

Executive Virtual Administration and Project Management Assistance



Bryan Miles - CEO

About eaHELP

eaHELP helps busy professionals and companies maximize the duties and results of administration and task/project management with a singular focus on helping leaders get the job done. Using a unique blend of eaHELP systems and processes, we provide you with real people, working virtually to efficiently meet your administrative needs and protect your leadership focus. Organizations of all sizes call us when critical administrative challenges arise because we understand the urgency of NOW and the consequences of lack of focus. Are you doing what only you can do?

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: Mr. Miles, what is the concept at eaHELP®?

Mr. Miles: eaHELP specifically is an executive virtual assistant company. We source skilled folks with business degrees and business experience, all here in the United States, to work with busy leaders in all sorts of different capacities.

CEOCFO: What are some of the common activities that your people can provide? What might be some of the more out of the box areas?

Mr. Miles: For me at least, I feel like the word “assistant” kind of does an injustice to the actual things that these folks do. Our assistants will do things that you would expect, like manage travel, book travel, manage calendars, book meetings, confirm appointments and things like that. However, they also do things that are more involved, like managing the leaders’ email. Many of the leaders that we work with handle anywhere from one hundred to two hundred emails a day, and at the end of the day they only really need to answer twenty of those. Therefore, our assistants are able to field the email management project for the leader, as well as provide project management and research. They do personal things, such as schedule a date night for the leader and their spouse, or they will make sure that they leave the office on time so that they can catch their kids playing soccer. It is really a very custom and very wide ranging mix of what our assistants do.

CEOCFO: There is a trend towards outsourcing of executive assistants. However, where is it in the consciousness and how is it going in general?

Mr. Miles: I think there is a great deal of acceptance that still needs to occur. I tell people all the time that we are in the infancy of our industry. Our industry, at best, is about eighteen to twenty years old. We specifically look out for experienced virtual assistants. The idea that I see as a growing trend is that larger corporations are fighting this uphill battle to bring on great talented executives. However, the challenge is that the talented executives want a more agile work environment, which companies have to develop to attract those leaders. Therefore, what happens is that the people that they want to hire do not want that assistant or secretary that sits outside of their office anymore. In fact, what they want is someone that has a work/life balance very similar to what the new executives are trying to accomplish themselves. That means someone that can work from home and is very willing to work with and leverage technology and not necessarily fit the face of traditional workplaces, but is comfortable meeting via Skype or another platform. To answer your question, I think that it is still in its infancy, but we have made some progress over the last five to six years.

CEOCFO: How do you match your people to execs?

Mr. Miles: It is hard! We have about a month-long vetting process that we take our executive assistants through. We get a ton of resumes from all over the United States. We only hire virtual executive assistants if they live here in the United States. That is obviously the key differentiator for us from other organizations. When they come in, we take them through a series of vetting steps. One is we have multiple web calls. We actually see how they are presenting themselves virtually, and take them through a set of tasks where they basically present to us how they would serve a leader. We throw things at them to see how they would deal with that. We are also very adamant about understanding the personality side of who they are. That is because some of our leaders are obviously very dominant and driven; we want to make sure we do not match them with someone who will butt heads with them. Then there are other times where we will have leaders who are

more low-key and they need an assistant that can just jump in and say, “Hey, this is what I want to do.” We pay close attention to that as part of our process.

CEOCFO: *You have EAs on your roster and you have people that need service. How do you put them together? Is there a trial period? What is the process?*

Mr. Miles: Yes, there is a trial period. We explain to our sales team that it is as big a process to vet the potential client as it is for us to vet our executive assistants. We go through a solid conversation where we really understand the needs of our prospects; only then do we send them a proposal. It is kind of “invite only.” However, what happens in that process is that we are qualifying our clients as much as they are qualifying us, to make sure that we can serve them well. That is because there are times when, candidly, we realize that we are not a good fit for them. Then we try and help them find a better solution for them, specifically. Once we say, “Green light, go; this is going to be a really good client,” then we have an internal executive matchmaking process to make sure that we connect the right EA with the right executive.

CEOCFO: *Do executives typically really know what they want? Do they articulate it well enough to you so that you can make a correct match or it is more likely that they are not really sure?*

Mr. Miles: The industry is still truly in its infancy. Therefore, one of the first questions that we always get from our prospects is, “So, how does this work?” It is just not intuitive to them, how this works. They know how the model works when someone is in their office, but virtually; they really struggle with that. So early on in our sales cycles we talk about that with our executives; “This is the type of stuff that they can do.” We ask them many questions about what their day looks like, how they communicate, what is important to them and what the things are that they want to delegate. We have had many executives tell us that they have worked with secretaries and assistants for twenty years and no one has ever really taught them how to do it well. That is a key differentiator for us. We really do teach best practices in terms of how to delegate and how to work with someone. The reality is – and most leaders know this - but you cannot ask someone to do something if they cannot expect it back from you. Much of it is just making sure that they understand that; that it is two way street, that you are getting a “work alongside” partner because we create a dedicated resource, a dedicated individual, that works with the leader. We walk them through how we see this working, and then we offer them ideas for things to avoid.

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CEOCFO: *Are there typical industries or typical personalities that tend to use your services more than others? Is there a common thread?*

Mr. Miles: Obviously, we get a great deal of interest from the financial services industry. In some industries that you would think are a little bit more traditional, we have found great success - for example, things like manufacturing and healthcare, fields that I would consider to be more traditional; they are very interested in it. We work with many folks in those categories. I would say that another emerging one for us are those solo entrepreneurs or those four-person shops where there are four consultants that share an office, so they want to try and share an assistant as well. Also, there is the person that is just starting their business and maybe had two hundred thousand in revenue in their first year and they just need help and they have hit the lid of their personal capacity. Those are the types of people that seem to approach us quite often. We work in over thirty different verticals or industries right now.

CEOCFO: *How do you reach out to potential clients?*

Mr. Miles: We are pretty solid with our social media and internet marketing. We are changing this, but to date we have yet to make a cold call in our company’s history. We have an abundance of folks that reach out to us on a daily basis that we need to have a customer conversation with. However, we leverage our social networks, because we are a virtual business. Our brick and mortar is really the internet. We spend a great of time investing in advertising online and making sure that we are giving value back in terms of our blog and content, and then making sure that we are available to folks when they are ready to have a conversation with us.

CEOCFO: *Do payments go through you? How does that work?*

Mr. Miles: eaHELP is the entity really responsible for the relationship. Therefore, we put up a firewall between the executive and the executive assistant. The clients do pay us on a per month basis. There is variability in that based on what they need, and fees are scaled up or down based on what their actual needs are. Not only do they get an executive assistant, we also assign a relationship manager that comes alongside them in that process, to make sure that everything is running smoothly. The executive can use the relationship manager as a guide or a trusted advisor to teach them what to do, and the EA is not distracted by that. They can really just serve the executive well.

CEOCFO: *How do you deal with it when the executive wants to then hire the EA on a direct basis?*

Mr. Miles: That does not happen often. That is because we are there to serve them and support them in perpetuity. However, there are times when executives will just really, really like the person that we have sourced to work alongside them. Therefore, we have a provision in our contracts where they essentially buy them out of their contract with us, just like they would with a recruiter in the hiring process. Then they are able to then bring that person on as a full W2 employee to their company.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us a little about the industry in general?*

Mr. Miles: The industry as a whole, as I said, is young. What is interesting about it is that there are several organizations within our industry that will use the word “virtual assistant,” but the reality is that they do not really create a dedicated resource like we do; a dedicated person. Let us say that you are an executive and you need to schedule a haircut. There are certain companies out there where all you do is call up or email them and one of maybe one hundred people will take on that task and do it for you and there is no relational connection. That is not our model. However, probably eighty percent of the industry as a whole is more geared to that model. Those other twenty percent are firms like us; we basically create a dedicated, assigned relationship between an executive and his assistant in that process. When you look at both of those types of models or paths, if you will, there is anywhere from one hundred and eighty to two hundred firms globally that do this right now. Then when you get into the states it comes down quite a bit, because there are still many global organizations out there in the Philippines, Guatemala and India that can support a lesser price. Therefore, if you do not really value a custom relationship, then you can absolutely go that route and look abroad.

CEOCFO: *By the time they come to you do most people know the difference? Do they understand?*

Mr. Miles: They start to. Some of that is just good marketing. Some of it is just having a network. We get a ton of business from referrals and folks talking to each other. They have a sense of it and they have done a little bit of the due diligence and have been on our site and realize that we are different from what they may see or experience on another website from one of our competitors. But it is still not intuitive. They still have many questions as to how the service actually works.

CEOCFO: *What is the average length of time that an EA stays with you?*

Mr. Miles: It varies based on the type of work they are doing for their executives. We have been in business since 2010 and we have got plenty that have been with us two or three or more years. We do not have a perfect record for sure, but we retain a great deal. That is because it is a very good solution for them. One of the neat things that I see as the CEO of this business is that we have been able to create a really great, legitimate, nice-paying work-from-home job for some really great women that have not had an option to be a mom and also be able to have meaning in their work and to be able to create some income for their family. We do that all over the United States, which is the truly rewarding part. Not only are we serving the executives and serving the leaders so that they can really be a better leader and get stuff done, but we are also creating a really cool environment for these ladies that would love to do this and have a good work / life balance.

CEOCFO: *Are the majority of your assistants women? Do you find more men coming in? Should more men be encouraged?*

Mr. Miles: They do not really know how to do this well. We are absolutely recruiting men. Our recruiting teams have tried really hard to find men who are qualified to do this. At the end of the day, there are just not many of them out there that are qualified to be executive assistants. Many of them want full-time employment. We can potentially offer that, but the reality is how most of these candidates approach it is entirely different than someone that is looking for more of a flexible work model. The other part of it too is that I have discovered that if you really want to get something done, hire a woman. I am not being sexist by saying that. Ninety nine percent of my staff of over three hundred are female. I am the rare one. We have got a few men that work at our company, but we all know that the reality is they are able to create great results and they have a better sense of work / life balance in that process. We have just found that if we get four hundred resumes in one month, I will bet that three hundred and ninety nine of them will be from females around the United States. It sounds ridiculously sexist, but it is just the nature of the business. We honor the women that work in our company and we really want them to find a “win” with this for their families. It is just so female intense.

CEOCFO: *Are you able to ramp up should there be a sharp increase, both as far as ramping up your staff and ramping up with the EAs? Are you set up for explosive growth?*

Mr. Miles: We already are. First off, we are in a very good financial position. We are privately owned. My wife and I own this thing one hundred percent. We have been approached by several types of investors, and we say it is a nice gesture, but we are not interested. We are in a really good cash position right now as an organization, and I think that if we needed to have a sizeable investment we have connections that could easily help us navigate that. For three-plus years we have been operating in the black and doing the things that we should do to be a prudent owner in a business. The other part of this, too, is that because we are a virtual organization we try and live like a virtual organization. We try to practice what we preach. Therefore, we do not have the same costs as a traditional business necessarily would. There may be a day in the future when that will change. However, our capital expenses are way down, because we do not have an office. Our

corporate team is based in Atlanta. Therefore, if you want to work on our corporate team in a non-client role, you need to be here in metro Atlanta. We meet all of the time face to face. We rent space when we need to for meetings or whatever. Therefore, we are a fairly agile group of people in terms of getting stuff done. The point is that we just do not have those traditional costs that you would if you were just a brick and mortar type of organization.

CEOCFO: Do you see specialization in EAs? Are there certain areas that might develop as a specialty, maybe people in science or healthcare? Where do you see growth other than everywhere?

Mr. Miles: I think that what I am starting to see is that our industry is becoming a little bit more “niche-y.” You will see a company pop up and they will really want to try and own a particular vertical or a particular industry, and I think that is great. The other thing I am seeing as an opportunity goes back to what I mentioned earlier about the word “assistant” as a disservice to what they are really able to do. The reality is that every day our executive assistants working from their homes are managing projects, they are managing project teams, they are updating their executives, they are working on Basecamp or some other project management platform, and they are managing the critical tasks. There is another tier of oversight that is available, and I could easily see that being an industry that really pops up, where you have more than just an assistant, but you are not required to go hire someone for one hundred thousand dollars that is a PMP or Project Management Professional. This person is qualified to see things naturally get done and executed.

CEOCFO: Why pay attention to eaHELP?

Mr. Miles: We want to affect the U.S. economy. We have plenty of global companies outside of the United States that approach us because they want an American presence. Executives here in the United States can leverage that to their benefit, just by the fact that they will get someone that is high-end, high quality and high-caliber with great experience that can come alongside them and work with them. I think that is a big difference here in our market, and that is what our clients tell us today. Oftentimes an executive will have a hard time understanding what they need to delegate. We have plenty of resources on our website that can teach them what the critical things to delegate would be versus the “nice to have”, so that they have greater capacity or greater leader impact. We have a ton of free resources on our website for leaders that are thinking through if this could be a solution for them or not.

BIO: Bryan Miles is CEO & Co-founder of Miles Advisory Group (a parent company to the Brands of eaHELP and MAG Bookkeeping) and is blessed to run this company with his wife, Shannon. Prior to starting MAG, he worked for companies in the tech and construction industries including Cogun, a national church construction company as the VP of Consulting. Bryan obtained his B.A. in Business from Mount Vernon Nazarene University in Mount Vernon, OH (and where he met Shannon as well).

Bryan, Shannon and their daughter Rainey and son Harper attend church at the Browns Bridge campus of North Point Community Church and live in North Atlanta, GA. Besides playing Legos, building forts, or drawing & coloring with his kids, or hanging out at the beach with his family, Bryan also enjoys backpacking, mountain climbing, writing, reading old history about Mount Everest climbs, and watching episodes of Goldrush on Discovery.



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