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Interview:
Steering the future
of IMA

Interview with Maria Cirillo: Steering the Future of IMA

Q: Maria, congratulations on stepping into the role of Chair for the International Management Assistants (IMA). Could you share a bit about your journey as an Executive Assistant and how it has prepared you for this position?

Maria: Thank you! My journey as an Executive Assistant spans over two decades, navigating the dynamic landscapes of international and domestic companies. Currently, at the Swedish Forest Industries Federation, I've had the privilege of closely supporting the Director General while managing office operations. These experiences have honed my understanding of the pivotal role of Executive Assistants in shaping organizational cultures and adapting to transformative trends.

Q: As the new Chair, what initiatives or changes do you envision implementing to further elevate the role of Executive Assistants in this era of hybrid work and advancing AI technologies?

Maria: In this evolving landscape, our adaptability and proactive approach are crucial. IMA aims to empower its members with top-tier education and training, essential tools for navigating the evolving work environment. Additionally, advocating for our profession's significance will be a cornerstone, ensuring that the collective voice of Executive Assistants is heard and valued.

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Q: Collaboration seems central to your approach. Could you elaborate on your plans for updating the strategy? How do you foresee engaging members globally while maintaining a cohesive network?

Maria: Absolutely. Collaborating with Nina Aunula is an exciting prospect as we strategize for IMA's future. Our focus lies in fostering an engaged and inclusive community. Emphasizing the significance of each member, irrespective of their geographical location, will be pivotal. We envision a strategy that encourages active participation, ensuring that every member feels integral to our shared goals.

Q: To align with your goal of championing engagement within IMA, how do you plan to address the softer, yet critical aspects that shape company culture for Executive Assistants?

Maria: Indeed, the softer elements often wield significant influence over a company's culture. It's crucial to facilitate discussions and initiatives that address these nuances. Providing resources and platforms for members to exchange insights on nurturing a positive work culture will be a priority. Embracing these discussions aids in fortifying the backbone of any organization - its culture.

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Q: How do you balance your professional commitments as Chair of IMA with your personal life and commitments?

Maria: Balancing professional commitments with personal life is indeed a challenge, but I firmly believe in the importance of maintaining that equilibrium. It's about setting boundaries, managing time efficiently, and having a strong support system in my family and loved ones. Their understanding and encouragement enable me to effectively navigate my responsibilities both at work and at home.

Q: Considering the global nature of IMA, how do you plan to leverage diversity and inclusivity within the association?

Maria: Diversity and inclusivity are foundational principles for IMA. Embracing diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds enriches our collective understanding and strengthens our network. Our goal is to create an environment where every member feels valued and empowered, regardless of their cultural or geographical origins.

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Q: In your view, what are the key skills or qualities that Executive Assistants should focus on developing to thrive in the evolving workplace landscape?

Maria: Adaptability, resilience, and a continuous learning mindset are pivotal qualities for success in our ever-evolving workplace. Executive Assistants must embrace change, harness technology to enhance productivity, and continuously refine their communication and interpersonal skills to navigate diverse and dynamic environments effectively.

Q: Maria, in fostering camaraderie among IMA's diverse members, how do you plan to encourage collaboration across different geographic locations?

Maria: Collaboration across distances is key for us. One way is involving all members in our strategic planning. In addition, imagine infusing even more cultural elements from host countries into our IMA trainings in collaboration with the Executive Committee. It's about creating an atmosphere where everyone feels included, no matter where they're based.

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Q: As the role of Executive Assistants evolves, how will IMA stay at the forefront, advocating for recognition and significance in the global business landscape?

Maria: Staying ahead involves scouting for new ideas and opportunities by the Executive Committee. Our goal is unwavering: consistently provide top-notch education, trainings, and impactful meetings for our members. It's about our commitment to continuous improvement, keeping ourselves updated to ensure IMA is always the voice advocating for the significance of Executive Assistants worldwide.

Closing statement:

Bringing this interview to a close, a heartfelt acknowledgment to Maria Cirillo and the entire Executive Committee for their insightful perspectives and commitment to advancing the role of Executive Assistants and the IMA community. Wishing them continued success in fostering collaboration, championing inclusivity, and advocating for the profession's significance on a global scale. Here's to a future where every member feels valued and empowered within IMA's dynamic network.