PITON Global

EXECUTIVE WHITE PAPER · WP-14

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT OUTSOURCING · PHILIPPINES

The leverage standard: the executive economics of administrative support outsourcing to the Philippines.

An analysis of why tasks completed is a busywork vanity metric, how executive time reclaimed and work owned end-to-end — never activity — decide the true value of an administrative function, and the vendor-selection discipline that turns support from a task queue into genuine leverage.

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JUNE 2026
MANILA · ESTABLISHED 2001

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ABOUT THIS SERIES — VOLUME 14

Every administrative-support proposal is priced in seats or tasks, because both are easy to count. This volume is about the only thing a leader actually buys from support: hours of their own attention back, and work they never have to think about again. The gap between completing tasks and owning outcomes is where the leverage lives. The full series lives at piton-global.com.

THE PITON-GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

About the authors

John Maczynski

Chief Executive Officer

John has hired administrative and executive support for three decades, and learned that the cheap assistant who needs everything checked costs more than the capable one who needs nothing — because the expensive resource in the equation is the leader's attention, not the assistant's hour. His standing question ignores the task list: how many hours of my own week did this give me back, cleanly? Applied at PITON-Global, that question is what clients get on every support sourcing decision — personally, with no account layer in between.

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Chief Strategy Officer

Ralf has spent twenty-five years building Philippine executive- and administrative-support teams, and he judges one by how much it can be trusted to own without being asked twice: the ownership gate, the judgment calibration, the close that comes back done rather than half-done with questions. The support contract in Section 3 codifies what he learned rebuilding pools that completed tasks and created follow-up. He now reads support providers the way he once ran them — from what they can be trusted to own, backward.

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ABOUT PITON-GLOBAL

PITON-Global is a buyer-side advisory practice, Manila-based since 2001, that has never operated a delivery floor or taken a placement commission. Its stock-in-trade is knowing the Philippine provider market at the operating level — 1,000+ mapped operations, re-verified continuously, including each support team's real ownership and judgment performance rather than its seat-count headline — and converting that knowledge into a shortlist of six to ten genuinely qualified partners per engagement. Buyers from Tripadvisor, Garmin, TSYS, HealthPartners, Yetipay, Workrise, and Norman Disney & Young have run their searches through the practice.

SECTION 01

Executive summary

-61%	11 hrs	90%+	6.1×
Fully-loaded cost per reclaimed executive hour vs. US onshore	Executive time reclaimed per leader per week on vetted teams	Tasks owned end-to-end without a second touch from the principal	First-year ROI, reconstructed case (Section 6)

An administrative-support engagement is bought on the seat rate and paid for in the leader's own hours. The vendor reports a full queue cleared at a fraction of the onshore cost; the executive finds every task came back with a question, half of them done wrong enough to redo, and the calendar just as full as before because managing the assistant became its own job. The engagement hit its task count and the leader lost the one thing support exists to provide — their own attention back. The gap between completing tasks and owning outcomes is where the real cost of cheap support hides, because the expensive resource is never the assistant's hour; it is the executive's.

The Philippines is where administrative support is delivered with the most ownership, because a deep, English-fluent, service-cultured talent pool can exercise the judgment and discretion that turns a task queue into genuine leverage. Five findings:

1 **Tasks completed is the industry's most flattering number.** Any pool can clear a queue. Vetted teams are measured on leverage: executive hours reclaimed, tasks owned without a second touch, judgment calls made right. Weak providers quote a low seat rate the leader repays in supervision and rework. Section 2 shows the gap.

2 **The ownership gate is the product.** A task handed back with a question has not been done — it has been forwarded. Teams that gate on end-to-end ownership return work finished; teams that gate on nothing return the work to the leader's desk with the hard part still on it.

3 **Judgment is the skill, not the keystroke.** Scheduling a meeting is typing; protecting the calendar, reading the priority, and handling the exception is judgment. Vetted teams are calibrated to the principal's preferences until they decide as the principal would; unvetted ones escalate everything, which is just supervision with extra steps.

4 **The supervision, not the task, is what costs.** A task that needs checking, correcting, and re-explaining consumes the leader's time at the leader's rate — many times the seat saving. Teams that hold ownership drive the second-touch rate under 10%, and that reclaimed attention — not the offshore rate alone — is where the case study's return is built.

5 **Contract on the hour reclaimed, not the seat filled.** The contracting failure of support is paying for a seat and hoping for leverage. Vetted deals set ownership floors, second-touch ceilings, and reclaimed-hour targets, making the leader's freed time the team's problem, which is where it belongs.

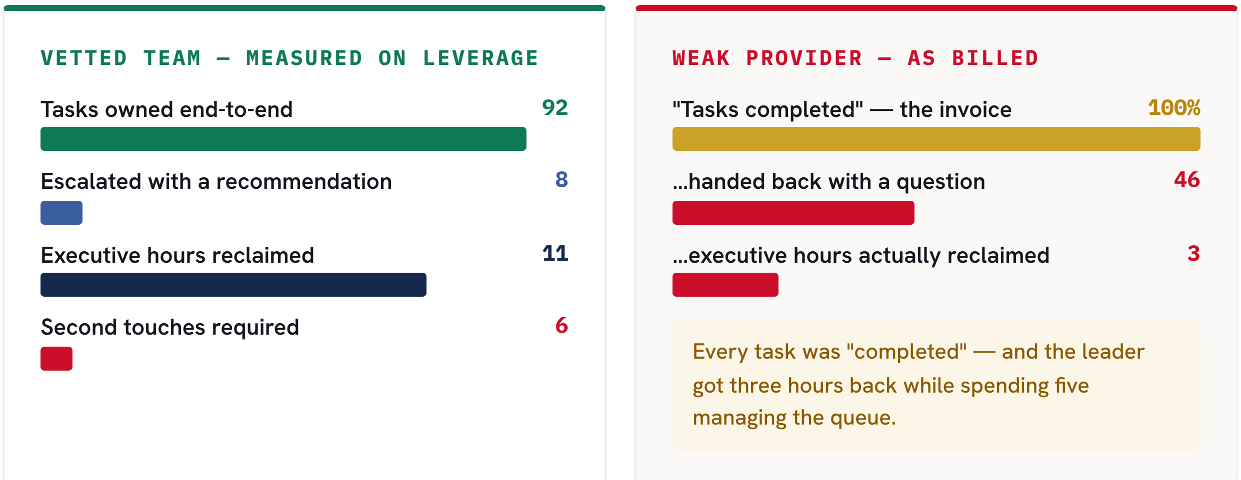
The intended reader is a founder, executive, or operations leader buying support by the seat and paying for it in their own supervision hours. Sections 2–4 separate the teams that create leverage from the teams that clear tasks; Sections 5–7, the method and the proof.

SECTION 02

The busywork mirage: tasks completed versus executive time reclaimed

Figure 1 shows one executive's week of delegated work two ways: as the task-count report a weak provider bills, and as the leverage reality the leader lives with. The tasks-completed number is identical in spirit to a chatbot's containment rate — a figure engineered to look like help while the leader's calendar stays exactly as full as before.

FIG. 1 — ONE EXECUTIVE-WEEK: LEVERAGE QUALITY VS. REPORTED TASKS



Left: PITON-Global engagement instrumentation, 2025–26, leverage audited. Right: composite of pre-engagement vendor reporting reviewed in diligence.

The economics follow the reclaimed hours, not the task count. On the left, ninety-two tasks owned end-to-end return eleven hours of the leader's week; on the right, a cheap seat clears the same queue but hands back nearly half with a question and nets three reclaimed hours against five spent supervising — a negative trade. A low seat rate that generates supervision is not a saving; it is the leader's own time, resold to them at a loss. The leverage audit — hours reclaimed, tasks owned, second-touch rate — is the cheapest due-diligence instrument in this paper.

SECTION 03

The support contract: the ownership gate, judgment calibration, and the trusted close

Figure 2 lays out the three clauses of a working support contract — the machinery a floor read verifies before any seat rate is believed.

FIG. 2 — THE SUPPORT CONTRACT, AS OPERATED ON VETTED TEAMS

OWN IT END-TO-END

A delegated task is owned from request to done — including the follow-ups, the loose ends, and the person who did not reply — not handed back at the first obstacle. The default is to resolve and report, never to forward the problem back to the principal's desk.

CALIBRATE THE JUDGMENT

The team is trained to the principal's preferences, priorities, and voice until it decides as the principal would — a documented playbook of how this leader handles the recurring calls. Escalations come with a recommendation, not an open question, so the principal ratifies rather than solves.

CLOSE IT TRUSTED

Work comes back done, confirmed, and off the leader's mind — with a short status the principal can scan, not a queue they must reconcile. Trust is built on a close that never needs re-opening, which is what lets a leader delegate the next thing without hesitation.

↓ yields ↓

GENUINE LEVERAGE 11 HRS/WK RECLAIMED · 90%+ OWNED · <10% SECOND TOUCH

The leader gets hours back, work leaves their mind for good, and delegation becomes reflexive instead of risky — so attention flows to the decisions only they can make. The engagement gets cheaper per reclaimed hour and more valuable at the same time, which is the entire promise of outsourcing support to people who measure the leverage, not the task count.

Operating parameters from PITON-Global administrative-support engagements, 2025–26.

In diligence, the contract is tested from the leader's side: hand the team a real ambiguous task and watch whether it comes back owned or forwarded; review how escalations are framed — recommendation or open question; check the second-touch log for how often the principal had to re-engage. Perhaps one team in ten survives it cleanly. Steps 3 and 5 of the framework exist to find that one before the contract does — because everything in Table 3 of Section 6 depends on the leverage created, not the tasks logged.

SECTION 04

Cost and performance: cost-per-reclaimed-

hour economics and benchmarks

TABLE 1 — COST PER RECLAIMED EXECUTIVE HOUR: THREE OPERATING MODELS (US$, 2026)		
OPERATING MODEL	COST / RECLAIMED HR	VS. US BASELINE
US onshore in-house executive assistant	$96	baseline
Low-cost offshore VA pool (per-seat, task-billed)	$71	−26%
Vetted Manila team — ownership-gated, calibrated	**$37**	**−61%**

Basis: PITON-Global engagement pricing 2025–26; reclaimed executive hour = one hour of the principal's time genuinely freed and not spent supervising; the VA pool looks cheap per seat but reclaims few hours per seat once supervision is netted out; US comparator fully-loaded in-house EA cost per hour of leverage delivered.

TABLE 2 — ADMINISTRATIVE-SUPPORT BENCHMARKS, VETTED VS. BASELINE (2025–26)			
METRIC	VETTED TOP TIER	BASELINE	EXECUTIVE READING
Executive hours reclaimed / leader / wk	11	3–5	The only support number a leader feels
Tasks owned end-to-end	90%+	55–70%	Finished, or forwarded back
Second-touch rate	<10%	30–45%	"Own it end-to-end" — kept or not
Escalations with a recommendation	95%+	40–60%	Ratify a call, or solve it yourself
Assistant tenure (12-month retention)	92%	55–70%	Kept context, or re-onboarding again

Source: PITON-Global administrative-support engagement data 2025–26; baseline = typical pre-engagement providers billed on seats or tasks.

The strategic read: the VA pool's −26% per seat is a false economy — the supervision, rework, and re-onboarding cost the leader far more in their own hours than the seat gap saves. The vetted Manila team's −61% is real because it is measured where the value is: hours of the principal's attention genuinely returned. Buy on seat rate and you buy the right column of Figure 1; buy on cost-per-reclaimed-hour and you buy leverage — the same discipline every volume in this series keeps arriving at from a different door.

SECTION 05

Sourcing discipline: the 7-Step Vendor Vetting Framework, applied to administrative support

Support diligence adds one hard requirement to every step: a seat rate is real only when the team behind it survives an ownership-and-judgment check. The funnel below is representative of a 12–30-seat administrative-support search.

	FIG. 3 — THE 7-STEP FRAMEWORK AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE-SUPPORT FUNNEL		
	STEP	WHAT IT ELIMINATES IN A SUPPORT SEARCH	FIELD REMAINING
1	**Requirements definition**	Seat-first scoping: fixes the reclaimed-hour target, the ownership floor, the second-touch ceiling, and the judgment and discretion standards the support must meet	1,000+
2	**Market mapping**	VA mills: pools that bill seats and treat every task as an escalation, and generalist floors with no executive-support depth or discretion culture	~46
3	**Capability screening**	Teams without the machinery: audited ownership and reclaimed-hour history, a calibration playbook, an escalation-with-recommendation norm, and a trusted-close discipline	~13
4	**Compliance & security audit**	Weak data governance: handling of executive inboxes, calendars, travel and personal data, credential and access controls, SOC 2 scope covering the support stack	~9
5	**Operational diligence**	The live read: hand the team a real ambiguous task and watch whether it comes back owned or forwarded; review escalation framing; interview on how they calibrate to a new principal	4–6
6	**Competitive RFP & negotiation**	Per-seat pricing: finalists bid against reclaimed-hour targets, ownership floors, and second-touch ceilings — all carrying credits for support that forwards instead of owns	2–3
7	**Transition & launch governance**	Cold handoff: the team shadows and builds the calibration playbook before it owns the queue, with ownership and trusted-close certified before steady state, PITON-Global embedded buyer-side	1

Field-remaining counts represent a 12–30-seat administrative-support search, PITON-Global engagements 2024–26.

The standing guarantees hold: **vendor neutrality** — PITON-Global operates no support teams, staffs no seats, and takes no placement economics, so the shortlist reflects audited ownership and reclaimed-hour performance, not inventory; **right-sizing** — teams for whom your account is a flagship. Six to ten genuinely qualified providers, delivered within 48–72 hours, free to the buyer, competing through a fully transparent, fair, comprehensive, and highly competitive RFP.

SECTION 06 · ANONYMIZED CASE STUDY

Re-basing the pool on ownership: a 24-seat support rebuild, reconstructed

Engagement AS-034 is a US professional-services firm — roughly 40 partners and directors sharing a pooled executive-support function — that had offshored administrative support to a per-seat VA vendor. The seat rate was excellent; the leverage was not: partners reported that delegating anything meant supervising it, most tasks came back with a question, and several had quietly stopped using the pool. The COO wanted the arbitrage and support the partners would actually trust. Identifying details are anonymized under NDA.

SELECTION (WEEKS 0–7, LIVE READS)

Requirements fixed a 90% ownership floor, a <10% second-touch ceiling, and a reclaimed-hour target of 10+ per partner per week, with a calibration playbook required. Mapping produced 44 claimants; the machinery screen — audited ownership history, calibration discipline, trusted-close norm — left 13; the data-governance audit left 9. Live ambiguous-task reads on each finalist, plus escalation-framing review, shortlisted 5. A Manila team won at a $10.80 blended rate priced against reclaimed hours and ownership, with a leverage audit written into the reporting spec.

TRANSITION (MONTHS 2–6, PLAYBOOK FIRST)

The team shadowed each principal and built a calibration playbook before owning the queue; the ownership gate and trusted-close discipline were certified in month 2. Escalation-with-recommendation went live from day one, and a second-touch log fed weekly coaching. By month 6 tasks owned end-to-end reached 91%, second touches fell from 41% to 8%, and partners reclaimed an audited 11 hours each per week — with the previously-lapsed partners back using the pool. PITON-Global chaired the leverage review board to steady state.

TABLE 3 — AS-034 FIRST-YEAR VALUE BUILD-UP (US$)		
VALUE COMPONENT	YEAR 1	BASIS
Labor arbitrage on the 24-seat support pool	$0.74M	45.0k productive hrs × ($27.30 – $10.80)
Partner time reclaimed & redeployed to billable work	$1.07M	Net +7 hrs/wk × 40 partners × billable-rate contribution, conservative
Supervision & rework collapse (2nd-touch 41% → 8%)	$0.21M	Recovered partner hours no longer spent managing the queue
Re-onboarding avoided (tenure 62% → 92%)	$0.08M	Avoided context-loss and re-training vs. incumbent-era churn
Gross value created	**$2.10M**	
Less: engagement & transition costs	($0.34M)	Shadowing, playbook build, calibration ramp; advisory fee $0 (provider-paid model)
Net value ÷ cost = first-year ROI	6.1×	$2.10M ÷ $0.34M

Figures rounded; ownership, second-touch, and reclaimed-hour effects audit-verified. Method in Methodology & notes.

Thirty-five percent arbitrage, sixty-five percent from reclaimed partner time and collapsed supervision — a value-heavy split for the series, earned because the pool was re-based on ownership rather than task count. Every line traces to a diligence step: the reclaimed-hour target to Step 1, the calibration playbook to Step 7's transition, the ownership gate to Step 3's contract. The COO's line at the year-one review: "The seat cost barely moved. What moved is that partners delegate now without thinking twice."

SECTION 07

The executive playbook: governance for the first 180 days

A support transition succeeds when the team is measured and paid on the leverage it creates — leader in command throughout.

DAYS 0–30

Define leverage, contract on it

Set the reclaimed-hour target, the ownership floor, and the second-touch ceiling with each principal before launch, and begin the calibration playbook. Contract on reclaimed hours and ownership — never per seat alone — with floors and ceilings carrying credits. Stand up the leverage audit as the program's arbiter of truth.

DAYS 30–90

Shadow, calibrate, certify ownership

Have the team shadow each principal and build the calibration playbook before it owns the queue; certify the ownership gate and trusted-close discipline. Switch on the second-touch log feeding weekly coaching. Publish the leverage dashboard: hours reclaimed, tasks owned, second-touch rate, escalation-with-recommendation share.

DAYS 90–180

Own the queue, certify steady state

Hand full ownership to the team only once it clears the ownership floor and reclaimed-hour target. Review the leverage board monthly with the second-touch log on the table. Certify steady state on two months at target across multiple principals; hand over on documented criteria; keep the quarterly leverage audit standing.

THE FIVE FAILURE MODES WE ARE HIRED TO PREVENT

Paying per seat while the leader still supervises · handing tasks back with a question instead of owning them · escalating open questions instead of recommendations · skipping the calibration playbook · handing over the queue before ownership is proven. All five are settled at selection and contract.

The administrative-support argument, in one sentence: a completed task is activity and a reclaimed hour is leverage, and a vetted Philippine team delivers –61% per reclaimed hour with 11 hours back per leader per week and 90%+ of work owned end-to-end — for buyers who audit the leverage instead of counting the tasks, and compete the finalists through a fully transparent, fair, comprehensive, and highly competitive RFP. Anyone can clear a queue. We make sure you buy the team that gives you your week back.

METHODOLOGY & NOTES

How the numbers were built

Leverage and ownership figures (Fig. 1, Table 2) derive from engagement instrumentation in PITON-Global administrative-support engagements, 2025–26. Reclaimed hours are measured against a pre-engagement time-diary baseline; ownership and second-touch rates are counted against the delegated-task log. The weak-provider column is a composite of pre-engagement vendor reporting reviewed in diligence, shown for contrast.

Cost-per-reclaimed-hour figures (Table 1) are fully loaded — wages, benefits and statutory charges, facilities, technology and collaboration tooling, management and QA overhead, attrition-driven recruiting — net of shrinkage; US comparators reflect fully-loaded in-house EA cost on the same basis. A reclaimed executive hour is one hour of the principal's time genuinely freed and not offset by supervision.

The case study (AS-034) is anonymized under NDA; headcounts and dates are generalized, figures rounded. Ownership, second-touch, and reclaimed-hour effects are audit-verified; the redeployed-partner-time line is a conservative estimate on a billable-contribution basis, not booked revenue. ROI = net first-year value ÷ all engagement-related client costs. PITON-Global's advisory fee is provider-paid and appears at $0 in the client cost base; neutrality safeguards are documented at piton-global.com.

Market context draws on IBPAP reporting and PITON-Global's proprietary provider mapping (1,000+ operations; support ownership and reclaimed-hour performance re-verified May 2026). Estimates and projections are PITON-Global analysis and should be cited as such. The full series is available at piton-global.com.

Would your provider's seat rate survive a look at your calendar?

Thirty minutes with John will tell you. Free to buyers, strictly vendor-neutral — a leverage-verified shortlist within two to three business days.

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