

A woman with voluminous curly hair, wearing a tan blazer over a white top, is smiling broadly while talking on a black mobile phone. She is sitting at a desk with a laptop open in front of her, and her hand is on the phone. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue.

Executive Assistants

The Invisible Orchestrators

Part 1 | Orchestrating Cross-Functional Coordination

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Introduction

In many organisations, the Executive Assistant (EA) occupies a strategic position that is often underestimated. They act as a point of convergence between senior management, operational teams, projects and governance bodies. Situated at the intersection of information flows and decision-making timelines, this role extends far beyond simple administrative assistance.

Despite having no formal hierarchical power, the Executive Assistant plays a central role in the fluidity of decision-making. They structure exchanges, ensure continuity between meetings and operational follow-up, and contribute directly to the coherence of priorities.

A Key Role in Cross-Functional Coordination

Cross-functional coordination is a cornerstone of the Executive Assistant's role. According to a study by the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP), over 70% of EAs report being directly involved in inter-departmental coordination and the preparation of strategic decisions.

In increasingly matrix-based organisations, decisions no longer follow a simple hierarchical chain. They are formed at the intersection of multiple departments, parallel projects and sometimes conflicting constraints. The EA occupies a unique position in this ecosystem, acting as the bridge between decision-making bodies and operational realities.

This role is rarely formalised, yet it is omnipresent, relying on a form of tacit delegation. Leaders expect their EA to structure discussions, secure information and guarantee continuity between debate and execution. The EA's value lies not in authority, but in reliability. Accurate, contextualised and immediately actionable information thus becomes a genuine lever for governance.

Such coordination relies notably on the structure defined for meetings, decision-making, and subsequent monitoring. Nevertheless, this pivotal role operates within a set of environmental constraints.

* iaap-hq.org

1 Information Challenges

Contributions arrive through multiple channels. Documents circulate in various versions. Decisions are not always formalised in the designated spaces.

In this context, maintaining a coherent overview becomes a demanding exercise. Gartner highlights that nearly one in two employees believes that a lack of visibility between teams directly slows down decision-making.* For the Executive Assistant, this fragmentation results in a constant task of recomposition and clarification.

2 Temporal Challenges

Meetings follow one another and decisions accumulate. Follow-up often still relies on manual reminders or informal notes. This mode of operation weakens continuity and delays the effective completion of decisions.

3 Relational Challenges

Cross-functional coordination involves influencing without imposing. The EA must navigate diverging priorities, busy schedules, and sometimes blurred responsibilities.

4 Structural Obstacles

Practices vary from one department to another, and meeting formats are not uniform. Post-decision responsibilities are not always explicitly defined.

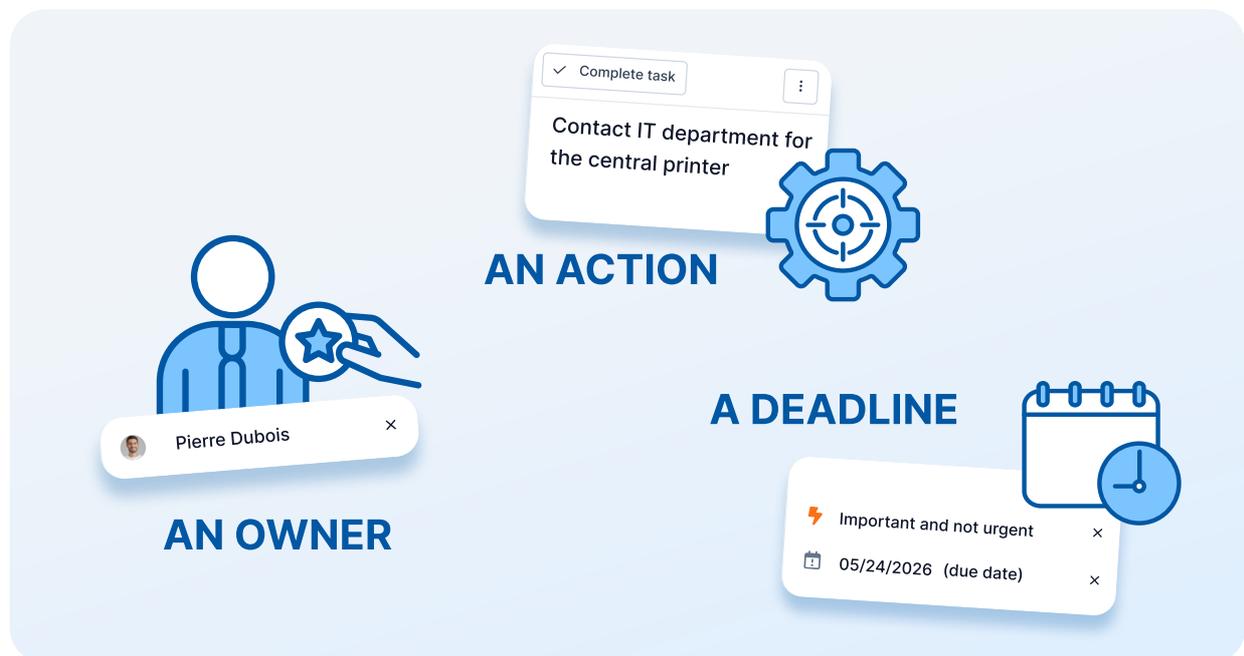
5 Organisational Memory

Decisions made months ago become difficult to retrieve. Staff turnover weakens continuity, and often, the EA becomes the organisation's "living memory".

*gartner.com

Structuring Cross-Functional Coordination

When decisions are made collectively, a lack of formalism often leads to dysfunction. An effective decision is one that is explicit; it must be clearly formulated when made and immediately linked to concrete actions.



Reliable coordination is built on a "Trio": An Action, An Owner and A Deadline. Without this, grey areas multiply and follow-up relies on individual memory rather than a shared framework.

This involves preparing executive meetings, ensuring the continuity of information, and guaranteeing that decisions made are correctly recorded and followed up over time. In management committees and boards of directors, the Executive Assistant is often the guardian of the framework. A structured agenda, reliable documentation, and rigorous traceability of discussions and actions directly determine the quality of decisions.

The alignment between human practices and digital tools remains decisive. When integrated coherently, collaborative tools do not distort the role of the Executive Assistant; instead, they support them in establishing a reliable structure. They reduce the mental load associated with information management, decrease the time spent on repetitive tasks, and allow them to continue fully playing that role of a discreet yet indispensable orchestrator, at the service of cross-functional coordination and governance.



As an Executive Assistant, WEDO has saved me precious time, particularly in task management and follow-up. I no longer need to chase information; it is available in real-time. Moreover, information sharing within the establishment has become child's play.

Morgane Navarro
Executive Assistant
Raiffeisen Bank of Gros-de-Vaud



According to McKinsey, 61% of executives believe that the quality of meeting preparation directly influences the quality of the decisions made.

Centralising Information

A Critical Issue

The dispersion of information constitutes one of the main barriers to effective coordination. Documents are often scattered across different storage spaces, versions multiply, and exchanges take place through heterogeneous channels.

This fragmentation complicates global understanding and undermines the reliability of decisions. These situations have a direct impact on working time.

According to a Gartner study, employees spend an average of 20% to 25% of their time searching for information. For the Executive Assistant, this loss of time is not limited to a question of individual efficiency; it affects the entire coordination and governance framework.

The centralisation of information is therefore not a mere organisational convenience. It constitutes an essential condition for reliability. Having a single source of truth allows one to rely on up-to-date, validated and shared information. This reduces the risk of misinterpretation and limits misunderstandings.

Digital tools at the service of coordination

When well-chosen and correctly integrated, digital tools become genuine levers for daily efficiency. For Executive Assistants, the challenge is not to multiply the number of solutions, but to have a single space capable of centralising all information related to meetings, decisions, and action follow-ups.

Collaborative platforms like WEDO eliminate the constant back-and-forth between emails, shared folders, and personal notes. Information is accessible at all times, securely, and in its most up-to-date version. The Executive Assistant no longer needs to reconstruct the thread of exchanges or verify the reliability of documents before every meeting or decision-making process.

Every document added during a meeting, whether a presentation deck or a consultation paper, remains directly accessible within the platform. It can be retrieved either from the meeting minutes or from the associated workspace. In any case, the global search function allows for the quick retrieval of a file, task, decision, or exchange using a simple keyword across the entire WEDO ecosystem.

Consequently, all elements discussed during a meeting — files, tasks, decisions, or discussions — are centralised within coherent and structured workspaces. These spaces, much like the meetings themselves, are secure. Only authorised personnel can access them, ensuring the confidentiality of information and the reliability of the coordination framework.

Linking Meetings, Projects and Priorities

Meetings can no longer be viewed as isolated events, disconnected from the rest of the organisation's activities. They are part of broader cycles, comprising ongoing projects, successive decisions, and sometimes competing priorities. Each meeting constitutes a stage or a milestone in a continuous process, the value of which depends directly on its capacity to produce concrete results over time.

The Executive Assistant plays an essential linking role. They ensure continuity between decision-making periods and execution phases. What is decided during a session must be translated into understandable and achievable actions. These actions must then be monitored, updated and, if necessary, readjusted over time. Without this work of ensuring coherence, meetings lose both efficiency and credibility.

This continuity is all the more critical as projects rarely unfold in a linear fashion. Priorities evolve, constraints emerge, and resources shift. The Executive Assistant must therefore maintain an overview, taking into account both recent decisions and long-standing commitments.

Harvard Business Review highlights that nearly 67% of decisions made in meetings are not implemented effectively, primarily due to a lack of clear follow-up.

In this context, the role of the Executive Assistant goes far beyond the mere organisation of meetings. They contribute to providing continuity to decisions, embedding them over time and ensuring their alignment with strategic priorities. By securing this link, the Executive Assistant directly contributes to collective performance and the credibility of decision-making bodies.



Bridging the gap with WEDO



Collaborative Meeting Preparation

The tool's collaborative features are a game-changer. Collective meeting preparation, topic submission, attachment management, and one-click sharing of agendas and minutes significantly streamline communication. The Executive Assistant moves away from manual centralization toward a strategic orchestration role.



Task Delegation

With WEDO, every task created during a meeting remains directly linked to its decision-making context. With a single click, it is possible to retrieve the agenda item, the associated discussions and the corresponding minutes. Follow-up no longer relies on individual memory or repeated chasing, but on factual, contextualised and shared information.

“

WEDO facilitates my daily work thanks to its intuitive interface and its ability to centralise information and archive documents.

It is an excellent tool for communication, project follow-up, and the drafting of minutes, perfectly suited to both personal and delegated tasks.

Alicia Aubert
Executive Assistant
Raiffeisen Bank of Nyon-La Vallée



Visualising Progress without being an Official Project Manager

Even without holding the title of Project Manager, the Executive Assistant is regularly called upon to provide a clear overview of the situation. One question recurs frequently: 'Where do we stand?'

Being able to answer it quickly and reliably is a central challenge of cross-functional coordination. Visualising the progress of actions during meetings primarily allows for the anticipation of bottlenecks. It offers the possibility to identify delays, dependencies, and upcoming decisions before they become problematic. This visibility also facilitates the preparation of subsequent sessions by refocusing discussions on truly priority topics.

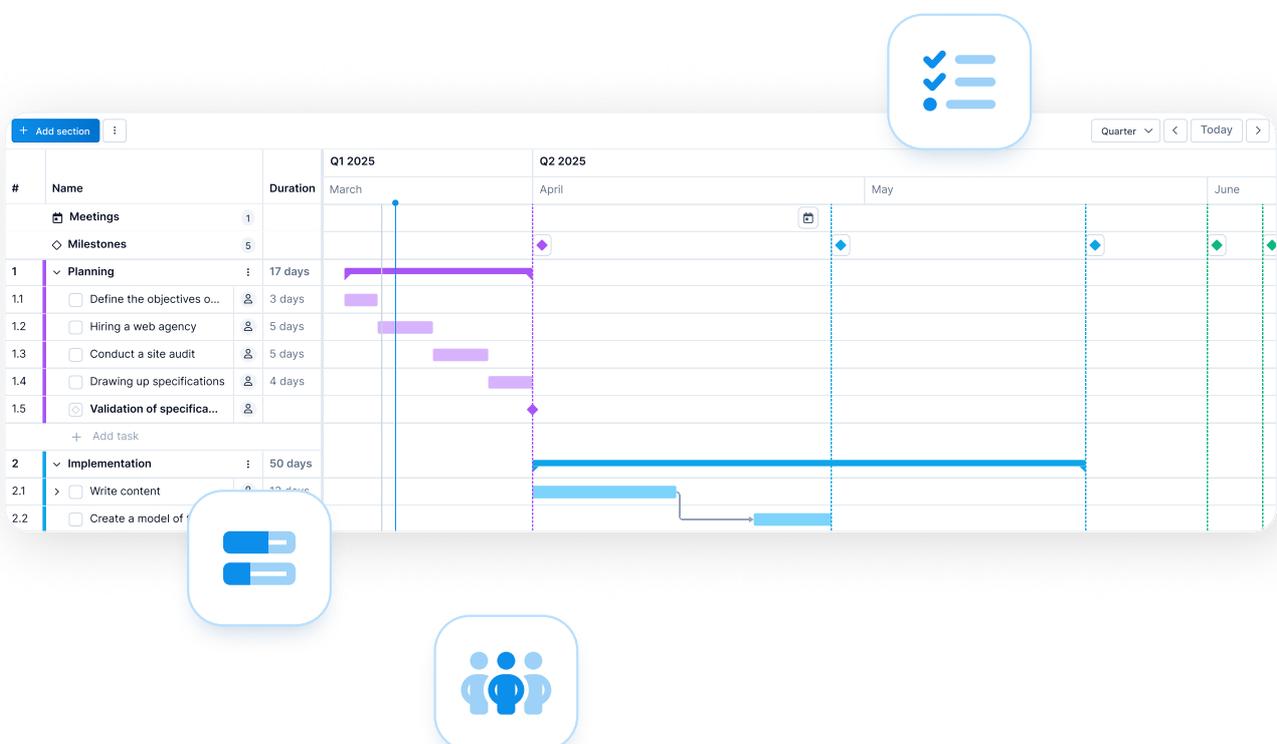
Having a concise and shared view of progress allows one to communicate with confidence, support decisions, and maintain the credibility of steering bodies.

According to the Project Management Institute, 37% of projects fail due to a lack of visibility over their progress. This figure underlines the importance of accessible and up-to-date information, regardless of the existence of a formal project management role.

Manage your project meetings with WEDO's Gantt chart

This continuity extends to the project scale thanks to the Gantt chart view. This provides a global, real-time overview of the progress of stages and tasks, while integrating the schedule of meetings linked to the project. Past sessions appear with their agendas and locked minutes, while upcoming meetings are visible as genuine steering milestones. The project can then be read not only through its actions, but also through its key decision-making moments.

For the Executive Assistant, this dual perspective — operational and decision-making — represents a considerable time saving and a tangible reduction in mental load. Information no longer needs to be reconstructed; it is accessible, coherent, and reliable. This visibility allows for the anticipation of bottlenecks, the efficient preparation of subsequent meetings, and the securing of communication with executives. Even without a formal project manager role, the Executive Assistant thus strengthens their position as a facilitator and guardian of continuity.



Standardising where Possible

Standardisation is sometimes perceived as a constraint, or even as a form of rigidity incompatible with the complexity of organisations. In practice, it constitutes, on the contrary, a powerful lever for saving time and increasing reliability. By defining common frameworks, it allows for a reduction in the cognitive effort associated with repetition and ensures consistency over time.

The benefits are measurable. According to a survey conducted by McKinsey & Company, organisations that adopt standardised processes generally see a 20% to 30% increase in productivity, thanks to more efficient workflows and less variability in task execution.*

For the Executive Assistant, standardisation thus offers greater availability for anticipation, analysis, and advisory. It strengthens their capacity to support executives proactively, while improving the quality and continuity of meeting processes.



Collaboration has significantly improved, notably thanks to effective task management and the uniform handling of processes through WEDO's checklist templates.

Nicole Thalmann
Executive Assistant
Raiffeisen Bank of Aare-Reuss



Create a checklist template

Before starting work 8

<input type="checkbox"/> Notify all employees (HR, accounting, service, ...)	-27d	1		
<input type="checkbox"/> Create a WEDO account	-27d	2		
<input type="checkbox"/> Signing the employment contract	-28d	3		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning WEDO training	-32d	4		
<input type="checkbox"/> Configure computer (install necessary software)	-35d	5		
<input type="checkbox"/> Create computer access	-35d	6		
<input type="checkbox"/> Writing the welcome card	-39d	7		
<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare work area and materials	-40d	8		

Start your Checklists

Reference date

Start date: December 16th, 2024
End date: June 30th, 2025

Assign unassigned tasks (except subtasks) to

Emily Johnson Remove

Share this checklist in workspaces

Keep track of progress

✓ Hélène Bongard

3 to do 28 done 7 days after

90%

23 to do 8 done 56 days before

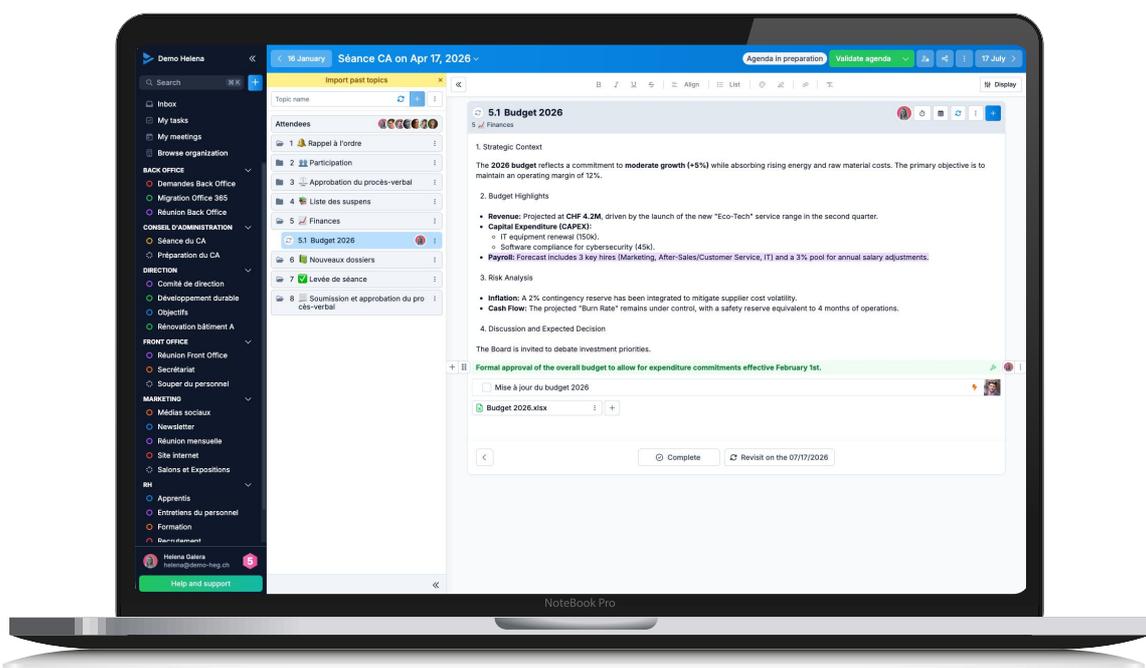
26%

WEDO

The Assistant to Executive Assistants

This white paper highlights a reality that is often invisible. Without formal hierarchical authority, the Executive Assistant exerts a decisive influence through the quality of information, the structuring of exchanges, and the reliability of follow-up.

In this context, solutions like WEDO illustrate how cross-functional coordination can be supported in a pragmatic way, by linking meetings, decisions, and projects within a shared framework. A discreet yet structural support for a role that is just as vital.



And you,

What are your challenges?

Do you recognise yourself in the various practical cases mentioned in this article?

Contact us to explore how WEDO can be adapted to the specific needs of your organisation. Benefit from a free personalised demonstration to discuss the concrete advantages for your specific use cases.



**Schedule a
free demo**



**You
Set the Tempo**