

Productive to the Max

Productivity

Performance

Profitability

Acknowledge the Importance of Administration

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Are you an administrative or executive assistant? Perhaps you are in the enviable position of being able to employ or manage someone in that capacity? If not, then you probably are responsible for your own administrative tasks. Regardless of which category you belong to, effectively carrying out administrative procedures is a key element in performance management.

Constant challenges await all administrators. With changing office environments, technologies and interpersonal relationships, they have become, more than ever, an integral part of the office evolution. I find that people who enter this field are very often warm, caring individuals who truly want to help. They assist the organization in providing the backbone for the structure and processes that keep the wheels moving. They are a cherished member of the group (witness what happens when they take a day off). However, their caring nature can also be a detriment for it prevents them from pushing back, saying no and getting to the tasks at hand. It is certainly a balancing act to be able to respond to the needs of others while completing the work required.

The following **MaxTips** will assist you in becoming a more effective administrator.

- v **Define who you are**
 - o What do you value?
 - o What is your greatest strength?
 - o What do you daydream about?
- v **Determine what you want**
 - o What obstacles do you face?
 - o What life issues are dragging you down?
 - o What new things would you like to try?
- v **Assess your values**
 - o Make your choices based on values
 - o Become more decisive
 - o Increase your self-esteem

- v **Set goals**
 - o Write the goals as if they have been achieved
 - o Aim high, but use common sense
 - o Break goals down into manageable parts
- v **Manage expectations**
 - o Communicate your needs and desires
 - o Speak up for your beliefs
 - o Establish your core functions
- v **Get help from others**
 - o Identify people who can assist you in your goals
 - o Encourage teamwork
 - o Share knowledge
- v **Know your audience**
 - o Identify how much information is necessary
 - o Create messages in keeping with their needs
 - o Determine the importance, sensitivity and confidentiality of all communication
- v **Practise proper etiquette**
 - o Dress properly
 - o Learn your P's and Q's
 - o Be pleasant and firm at all times
- v **Learn to deal with difficult people**
 - o Clarify objectives
 - o Focus on the rational
 - o Generate alternatives
- v **File properly**
 - o Eliminate unnecessary information
 - o Ensure that files are easily identifiable and accessible
 - o Create shared systems
- v **Maintain an organized environment**
 - o Develop storage systems
 - o Tidy up your desk regularly
 - o Establish a peaceful workplace
- v **Establish communication with your boss**
 - o Determine and write down expectations on both sides
 - o Get to know each other's values, needs and behavior patterns
 - Realize that you both deserve to be taken care of
- v **Meet regularly at the same time each day**
 - o Update each other on the day's events
 - o Provide support for activities
 - o Learn more about the department
- v **Deal with change**
 - o Accept the inevitable
 - o Maintain your equanimity
 - o Get involved in the process

- v **Learn to communicate effectively**
 - o Be aware of body language
 - o Mirror other's actions
 - o Adjust to different personalities
- v **Build on your strengths**
 - o Develop new skill areas
 - o Attend conferences regularly
 - o Share your talents with others
- v **Keep up to date on your training**
 - o Constantly be aware of training opportunities
 - o Create a performance training plan
 - o Meet with other administrators in your department to keep current on policies and procedures
- v **Network regularly**
 - o Join administrative organizations
 - o Acquire a mentor within the organization
 - o Keep abreast of all developments
- v **Have fun!**
 - o Plan amusing activities
 - o Laugh a lot
 - o Use humor to diffuse difficult situations

I constantly hear from managers, directors, CEO's and DG's many concerns about their assistants. They feel that the administrators lack initiative, are not proactive, do not follow up on tasks and generally do not provide the support required for the individual or the department. Upon subsequent discussions with the assistants, I also discover that in most instances the expectations have not been established from the start. We would never think to build a house without a foundation or set up a department without specific strategic plans, so why do we think that our administrators can know what is expected of them if they are not told? It really is as simple as that.

It is essential that you establish, right from the beginning, the expectations for the position, You do this by offering a comprehensive job description, an administrative manual outlining all the policies and procedures and providing extensive training in these areas. Then meet with the person involved and communicate your needs, desires and expected outcomes for each of the tasks.

On a regular, day-to-day basis, depending on the workload, meet first thing in the in the morning with your assistant to discuss your calendar, emails, the meetings scheduled for the day and other related tasks. Ensure you have a system for all the documents you require and another system for related documents you bring back from appointments and meetings. At the end of the day, establish a time for follow-up to ensure all duties have been accomplished.

Communication is the key to this relationship so the more that you know about each other's goals, expectations, personalities and styles, the more effective you will be. Allow your assistant the freedom to explore other areas in which they can provide assistance so you can get on with the big picture items that are your responsibility.

Administrative procedures are here to stay. They provide a solid foundation for everything we do and aspire to. The more we simplify the processes and systems, the more we communicate our needs and the faster we complete the items, the better off we will be.