

Activity is not value, and everyone knows it. A large number of scheduled meetings could mean you are running a tight operation or that the business has a meeting problem you are enabling. The number alone does not say which, so the reader supplies their own interpretation and it is rarely the flattering one.

It invites the wrong comparison. Once you have framed your contribution as volume of tasks, you are competing with anyone who can do tasks, including software. That is an argument you cannot win and should not enter.

It hides the work you actually want credit for. The judgment call, the prevented problem, the system you built that removed forty tasks from existence, none of these increase your activity count. Several of them reduce it. A busy assistant is not obviously better than a calm one, and your counting suggests otherwise.

> **Report what changed because you were there, not what passed through your hands.**

The reframe is simple and it takes discipline to hold. Every line of your scorecard should describe a difference in the business rather than an action you performed. Not "processed 340 invoices" but "days to collect fell from 44 to 31." Same work, entirely different conversation.

CHAPTER 2

The four kinds of value

Operational work produces value in four distinct ways, and they are not equally easy to prove. Knowing which kind you are describing tells you what evidence to gather.

EASIEST TO PROVE

Time returned

Hours handed back to someone more expensive than y

EASY TO PROVE

Money moved

Cost removed, cash collected sooner, spend avoided

HARDER, STILL POSSIBLE

Risk removed

Problems that stopped being possible, not just solved

HARDEST, AND REAL

Judgment applied

Decisions that went well because you were in the roor

Figure: four kinds of value, in descending order of how easily they are evidenced

Lead with the top two and let them carry the bottom two. A scorecard that opens with hours returned and money moved earns the credibility to then claim the judgment work, which is where most of your real contribution actually sits but which nobody accepts as an opening argument.

Risk removed is worth learning to phrase properly, because it is the category that describes prevented problems. The trick is to describe the mechanism rather than the hypothetical: "access is now revoked on the leaving date rather than whenever someone remembers" is checkable. "Prevented a data breach" is not.

CHAPTER 3

Building the scorecard

One page. Twelve lines at most. Updated monthly in about twenty minutes, and it exists whether or not anyone asks to see it.

WHAT CHANGED	BEFORE	NOW	EVIDENCE
Days to collect on invoices	44	31	ageing report
Founder hours in status meetings	6/wk	1.5/wk	calendar
Weekly report assembly	90 min	automated	the script
Onboarding steps missed	varies	0 in 5 hires	checklist

Figure: four columns. The fourth is the one that makes it credible.

The before column is the hard part, and it must be captured first. You cannot demonstrate an improvement you never measured beforehand. This is the single most common reason good operators cannot prove their work: they fixed the thing before recording what it looked like broken.

So in your first weeks anywhere, measure a handful of things you are confident are bad and change nothing. Days to collect. Time to produce the weekly report. How often something is escalated to the founder. Four weeks of baseline costs you nothing and is worth more than a year of retrospective estimation.

The evidence column matters more than the numbers. A figure somebody can go and check is worth ten they have to accept on trust, and naming where it came from removes the suspicion that you selected it.

CHAPTER 4

What to actually track

A menu rather than a prescription. Pick four or five that match what you genuinely do, and ignore the rest. A scorecard measuring things you do not influence is worse than none.

01 **Time returned to someone senior**

Hours per week the leader no longer spends in status meetings, assembling reports, or handling things you now handle. Take it from the calendar rather than from estimation.

02 **Cycle times you influence**

Days to collect an invoice, days to fill a role, time from request received to work started, time to produce a recurring report. These move visibly and they are hard to argue with.

03 **Things that stopped reaching the leader**

Count what you absorbed. Requests resolved without escalation, decisions made at your level, fires handled. This is the closest honest measure of the invisible work.

04 **Spend removed or avoided**

Subscriptions cancelled, tools consolidated, work brought in-house rather than bought outside. Small numbers, and they are in the currency leadership already thinks in.

05 **Processes that now exist**

Documented, owned, and running without you. Count them, and name the one that ran correctly while you were away.

Two things not to track. Hours you personally worked, which rewards the wrong behaviour and invites the wrong conversation. And anything you cannot influence, because you will be held to it in a bad quarter without having been credited for it in a good one.

CHAPTER 5

The monthly note

The scorecard is the record. The monthly note is how it reaches people, and sending it consistently matters more than any individual line in it.

Five lines, sent on the same day each month, to the person you report to. Not a request for anything. Not a performance argument. Simply a short statement of what moved, which over a year becomes an unarguable record that exists in someone else's inbox rather than only in your folder.

THE SHAPE OF IT

One line on what improved and by how much. One line on what you took off their plate. One line on what is now documented or automated. One line on what you are working on next. One line naming anything you need from them. Then stop.

Include the month where nothing improved. This is what separates a record from a marketing exercise. A note that reports a flat month, or a thing you tried that did not work, makes the eleven positive ones believable. Sending only good news teaches people to discount all of it.

The other reason to send it monthly is memory. At review time, nobody accurately recalls March. If the only account of March is one you wrote in April and they read at the time, that account becomes the history. The record that exists is the record that counts, and almost nobody in this profession keeps one.

Keep it genuinely short. A five-line note gets read for years. A one-page monthly report gets read twice and then filed, and the filing is where value goes to be forgotten.

CHAPTER 6

The conversation about money

Everything above exists so that this conversation is short, unemotional and evidence-led. If you have been sending the monthly note for a year, most of it has already happened in writing.

Open with the record, not the request. "Here is what changed in the year" followed by four lines from the scorecard. You are not asking them to believe anything; you are asking them to look at something they have already seen twelve times.

Bring an external reference point. Published ranges exist and are checkable. Robert Half's 2026 guide places senior executive assistants between roughly $76,750 and $97,250 in the United States, and reports that 84 percent of hiring managers say they will pay more for in-demand skills. Naming a source converts an opinion about your worth into a market fact you are both looking at.

Then connect development to the raise explicitly. This is where the ASAP finding earns its place. Among administrative professionals who received a performance-based increase, 51 percent tied it to completing external professional development. So finish the certification, and say that you finished it, in the same conversation.

> **Ask for a number and a date. A conversation that ends in encouragement rather than in a decision has not ended.**

If the answer is no, ask what specifically would need to be true, get it written down, and set a date to revisit. A no with defined conditions is a plan. A no without them is information about the employer rather than about you, and it is worth having early.

CHAPTER 7

The numbers I will not use

Search for evidence of the value of an executive assistant and you will find the same handful of statistics everywhere. I went looking for their sources and I am not going to hand them to you, because if you use one and somebody checks it, you lose the entire argument.

"An assistant saves an executive eight hours a week." This traces to a 2018 survey by OfficeTeam, a staffing firm, of 600 senior managers who were asked to estimate. It is old, it is self-reported, it is marketing published by a company that sells assistants, and it is frequently attributed to Harvard Business Review, which did not produce it.

"Executives report a 20 to 30 percent productivity increase." Widely circulated on outsourcing company blogs, often credited to Harvard Business Review. I could not trace it to any study at all.

"Eighty percent of leaders rely on an assistant." Vendor content, no traceable primary source.

USE THIS INSTEAD

Your own before-and-after numbers, from your own business, with the evidence named. They are smaller, they are less impressive in isolation, and they are the only ones that survive somebody asking where they came from. A modest number you can defend beats a spectacular one you cannot.

There is a broader point here that applies well beyond a raise conversation. Most published statistics about this profession are produced by companies selling staffing, outsourcing or software, and the incentive runs one way. Being the person in the room who knows where a number came from is itself a professional asset.

CHAPTER 8

What the leader should be measuring

If you are the person deciding what an assistant or operations hire is worth, the difficulty is symmetrical. You know the person is valuable and you find it hard to say precisely why, which makes it hard to defend their compensation and easy to underestimate the cost of losing them.

Measure your own time, not their activity. The clearest signal is what you no longer do. Compare a week now against a week before they started. If the difference is not visible in your calendar, the role is not yet designed properly, and that is a management problem rather than a performance one.

Ask what stopped reaching you. Requests resolved without you, decisions made without you, problems you never heard about. A person who absorbs more each quarter is compounding, and that is the trajectory worth paying to keep.

Look for things that run without them. Documented processes, automated reporting, work that survived their annual leave. An operator who builds systems is worth considerably more than one who is heroically busy, and the second is easier to notice.

And the practical warning. The reason good assistants leave is rarely the money in isolation. It is being unable to see a path, which is what happens when nobody has ever articulated what they contribute. The scorecard is as useful to you as it is to them, and asking for one is a reasonable thing to do.

CLOSING

Start this month, not at review time

The reason this work goes unrecognised is not that people are ungrateful. It is that operational value is genuinely difficult to see from the outside, and the person producing it is usually too busy producing it to describe it.

So the discipline is small and it is early. Measure four things before you improve them. Keep one page with four columns. Send five lines on the same day every month, including the months that were flat. That is perhaps twenty minutes of work, and in a year it becomes a record that no one can argue with because they have been reading it all along.

Then finish the course you have been meaning to finish, because among administrative professionals who received a performance-based raise, more than half tied it to exactly that.

The unfairness at the start of this playbook does not fully go away. The best weeks will still be the ones where nothing happened, and nobody will thank you for a fire that never started.

But if you have the ageing report, the calendar comparison and twelve short notes in somebody's inbox, you will not be relying on them to notice. You will be able to show them, which is a much better position to negotiate from and a considerably calmer way to work.

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