



LET'S MEET VANIA ALESSI

Image of the Profession – Self-Assessment Tools

1. *Tell us about yourself (your background/ journey/experience)*

Hello everyone I'm Vania the co-founder of Secretary.it the first Italian EA/PA community I launched 18 years ago, such a long time ago! In a few words: 9.000 members from all over the country attending hundreds of training sessions, meetings, workshops and conference, knowing each other and empowering. I just turned 50, I was born in Belgium, but I have been living most of my life in Italy. I grew up in a multicultural environment, travelling since I was a child and I got married to a German guy. My professional experience started very young: first as a language tutor for students, then as hostess and interpreter.

I have been supporting executive and top managers since I was very young and while I was working, I graduated in Business & Economics at University and served in several charities. After 14 years of experience as C Level Executive Assistant, and then as Project Manager for the Italian Textile Association, after travelling around the world and managing projects dealing with the entire textile industry, I decided to set up a happy family and raise the self-awareness and business proactivity of our profession.

I have learned so much about leadership, self-improvement and dealing with Executives from all over the world, that I found myself so committed in promoting the evolution of our role. I believe that our profession is an inexhaustible source of learning, because our days are never the same fortunately, because we are people of extreme trust and we have a thousand opportunities to get in touch with the core business of our company. We have access to knowledge and therefore we must catch many opportunities for our growth and in order to be perceived as real business partners of our managers. It may not always be that simple, but I think it is important for many of us to develop this awareness. I believe in trust, continuous learning, in mentoring, in drawing inspiration from all the people with whom I have had the privilege of getting in touch. And this privilege I wish was just yours.

In the era of artificial intelligence, it is more and more relevant to raise our awareness, to know our peers, colleagues, extraordinary people... To find advice, opinions, trainers, mentors and coaches to support us, in everyday life but with a long-range vision, a path of professional and personal growth. To help us excel and guide us, lead us far and think about the future.

Recognition of your role and your abilities and quality starts first from you and from your associations or communities. The WASummit is an extraordinary resource for any EA or Admin to discuss of our profession. And as a fabulous woman named Michelle Obama says in her book "I'm good enough for"... it doesn't have to be a question, but a question to say you're good enough to be the best part of you. Let me close by telling you that I am particularly proud to announce to you that Secretary.it community has sponsored the Isipho project this year and that we are all in love with Tidimalo, our young south African student who will soon become one of our peers!

2. *Which Task Force are you working with/leading?*

I am working with fabulous people in the task force of our Image and Profession of course, with a strong focus on self-assessment tools. Karen, Eleni, Elizabeth together with Sue and Eleanor and the extraordinary Julie Perrine, just to mention some of them. This was quite natural to me, since I have been working for a long time in Italy with my community to enhance the image of

our profession with a great team of Italian Ambassadors and of course collaborating with the most important Associations of Executives, CEO and HR. How do we evolve behind the role? How do we see and brand ourselves? The mindset must change, if we evolve all together. Advocacy for our profession means that we position ourselves and our performances and take the lead. We need to be strategic, understanding opportunities, learn from the past and lead the future. This as a result will help us prioritize our self-development by developing an accurate self- assessment and self-acknowledgment.

3. What inspired you to support the WASummit?

In the last 6 years I had the chance to travel and attend International conferences such as Executive Secretary Live and get to know extraordinary people (Lucy Brazier of course who came to Italy as a speaker to our Secretary Day, Anel Martin, Kem Foley, Eth Lloyd, Diana Brandl and many, many others). Lucy is an extraordinary accelerator of connections, as I think I am. I met Eth again in Rome in a conference I was invited to as a speaker. and the fire was on.

4. What do you see as the key aspects of your involvement with the WASummit?

I truly believe that it is very important to share our knowledge and of course to have a world-wide view and perception of our role, which can be very different according to cultural, political and economic differences in each country. Change can start from the downshift and not from the top today! In the era of social sharing we can make the difference. So it is very important to share with my associates in my country the outcomes, input and templates that WASummit will provide us with, and spread them.

5. How do you plan on using your experience/platform to assist Administrators, and what would you personally like to achieve for the WASummit?

Since I am already used to work internationally and I have the chance to meet or talk to EA's/PA's every day, my mission is of course to get involved all the Italian Admin. A big part of them already have the chance to work in big corporations or are already used to the path to digitalization, improvement and life-long learning. So my mission is to spread the change, to let anyone know what my and other working groups are working on at the WASummit. We always strive to let them learn and of course be international, especially for different areas in the country who are not as fortunate as we are in Milano. Every year, since 2001 we have a national Secretary day gathering more than 200 admin that meet and really improve and learn from our speakers, trainers, and counsellors.

6. If there is one piece of information regarding WASummit that you want everyone to understand, what would it be?

It is an enormous advantage and opportunity to have worldwide representation. We need to understand what the gaps are, the skills and the core of this role to position ourselves and how we can evolve and progress. It is no longer a matter of job description or tasks, but a set of competencies that of course are managerial. I really do want to inspire my members and create a better future for them, fostering collaboration and building a sustainable career path. If we do not embrace opportunities, we will never be able to shape our future. WASummit will help us and lead us to the top