



PROFESSIONAL

Tips

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Shaping the Future

Administrative Professionals Day 25 April 2007

The “Shaping the Future” theme for Administrative Professionals Week 2007 signifies that today’s administrative professionals must take charge of their own career development and be fully aware that the necessary skills to remain key contributors to employers are constantly changing.

Qualities of a True Administrative Professional

The International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) suggests that a true administrative professional should have most or all of the following qualities...

- Is skilled in new and emerging technology. This includes a strong working knowledge of a wide variety of integrated computer software applications, Internet and Intranet communications and research.
- Acts autonomously. This means having less direct interface with bosses and more with clients and internal departments. Is able to make decisions independently, and manages his/her own work and schedule.
- Provides broader skills beyond the traditional scope of the secretary. Brings greater value to the workplace through skills in such areas as accounting, interviewing, hiring and training, and coordinating activities with outside vendors.
- Demonstrates strong interpersonal skills. These can include effective listening, good writing, strong negotiating and oral communication skills.
- Uses educational opportunities provided and finds new ones. Attends relevant educational and training sessions offered by employers or pursues them independently. Never stops learning. Makes like a sponge and learns as much as he/she can on the job.
- Is flexible. Shifts gears effectively and goes with the flow if things get hectic.
- Gets results. Meets deadlines and always sets personal goals and meets them.
- Takes the initiative. Doesn't wait to be asked to do something. Stays one step ahead of the boss.
- Innovates. Comes up with new, more efficient ways of doing his or her job. Offers assistance, ideas, and recommendations for making things work better in the office.
- Can set priorities with little guidance.
- Can juggle several assignments at once.
- Works well with other employees at all levels and from other departments.
- Asks intelligent questions about the business.
- Participates in group discussions, meetings, work teams - not just as a scribe.
- Thrives with a fair amount of chaos!
- Keeps an open mind. Realizes that what we thought was right yesterday, may not be true today...and vice versa. Is willing to look at new information in a new light to make new decisions to keep fresh and up-to-date.

In short, administrative professionals are those who master technology, have top-notch interpersonal and communication skills, are able to manage projects, track and organize and be creative in solving problems, and most importantly, have the willingness to learn and grow, and accept challenges.

How Managers Can Work Most Effectively with an Administrative Assistant/Secretary

It's a Two-Way Street

Below are tips on how managers can work effectively with an Administrative Assistant/Secretary

- The first step in empowering an administrative assistant is to develop a checklist of responsibilities. An analysis of the checklist can also identify things that no longer need to be done by *anyone*. Ask the questions: Are these tasks necessary? What value does the task add? What could we stop doing? What should we start doing?
- Empowering administrative assistants is only possible when they have the skills and educational level to respond to their changing role.
- To help my assistant be aware of the workflow of our organization, I have her attend my staff meetings as an equal to those who also report directly to me. This has facilitated her understanding of the issues facing our staff and the key dates of activities. It has also elevated her role so that my staff takes her more seriously.
- Communication is the backbone of any organization. Your communication skills need to be outstanding. Administrative assistants are vital communication liaisons that maintain mutual understanding and connections among managers and the staff, the public, the customers, and other managers.
- There may be some things that the bosses could easily do themselves that take more time to delegate. For example, it is far easier for me to read and respond to my e-mail than for my assistant to go through it and respond for me. However, there are items in the e-mail that she can act on. She is currently doing that for me.
- From the executive's perspective, it is important to remember that assistants can't read minds.
- My advice to both the executive and the assistant is to clarify the relationship on a regular basis so that the roles that are changing can be acknowledged and nurtured. Both people have responsibility in this. It is truly a two-way street.

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