



INTERVIEW

Meet Joanne and Linda,
Two EA's from Silicon Valley
by DeskDemon.com

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Can you tell DeskDemon viewers a bit about your background and your current “day time job.”

Linda: I have worked for, and with, high level executives in several industries, ranging from high tech, hospitals, and energy companies, to law firms and even the court system, where I supported superior court judges. Throughout my 25-year career, I have supported nine CEOs in Silicon Valley. I currently support the CEO of 2Wire (www.2Wire.com). My day consists of organizing our weekly executive staff meetings and agendas, handling detailed domestic and international travel, scheduling meetings, organizing offsite events, interaction with board members and board meeting preparation, and many other responsibilities

Joanne: Currently, I’m the Chief Executive Assistant to Aart de Geus, the Chairman and CEO of Synopsys. In my 25-plus years as an administrative professional, I’ve spent the majority of those years supporting a CEO. I’ve had the pleasure of working for Mr. de Geus for over 11 years, with the greater part of my time managing his schedule or coordinating complicated travel itineraries.

Your day time job just makes up a tiny bit of all you do for the admin community. Tell us a bit about your projects outside your 9-5 day or “day job.” I am sure 9-5 doesn’t really fit!

Joanne: Wow, 9-5 job...is there really such a thing? We both mentor and train administrative professionals and teach at the Administrative Executive Assistant Certificate Program at UCSC Extension in Silicon Valley. We are both very active in the Silicon Valley Catalyst Association (SVCA) which is an association exclusively for CEO assistants.

Linda: I have raised four children; have been married to my husband, Tim, for 31 years. Just before Thanksgiving, my daughter gave birth to a beautiful baby boy. Also, I am active in our church community, and I enjoy playing golf with my husband (when time permits).

Joanne: I have two grown children, and have recently been blessed with our first grandchild. My husband, Allan, and I have been married for 35 years.

As executive assistants to CEOs I am sure your schedules have always been busy. How did you get involved with UCSC Extension in Silicon Valley? What were your personal driving factors to step out of your comfort zone and go the extra mile?

Linda: For years, Joanne and I have dedicated ourselves to learning more about how to be better administrative professionals. And the more we learned, the more we wanted to share our knowledge with other administrative professionals.

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Linda: During my early career as a CEO assistant, I had the opportunity to meet with other CEO assistants in Silicon Valley. We formed a group called Silicon Valley Catalyst Association (SVCA). This group is still functioning after 15 years. SVCA gave us the opportunity to meet other CEO assistants, to network, to share ideas and best practices, and to develop leadership skills. I met Joanne through the SVCA organization.

Linda: In 2004, the SVCA members were approached by UCSC Extension in Silicon Valley to work with other CEO assistants to develop a certificate program for administrative professionals. At first, our role was in an advisory capacity. Once the program was developed, we were asked to

participate as master instructors or guest lecturers. That's when our passion for training began. I currently serve as a Master Instructor and guest lecturer in the program. Joanne is a guest lecturer. We both continue to serve as advisory board members for this program.

*You have just published your first book, **Sitting on a File Cabinet, Naked, With a Gun: True Stories of Silicon Valley CEO Assistants.** Tell us a bit about it.*

Linda: Several years ago, I started a manuscript for a “how-to” book for administrators. Well, life got in the way and I put the manuscript on the shelf and forgot about it. About five years ago I came across it again, dusted it off, and got back to writing. This time I knew I needed someone to help me focus and get the job done. I asked Joanne if she wanted to collaborate with me on the book as co-author. She agreed, and the book evolved from a “how to” book into a book that offers engaging, entertaining insider’s stories of some of the most powerful men and women in Silicon Valley. Following the stories, we share some Points of Wisdom™ (POW!™) to bring home the lessons learned.

Joanne: We spent two years interviewing CEO Assistants and gathering their real-world experiences, their daily challenges, and their way of problem-solving. We are very happy with the outcome and have received great feedback.

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Can you tell us a bit about PlanetAdmin?

Joanne: Linda and I share our energy, passion and expertise in order to bring programs that inspire and challenge administrative professionals to take their own inner wisdom and knowledge and perform at a level higher than ever. Our goal is to provide superior services, training and educational programs that enhance the skills, self-esteem and personal value of administrative professionals, thereby benefitting both the admins and their employers. We have some exciting things planned for 2010.

Given all you do, can you tell us how it has affected your day job and what your CEO thinks of your extra out of the office functions?

Linda: Believe it or not, our extra activities have added lots of value to our CEOs in our current positions. Our networks have broadened, we've developed and expanded our leadership skills, taken our project management skills to a higher level, and continue to develop our interpersonal skills. Our CEOs have been very supportive, and they know that what we do will only help them in the long run.

What is in the future for you?


Joanne: We plan to continue our work in our roles as CEO assistants. We also plan to continue training and keynoting to administrative professionals. In 2010, we will be participating in



conferences, promoting our book, and evaluating ideas for a second book. We also have a few new ideas we plan to launch in 2010.

What is one piece of advice you can give DeskDemon viewers who want to step out of their comfort zone and do something extra.

Linda: You are not alone. There are many administrative professionals out there that want to be a better business partner with their executive. Find mentors, read articles, and take classes. You will become that business partner you want to be. Remember, you are not "just an admin."

Joanne: Don't be afraid to go the extra mile. Step out of your comfort zone and improve your skills. It just takes a network of supportive people, a strong desire, and some specific goals. 

*If you would like to order their book, **Sitting on a File Cabinet, Naked, With a Gun: True Stories of Silicon Valley CEO Assistants**, you can at Amazon. <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1449031587?ie=UTF8&tag=deskdemoncom-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1449031587> For information on their training courses, visit: PlanetAdmin™ at <http://www.planetadmin.net/>*