

Career IQ



Forward Moving in Today's Workplace

Administrative Professionals Week
April 20 – 26, 2008

Today, there are more than 475,000 administrative professionals employed in Canada and millions more in offices around the world. This year's theme – "Forward Moving" – denotes how career-minded administrative professionals are positioning themselves for success in today's ever-changing business environment by taking charge of their own career development.

The typical duties of an administrative professional have evolved over the past two decades. Compare then and now:

Then – administrative professionals took phone messages; handled clerical details; identified problems; supported one manager; were given constant direction; took minutes at meetings; and collected information.

Now – administrative professionals coordinate communications and handle calls; manage projects; problem solve; work as a partner and team player; are self-starters; participate in meetings; conduct research; organize and publish information.

It is no secret that administrative professionals are taking on new roles in today's office. Technology has empowered administrative professionals with timesaving systems and tools

to process information and manage a wide range of both electronic and print communications. To be successful, new competencies are required. Interpersonal skills, communication skills, a mastery of the latest office software, and advanced knowledge of business functions are key.

Stay ahead in a continually changing workplace:

1. Become a computer software expert. Demonstrate your mastery of "office suite" packages and the Internet for gathering information or maintaining web content.
2. Actively pursue continuing education. Polish your written and verbal communications skills.
3. Learn how to plan conferences and meetings. Make them well-organized and user friendly. Understand audio- and video- conferencing.
4. Be a good teacher and leader. Many administrative professionals are training and supervising other staff.
5. Become a communication hub in your workplace. Clients and vendors often judge the character of a business by the quality and efficiency of its administrative support staff.
6. Be an adept organizer and "Information Manager." Utilize computerized data as well as paper office records to provide information needed by managers.
7. Get involved in selecting and maintaining office equipment. Stay current with the types of office equipment available and what is most suited for your organization.

A recent study – *Office of the Future: 2020* – identifies future workplace trends and skills necessary for success. According to this study, the future office will be increasingly mobile, with technology enabling employees to perform their jobs from virtually anywhere. Among the findings, technology tools will provide even greater flexibility; telecommuting will rise; and companies/employees will take a new view on the work/life balance. Experts identified six skills administrative professionals will need to prepare for success in this new environment:

- Analysis:** analysing information and exercising good judgement
- Collaboration:** establishing rapport and facilitating team building
- Technical aptitude:** selecting the best technical tools and using them effectively
- Intuition:** identifying and adapting to the needs and work styles of others
- Ongoing education:** engaging in continual learning
- Negotiation:** participating in business discussions that produce positive results

Be glad you're an administrative professional!

As an administrative professional you have a skill set that is broader than most other professionals – you can more easily transition! Perhaps more important than your present-day skills is your willingness to adapt, grow, and keep learning new things. A can-do attitude will overcome many shortcomings in today's workplace. Administrative professionals have been taught to use diplomacy, tact, and influence to get a job done. You are a master in this area! Throughout the world, many employers are recognizing your contributions, dedication, and unique skill set. Hats off to all administrative professionals!

Source: International Association of Administrative Professionals



Tips and Strategies for Project Management

Nothing helps move things along better than a good plan. It helps those who have to work with the plan and also leads to a better use of resources. It helps anticipate problems before they occur. A good plan leaves more time to do other things secure in the knowledge that things are on track and proceeding as planned.

Lay out tasks and work. Most successful projects begin with a good plan. What do I need to accomplish? What are the goals? What's the timeline? What resources will I need? How many of the resources do I control? Who controls the rest of the resources – people, funding, tools, materials, support – I need? Lay out the work from A to Z. Many people are seen as lacking a plan because they don't write down the sequence or parts of the work and leave something out. Ask others to comment on ordering and what's missing.

Set the plan. Buy a software program that creates flow charts. Become an expert in its use. Use the output of the software to communicate your plans to others. Use the flow charts in your presentations.

Set goals and measures. Nothing keeps projects on time and on budget like a goal, a plan, and a measure. Set goals for the whole project and the sub tasks. Plan for all. Set measures so you and others can track progress against the goals.

Manage multiple plans or aspects of big plans. Many attempts to accomplish complex plans involve managing parallel tracks or multiple tasks at the same time. It helps if you have a master plan. Good planning decreases the chances you will lose control by spreading yourself too thin.

Manage efficiently. Plan the budget and manage against it. Spend carefully. Have a reserve if the unanticipated comes up. Set up a timeline so you can track ongoing expenditures against the plan.

Match people and tasks. People are different. They have different strengths and have differing levels of knowledge and experience. Giving people tasks that match their talent creates a happier and more efficient team.

Walk the Plan Out. What could go wrong? Run scenarios in your head. Think along several paths. Rank the potential problems from highest likelihood to lowest likelihood. Think about what you would do if the highest likelihood things were to occur. Create a contingency plan for each. Pay attention to the weakest links which are usually groups or elements you have the least control over (perhaps someone in a remote location, a consultant or supplier). Pay close attention to potential weak links.

Set up a process to monitor progress against the plan. How would you know if the plan is on time? Could you estimate time to completion or percent finished at any time? Get people involved in implementing the plan timelines and have the team report regularly on progress.

Find someone in your environment who is better at planning than you are to see how it's done. How does that compare against what you typically do? Try to increase doing the things he/she does. Ask for feedback from some people who have had to follow your plans. What did they like? What did they find difficult?

Get others to help. Share your ideas about the project with others, possibly the people you need to support you later. Get their input on the plan. Delegate creating the plan to people who are better at it than you are. You provide the goals and what needs to be done, and let others create the detailed plan?

*Source: Michael Lombardo & Robert Eichinger,
For Your Improvement*

The 21st Century Administrative Professional

One of the largest segments of the office workforce...

- A total of **476,000** administrative professionals are employed in Canada, including 365,670 secretaries, 26,390 executive assistants and 84,140 clerical supervisors.
- Millions more work in offices around the world.
- More than **255,000** administrative assistant and secretarial positions will be added in North America between 2004 and 2014, representing a growth of 6.2%.
- More than **438,000** office supervisor positions will also be added.

An increasingly vital and skilled role in today's (and tomorrow's) office...

- Administrative professionals today require skills in management functions and technology, including: project management; integrated computer software applications; organization and scheduling; Internet/Intranet communications and research; document preparation, storage, and retrieval, with emphasis on electronic recordkeeping; customer service and public relations.

*Adapted from the International Association of
Administrative Professionals (IAAP)*

Training and Workshops

MVP Professional Development Training
offered by McMaster's Centre for
Continuing Education

*McMaster is committed to providing you with
training that will help you achieve your most
important career development goals.*

Visit their website at
<http://www.mcmaster.ca/conted/mvp>
for full course listings and dates.

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Newest Resources Available

- *Go for Gold: Inspiration to Increase Your Leadership Impact* by John C. Maxwell
- *The Key to Great Leadership: Rediscovering the Principles of Outstanding Service* by Peter Burwash
- *What's the Secret: To Providing a World-Class Customer Experience* by John R. DiJulius
- *Excellence Every Day: Make the Daily Choice – Inspire Your Employees and Amaze Your Customers* by Lior Arussy

To be released mid-2008

- *Satisfied Customers Tell Three Friends, Angry Customers Tell 3,000: Running a Business in Today's Customer-driven World* by Pete Blackshaw
- *Make Meetings Matter: Ban Boredom, Co-Opt Confusion and Eliminate Time Wasting* by Charlie Hawkins