

THE CORNER

Weekly updates from the Social Work Training and Research Centre

ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS

Who Are We?

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Image courtesy of Fiverr

As an Administrative Professional (fondly referred to as an AP hereafter) people tend to ask, "so what do you do?" At first I wasn't sure how to answer this question as the role of an AP can be extremely diverse, as well as the nomenclatures assigned. It all depends on the industry you're in and the organization you work with, among other things. But there are many statements that come to mind when I think about this role. An AP is like:

- your heartbeat – if it stops, everything else stops;
- your shoe strap – if it breaks, everything falls apart;
- money in your bank account – with it you are fine, without it you're not so fine.

And if you're Jamaican, then you'd more likely understand these.

- What would Mr. J. Wray be without his Nephew?
- Your ackee without saltfish just isn't the same.

Administrative professionals are a special kind; we are more than just the eyes and ears of an organization; we are also the backbone and organs. Often times however our role is demeaned, we are stigmatized and the role and its importance taken for granted and that needs to change; it is so much more than what it is deemed to be.



SO WHAT ARE SOME OF THE REQUIRED SKILL-SETS FOR AN AP?

An Administrative Professional's skill-sets can be as wide as the ocean; there is no one size that fits the bill, but, there are some basics they should be / have:

Great organizational skills - *cornerstone of any AP*

Clear communication skills

Discreet

Trustworthy

Initiative

Technologically savvy

Transparent

Excellent time management skills

Problem solving skills

Good at prioritizing and scheduling

Persons who possess these skills, as an innate ability, are already way ahead of the game. However, these are skills that are teachable and transferable.

Did you know that an AP has superpowers?

Yes we do.

***We read minds, think on our feet – literally,
and
can multitask like nobody's business.***

But the reality is, an AP's role can be very time-consuming, repetitive, challenging, complex and at times, boring even. But there are ways in which the mundane and time-consuming aspects can be minimized, and the challenges and complexities reduced.

How? By always keeping ahead of the game, learning new things, upgrading your skills, constantly revisiting technology and, be willing to share knowledge and ask questions.

10 KEY AREAS/STRATEGIES THAT ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS MAY BE INVOLVED IN

- a. Financial management – emphasis on implementing strategies for budget control and cost management
- b. Change Management
- c. Policy & Procedure Development & Execution
- d. Delegation
- e. Facility & Security Management
- f. Leadership & People Development
- g. Performance Management
- h. Problem Management
- i. Relationship Management
- j. Document Filing & Retrieval

MY THOUGHTS AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONAL

Over the last 25 years I have held numerous roles which have had varied levels of administrative responsibilities. Those experiences have afforded me lifelong lessons that I now transfer into conducting the affairs of my current role as an Administrative Officer. Aside from using the technical, human, and conceptual skills that have helped me to succeed over the years I can tell you these things:

- **Being organized** must be at the core of your being.
- You must have a **passion for excellence**.
- You must use technology to drive and improve the processes/systems specific to your industry – **technical skills**.
- Being **proactive** will serve you well.
- Learning how to **manage your relationships**, respectfully and creatively, both internal and external, can take you a far way – **human skills**.
- You must be able to see the bigger picture, how each depends on the other and how they are affected by each other – **conceptual skills**.
- Being **meticulous** is a good attribute.
- One must be **authentic and intentional** in their daily activities.

Next time you have to interact with an AP just remember, “behind every successful team, there is an efficient and effective Administrative Professional” – Unknown

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