

## **Administrative Professionals Make the Difference** **By Hans Schultz**

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Do you review and answer email at night or on the weekends just to catch up or stay ahead of the game? Are you struggling to meet deadlines? Are you spending too much time on things that don't drive production or revenue? If this sounds familiar, an administrative professional could be the answer to your situation.

According to the International Association of Administrative Professionals, 4.2 million administrative assistants and secretaries were employed in the United States in 2006. These individuals support executives, department managers and small to medium size business owners by performing a range of responsibilities.

Many will agree that being an executive assistant is not an easy job. It takes more than basic administrative skills and duties. An executive assistant is also a counselor, organizer, and scores of people say they are the oil that keeps the engine running.

Today, administrative professionals handle meeting and event planning, travel arrangements, document preparation and record keeping. Other duties also include supervision of staff, negotiations with vendors and suppliers, and coordinating mailings and other marketing efforts. Exceptional executive assistants are organized, productive, have excellent time management skills, think ahead and work quickly and efficiently.

An administrative assistant with a local consumer products company defined her primary responsibility as being an "assistant to management", which means she oversees the day-to-day running of her department. Working under minimal supervision, she handles everything from accounting, personnel administration, computer programming, training and marketing. Besides serving in a support capacity, she is a valued member of the business.

Another example is an attorney who was contemplating retirement so he hired an assistant to help with the clerical functions of downsizing the practice. The individual chosen was so productive that the attorney remained in practice for seven more years.

These valuable team members are very often the point of contact for communicating announcements to company employees. Typically, executive assistants also have training in project management so they know how and when to get the word out. Great assistants anticipate what you need before you need or ask for it.

Skills to look for when hiring an administrative professional are the ability to: handle a wide variety of situations and problems; interpret procedures and policies of the organization; communicate effectively, as well as deal effectively, with all types of people.

The personality of an assistant is as important as the individual's technical expertise. If you are a task person your assistant should have stronger people skills, or if you prefer not to spend time on details, someone more detail oriented would be best.

When hiring an assistant consider the following—what duties will this person perform? What skills or experience should this person have? Will they need to work full or part time? What personality will complement mine? A professional staffing company can assist you with the search by analyzing your needs and developing an employee profile. These firms have a pool of pre-screened and pre-qualified candidates ready to work.

Behind every successful executive; behind the record-breaking sales figures; behind every new deal, there is an employee that makes it all happen. Don't waste another minute, the right administrative professional can make all the difference to your company.

*Hans Schultz is division manager of professional services at Landmark Staffing Resources, Inc. and can be reached at 920-731-3130 or at [hans.schultz@landmarkstaffing.com](mailto:hans.schultz@landmarkstaffing.com).*