

JOAN
Burge



**OFFICE
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INTERNATIONAL**

Turbocharge

Your Administrative Career

By *Joan Burge*

Founder & CEO, Office Dynamics International

Inspiring Administrative Excellence Since 1990

eBook²⁰¹⁴

Turbocharge Your Administrative Career

By *Joan Burge, founder & CEO, Office Dynamics International*
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Welcome to this unique eBook. This is a compilation of popular published articles written by Joan Burge over recent years. These articles are special because they were written by an administrative expert for administrative professionals who desire reaching the top of their game and continuing to strive for their personal best – day after day. Professional assistants support businesses of all sizes everywhere. They help the world go round!

Even more important is that the information in these articles is based on 42+ years of experience on both sides of the desk:

- Joan worked in the administrative profession in a variety of organizations and industries for 20 years. She worked her way up from Receptionist to partnering with CEOs and Presidents of large organizations.
- Since 1990, Joan has been a successful CEO teaching real-world principles to administrative professionals of all levels and coaching executives and assistants on building strategic partnerships.

We hope you enjoy these articles filled with practical, proven tips and live-changing principles. For more great articles and updates from Joan Burge and her staff please see our Blog and Articles at www.OfficeDynamics.com.

You can also register to receive weekly Monday Motivators™ with special video messages from Joan. Monday Motivators™ offers you a BOLT of information and a JOLT of motivation to kick start your week! Sign-up at www.OfficeDynamics.com/Motivators!

For more great ways to Turbocharge Your Career, check out one of our live events or our free highly-rated video series, 26 Weeks to Administrative Excellence.

Wishing you great success!

The Office Dynamics International Team

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Special Thanks

We extend special thanks to these fine resources for sharing our valuable information with the administrative profession over the years.

Administrative Advisor

Administrative Assistant Adviser™

Administrative Professional Today

Essential Assistant

Executive Secretary Magazine

From 9 to 5

OfficePRO Magazine

DeskDemon.com

AdminSecret.com

OfficeArrow.com

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All the World's a Stage

WRITER
JOAN
BURGE



Many people, administrative assistants included, are afraid of public speaking. In fact, it's the number one fear in America, rated higher than snakes or fire! Truth be told, there is so much more to it than just talking on a raised platform. While you speak, you stand alone and all eyes are upon you making you the natural focal point in the room. I think that is the actual basis for the fear of public speaking.

Now let's talk about you. I'll bet you didn't think about being on stage this morning when you got ready for work, did you? Did you think about making an entrance as you badged through security into the building or as you responded to the first caller at your desk?

The truth is that even if you never set foot on a stage or give speeches at public gatherings, you are always, always on stage.

Whether or not you like it, the fact is that human beings form ideas and opinions about others within moments of meeting them. We all have an internal classification process and a need to organize our world and everyone in it. So, you have a very short window of opportunity to present yourself to the best advantage.

I'm amazed at how many administrative professionals overlook this critical "make it or break it" area of their career! In my Star Achievement Series® workshops, we discuss in detail how to brand and present yourself as a polished, well-groomed and well-spoken individual.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Simply put, it's all about respect. Respecting yourself enough to dress consistently every day in proper business attire, including neat polished shoes and modern hairstyle and makeup. Additional notes: if you wear eyeglasses, make sure your eyeglass frames are modern and up to date; and always carry a beautiful pen and professional portfolio to meetings. These say that you care.

Maybe when you were growing up you were taught that "as long as your clothes are

clean that is enough." You may think that philosophy condones old styles, scuffed shoes, ripped handbag, clothes that don't fit your current body (too tight or too baggy) or are inappropriate (sparkly clubbing outfits to daytime banking or law offices) or sporting a non-haircut and bare face "au naturel". Or, you may dress up one day, down the next, so no one can anticipate your presentation in advance.

Today's executives want their assistants to represent them when they interact with others. They want you to represent them well! They need you to deliver their messages – that's hard to do if your professional polish and presence have gone AWOL. Managers and executives want to see you exhibit the know-how to be modern, respectful of yourself, their business and company objectives. You should represent the business conduct and business attire that your CEO presents every day.

Managers and executives want to empower their assistants. They tell me this when I meet with them, because they want their assistants to grow.

In order to meet that challenge and succeed in business you will need to continually grow in how you present and view yourself. You need to reinvent yourself, over and over. This message isn't just for assistants with decades of experience. This is also for brand new assistants and those who've been working for a while. We should never stop reinventing ourselves and staying current, not just in our skillset but also in our brand presentation.

Furthermore, your career and your manager's faith and trust in your position as her or his ambassador to the organization, clients and colleagues, depend on whether or not you "get" this.

At my 19th Annual Conference for Administrative Excellence, I interviewed the powerful CEO of a huge company for my "Executive Perspective" segment, which

provides attendees an opportunity to see things from the other side of the desk. It's an amazing time for everyone.

Do you know what this high-level CEO mentioned as his number one business pet peeve? He called it "car wash Fridays" because people in the organization mistook "business-casual Fridays" to come to work dressed in workout sweats, motto t-shirts, tennis shoes, sports jerseys, hoodies or jeans.

When did business-casual Fridays become just casual Fridays? When did professional business attire become beach or party attire (assuming your industry isn't related to the beach or clubbing!) Why do I hear good administrators say they want to grow their careers yet they collect stuffed animals in their cubicles and go to meetings with a tattered paper pad?

Style and presentation inconsistencies that do not jive with business objectives will limit you.

What do you do if everyone else at your office is attired without a thought to being on stage? I will acknowledge that it takes true courage to do what is right in your opinion. Just because others are doing something else you need not relinquish your convictions about your professional presentation.

While we're on the subject of good presentation, let me also mention the importance of great soft skills. Are you confident on how to make introductions? Can you make others feel at ease? Do you smile often and engage in eye contact? How is your tone of voice on the phone and in person? It's very important to "smile with your voice" because you can disarm a lot of tension in the office by your tone, not just your words. Good manners, joy, energy and positive outlook are all part of your presentation, too.

William Shakespeare once penned these words, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players..." In 21st century business today, we are still on stage, and it's up to each of us to present ourselves positively and powerfully.

about the author



Joan Burge, a renowned author and administrative expert, has been a visionary for administrative training and development since 1990. One of the first to venture into the administrative training industry, she has become an international administrative expert, trainer, author and consultant. Joan Burge equips Administrative Assistants, executive assistants and office support professionals to move beyond task work to higher-level functions that meet the ever-changing demands of today's workplace. In addition to being editor of the weekly e-zine, Monday Motivators™, Joan is the creator of the Star Achievement Series®, World Class Assistant™ Certificate Program, more than 40 customized workshops and seminars for administrative professionals, and most recently — Adminology®, a new mindset for a new decade: www.officedynamics.com



Be Results-driven

WRITER
JOAN
BURGE

A professional is someone who cares about results, not just the activity. The only catch is that it takes a certain kind of person.

Michael Hammer, author of *Reengineering the Corporation*

Successful leaders do not think “What are the tasks I have to do today?” They think “What are the results I have to achieve?” Their tasks then become the vehicles for arriving at their destination. Some of us may arrive to work each day and not think about results. We think only about what comes into our email, or what was left over from yesterday.

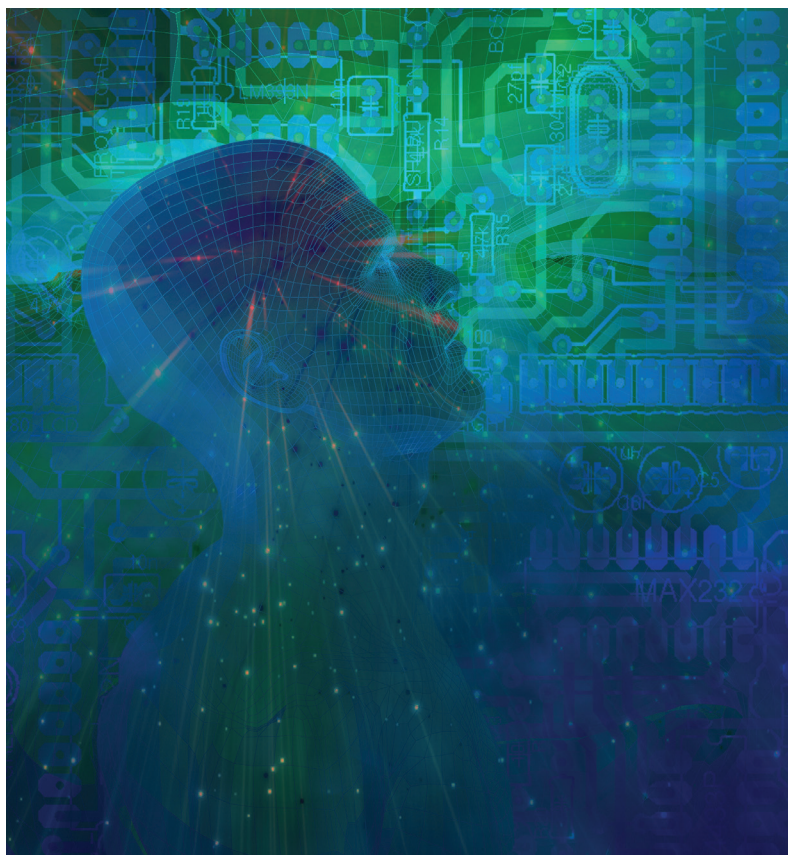
Your performance plan may be esoteric in nature, broad—stroked without detail. But to be results-driven, you must instead begin to see the end goal, and then work backward to make it happen. Once you work with results in mind, it becomes easy to plan what needs to happen today to achieve “X” at the planned date.

In business, as in life, results count. A wishin’ and a hopin’ aren’t drivers of success. What results do you want to achieve? By when? What will the results look like? Now, take the image of successful results and picture what must happen and in what order it must happen to flow smoothly and efficiently toward completion.

The mental aspect of time management

Time management has always been a challenge for professionals. And it will continue to be a challenge. People thought technology would make life smoother and simpler, reducing paper pile-up in the office. That hasn’t really happened. Some employees complain about having more paper because now they print email messages in addition to their regular mail.

There are probably many days you feel there just aren’t enough hours to complete what you need to do. We can’t stop time from passing and we don’t “manage time” in the sense that we can’t stop the clock or turn the hands back an hour or two. We can manage ourselves, thoughts, projects and establish priorities. We all have the same number of hours in a day.



What we do with them and how we manage our tasks is up to us.

You can have all the tools in the world to manage projects and tasks, but they will not do any good if you are not in the right frame of mind. For example, you can be taught to use the Franklin Planner system, but if you aren’t mentally up to it and convinced it works, you won’t use it effectively. You can have all types of software programs for managing projects, wall calendars and portfolios to hold your project papers. If you are not mentally in tune, these tools will not help you.

Here are some power tips on the new way to approach your work and achieve better results!

First: kill multitasking!

Yes, you read that correctly! While many people in our society boast about being great multitaskers, there are volumes (and that is putting it mildly) of research on the negative effects of multitasking. I have provided a few excerpts from some of the research but if you still aren’t convinced, do your own research and you will be amazed.

(Source: *Harvard Business Review* by Peter Bregman)

Doing several things at once is a trick we play on ourselves, thinking we’re getting more done. In reality, our productivity goes down by as much as 40%. We don’t actually multitask. We switch-

task, rapidly shifting from one thing to another, interrupting ourselves unproductively, and losing time in the process.

(Source: *TheEnergyProject.com*)

The concept of multitasking is actually a misnomer. Human brains process information sequentially and cannot process two cognitive tasks at the same time. Instead, what they're really doing is "task switching". This movement between tasks prompts significant costs. First and foremost, it is less efficient. The research shows that any time a person moves attention from a primary task to another one, it adds an average of 25% to the time it takes to complete the initial task. It also affects the quality of work people do. When people switch reactively from one task to another, they are trading depth for breadth.

Avoiding time-robbers

There are many activities throughout the day that waste our time. They may not seem significant individually, but can add up to minutes or even hours of wasted time!

How Quickly Time Flies

Get morning beverage, say hello to co-workers and unpack desk	20 mins
Online surfing at work	120 mins
Social networking (non-work related)	30-180 mins
Stop in hall throughout the day to speak with co-workers	45 mins
Take time in restroom to visit with co-worker	20 mins
Extended lunch and breaks	30 mins
Personal telephone calls	20 mins

285-435 minutes or 4.75-7.25 hours!

Procrastination

Do not keep putting off a task that needs to be done. Tackle tasks promptly. Remember and use this rule: handle each piece of paper (or each email) only once.

Outside interruptions

Politely prevent others from disrupting you at your desk. How can you tactfully do that? Try any of these three methods:

- Don't put down your pen or pencil and don't stop working. Don't relax or fold your arms.

Instead, lean forward or sit upright. Glance up only to say "Hello, Bill, how may I help you?" or "Hi, Bill, what can I do for you?" This visually signals Bill that you are not dropping your work to chit-chat with him. You are acknowledging his presence and want to help.

- Since some people may not pick up your cues, physically do something: pick up the phone and start dialling or turn to the computer and begin typing.
- Be friendly, but direct. Say something like, "Bill, I'd like to talk to you, but I'm in the middle of a deadline. Maybe we can talk at lunch or later in the day."

Wasted steps

Save steps. Organize your work logically according to the errands you must do to avoid unnecessary trips back and forth. For example, accumulate items for copying and plan to go to the copier two or three times per day. Unless something is urgent, you can put it aside for planned trips. You can save even more steps by

puzzle – the big picture. However, when communicating what is needed, he or she may only give a small part. This makes it harder for you to do an adequate job. It creates errors and rework because thoughts and needs have not been defined clearly. Help others give you the details required to perform at your highest level and most efficiently by asking people questions and clarifying what you think you heard.

Inability to say "No"

Of course you want to be helpful, but what if you are already swamped? How do you decide when to say no to a request? Ask yourself if this is part or an extension of your job. If not, is it a way to advance your career or are you being taken advantage of?

Crisis

A crisis is an unexpected interruption or major impact above and beyond the normal day's events that requires your immediate attention. Expect the unexpected to occur during the day. Head off crises by finding out why things keep going wrong and learning to anticipate the outcome of events. All of us have to be able and ready to, at one time or another, "pull a rabbit out of a hat." The real "magic trick" is not working that way every day!

Managing events

Establish some quiet time throughout the day to get yourself reorganized and mentally back on track so you can tackle the day's activities and events as they occur, planned or unplanned.

Plan ahead

It is important to take time throughout to plan the next day and next few days. There is plenty of opportunity to be reactive. The more you plan and organize your work, the less stress you experience and the more effective and productive you become.

For more tips, visit *OfficeDynamics.com* where there are more than 900 Blog posts!

about the author



Joan Burge, a renowned author and administrative expert, is known as the red-lipstick-wearing "Rock Star" of administrative and executive assistant training. She's a successful entrepreneur who created a unique business niche by founding a movement to help administrators see themselves as professionals so they can excel in business. Joan Burge equips administrative assistants, executive assistants and office support professionals to move beyond task work to higher-level functions that meet the ever-changing demands of today's workplace. In addition to being Editor of the weekly e-zine *Monday Motivators™*, Joan is the creator of the Star Achievement Series®, World Class Assistant™ Certificate Program, more than 40 customized workshops and seminars for administrative professionals, and is the author of several books, most recently published: *Who Took My Pen... Again? Secrets from Dynamic Executive Assistants*, www.officedynamics.com.



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Break Through A Career Plateau —And Climb To The Stars!

By *Joan Burge, founder & CEO, Office Dynamics International*

Employees often ask me “How can I continue advancing my career after I feel I’ve hit a job plateau?” They also tell me that they like who they work for and the work they do, but feel stagnant. Anyone who asks that question is a go-getter! How does an employee continue moving forward in her chosen profession?

Expand your job. A lull in your career may signal you’re ready for new challenges – not necessarily a new job. So broaden the scope of the work you do: Look for projects that highlight your particular strengths – tasks that step beyond your job description, but that you feel qualified doing or learning. The reason is when advancing your career, the skills you’ve demonstrated are often more important than the title you’ve held. Doing higher-level, more complicated work will expand your skill set and earn you kudos and new opportunities in the process.

Illustration D: Monica’s new executive was a micro-manager. Little by little, he reduced Monica’s responsibilities. After about 6 months she started to think about quitting her job. “I’m so bored,” she lamented to her sister. Her sister worked in another department and knew a lot about the company. “Why don’t you ask if you can oversee the Scholarship Program?” she offered. The company had an admirable program and the man who was in charge of it had been promoted and hadn’t named a successor. Monica agreed it was a good idea. Four weeks later, Monica was officially named the contact person for the company scholarship program. Later, her executive acted as though the whole thing was his idea. He cooperated with Monica fully. “Are you sure you don’t need more time to devote to this job?” he asked from time to time. Eventually, Monica posted for another position in the company and no

longer interacted with this executive. While she waited for an opportunity to present itself; she got busy with something new and rewarding.

Seek new education or training. When you feel your career is in a rut, try to find educational opportunities that re-ignite your curiosity about the world – and inspire you to achieve even more. Whether you pursue formal schooling or seek professional training through conferences and seminars, you’re sure to benefit, and so is your career.

Ask for guidance. Perhaps there’s a barrier to advancing that you can’t see. Or maybe there’s an obvious way to move forward – but it’s not immediately evident to you. In either case, when you feel stymied, seek the advice of someone you trust – someone who understands your career aspirations. It could be your supervisor, a mentor, an HR manager or even a career coach.

Speak up. Career stagnation can sometimes be fixed by speaking frankly to your manager about the situation. Make no assumptions! If managers are unaware of your views, then you haven’t given them the opportunity to help you identify new ways to grow and expand your career.

Move on. Of course, if none of the above suggestions work, you may want to consider whether there’s another job that suits you better – one that’s more in line with your future career goals. Write down all the pros and cons to keeping your current position. If the cons outweigh the pros, have the courage of your convictions to begin seeking a new position.

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Coping With Conflicting Priorities

(From Star Achievement Series® curriculum)



By *Joan Burge, founder & CEO, Office Dynamics International*

Prioritizing means using your strategic thinking, long-range vision and knowledge of your leader's priorities and business objectives to see and determine which tasks are more important at each moment. You give those tasks more of your attention, energy and time. You focus on what is important at the expense of lower value activities. Prioritizing is about making choices of what to do and what not to do. To prioritize effectively you need to be able to recognize what is important, as well as to see the difference between urgent and important. And, it means recognizing that at any moment your A1+ hot priority could be supplanted by a new and more urgent A1++ priority!

It is not about getting faster. It's about putting your energies where they are most needed when they are most needed. It's the reason why you must learn your leader and know the business, so that you can put those factors into play when you are prioritizing.

When you have a long To-Do list, it can be quite overwhelming. In fact, you can feel so overwhelmed by a lengthy To-Do list that the feeling of being overwhelmed can stop you in your tracks, preventing you from accomplishing anything at all. One way to stop feeling overwhelmed and get back to accomplishing the tasks on your To-Do list is to prioritize tasks.

Prioritizing Tips

- Focus on high-value activities.
- As soon as possible, finish all the important urgent tasks. (These are the ones that would have a major negative impact if you did not get them done.)
- Start with the end in mind. Ask yourself, "What will be the result if I do not get this done today?"
- Ask for specific deadlines – not simply "ASAP."
- If you support multiple leaders and feel conflicted as to what takes precedence, ask the group to decide the order and then tell you.

- Early in the day, clarify the top three items that must be accomplished that day.
- Establish huddles with your leaders so you can discuss the day or week's priorities.
- Do the work first for the person who gives your performance evaluation, unless they tell you differently.
- Make deadlines public information; inform all members you support through a status update sheet or form.

Establish Categories and Rank Tasks

A This item is of extreme importance. It requires same day turnaround. If not done, it will lead to significant consequences.

A1.
A2.
A3.

B This item is important, can be completed within 2 - 3 days, as necessary. These should not be done until you have finished the "A" items.

B1.
B2.
B3.

C This item may be completed within 2 weeks. These are tasks that have no penalty.

C1.
C2.
C3.

Of course, these categories can shift, especially the A's and B's as the day passes and business fluctuates. When you set priorities, also keep asking yourself if any of your tasks can be eliminated or delegated.

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Creating a Career Portfolio™ for Administrative Professionals

By

Joan Burge, founder & CEO, Office Dynamics International

Including Bonus Tips by Jasmine Freeman, Chief Executive Assistant to Joan Burge

Many people think a career-focused “performance brief” as something they either once did to obtain their current position or as an annual “ho-hum” requirement. The Career Portfolio™ is NOT about job hunting. It is a Professional Journal created to detail how “You, Inc.” has capably and measurably demonstrated professional contributions to your organization and leader’s overall successes. The Portfolio captures current-and-building skill levels, recognition by others, shows career enhancements, development activities and accomplishments. It’s what a cognitive business professional brings to the table to articulate, “Game on!”

Whether you decide you want to move up in your chosen field, move out of the profession, or stay where you are, a career portfolio will be a valuable asset to you. It’s not enough to just “tell” people what you do; or to give them a resume. Especially in today’s job market, where you might be competing against 10 other top-notch assistants interviewing for 1 job!

Let’s say you have a great position, work for a good leader, like your environment – you probably think you can get by simply by continuing to do a good job and excelling at what you do. The truth is, that isn’t enough today. With organizations working meaner and leaner, every employee must consider that they are working every day to keep their, or even compete for, their job!

On the other hand, you may be in that time of your career where you want to move into another department, obtain a more challenging position within your organization, or gain recognition for your work.

Regardless of your situation or professional goals, remember that you are on stage every day with internal and external customers.

Let’s get started by considering the following points.

Why would it be beneficial to create a Career Portfolio?

- Shows you are proactive.
- You’d have a hard & soft copy of your accomplishments; permanent career history catalogued.
- “Shows” people what you are capable of doing.
- A tool to receive higher levels of recognition.
- Shows your creativity.

What can you do to get people to notice you and your unique talents? (Jot your ideas down in the box below.)

Getting People to Notice You

It’s time to start promoting your valuable skills and build alliances.

Promote yourself without being a “self-promoter”

- Don’t let any positive accomplishment go unnoticed.
- Be visible to the right people.
- Create an assignment that will bring you into close contact with the people who can help you move ahead. (and it’s not always the senior level people who can do that.)

Impress people

- Be a person of action! Impress people by doing something important or relevant. Be known as someone who comes up with ideas and gets things done.
- Do something for others first! You can make a great impression by first providing a service, doing a good deed, or promoting others. Can you send them information about something they are interested in? A project they are working on?

When and where can you use/introduce your Career Portfolio?

- During your performance review.
- When writing your professional development plan for the upcoming year and tracking accomplishments.
- Competing for an internal position.
- Updating a new leader of your skillset/talents and experiences.
- Asking for additional responsibility.
- Outside work – especially when trying to obtain a leadership role.
- When being considered for committee work.
- External interviewing.

Ways you can build your skills and add value to your Career Portfolio.

- Constant updates to your Career Portfolio.
- Think of it as a showcase of “You, Inc.”
- Be a catalyst for change in terms of job descriptions and salaries.
- Encourage feedback from several people in your organization and with whom you regularly interact.
- Know your strengths, use them.
- Know your gaps, work on them.
- Be a generalist or a multi-specialist.
- Take people you admire to lunch.
- Always continue to learn and grow in your craft. Stay current.

Now that you know the importance of why you need to build your Career Portfolio let's talk about how and what you can include inside of your Career Portfolio. Remember, this is just a listing of suggestions. Don't feel obligated to put everything you see listed here in your portfolio and certainly don't let it limit you to only putting these items in your professional portfolio. Each person is different and the purpose of this portfolio is to demonstrate what is special and unique about you, so it's time to get creative!

What can you put in this portfolio?

- A professional photo of yourself (moderate in size, no larger than a 4x6).
- Record of any outside work; volunteer or committee work (including examples of leadership roles or other areas of your expertise).

- Thank you notes from customers or clients on a job well done.
- Thank you letters from internal divisions and executives on a job well done.
- Examples of your work: graphic work, spreadsheets (be careful not to divulge confidential company information).
- Past evaluations (no more than 3 years back).
- Your personal mission and vision statement.
- Customer appreciation letters.
- Resume (keep extra copies on hand).
- Personal profilers.
- Emphasize results and accomplishments versus job duties.
- Copies of Certificates of Completion from learning courses relevant to your profession.

What should you use to display your Career Portfolio?

Be sure to place this information in a nice binder or casing. Many assistants have gone above and beyond by getting a leather portfolio embossed with their initials on it. You may feel more comfortable using a three-ring binder when you start the formation of your portfolio. Be creative. Remember the outside packaging also represents you and will send a message to the person viewing your portfolio. Think clean lines, professional-looking, and quality products. Also think about the font style and size you will use—again keep it professional. Consider the details right down to the type and color of paper you will use. Sheet protectors will provide your portfolio protection from the hands that will be reviewing it as well as easy access to simply change out and update your information.

For ease of browsing, it is recommended that you tab your portfolio and name each section accordingly. This is another way to add your own personal touches to your portfolio. Some creative terms or tab names used have been:

- Employee Advocate
- Credentials
- Strategic Partner
- Visual Identification (photo)
- Career History
- Specified Training

Extras can include a Table of Contents, cover letter, an informational CD, jump drive or a link to the soft copy version of your Career Portfolio.

Remember this is a tool to showcase your talents and open the conversation up with your leader or interviewer. Give them a chance to ask you questions – you don't need to put every single detail in the portfolio (think 'at a glance') as your reader will likely thumb through the pages. Avoid text-heavy pages.

NOTE: Do not leave this portfolio with the interviewer or others reviewing your portfolio. That is why you may wish to keep a copy of your Career Portfolio online.

Having a physical representation of your Career Portfolio is important and it shows an executive that you are serious about your career and you care enough to take the time to nurture this portfolio and showcase your work professionally. However, you won't

want to make a new portfolio with each interview or chance the possibility of the reviewer losing or damaging it. Yet, you do want to have a way to showcase your work to someone who wants to have more time to review your portfolio. The perfect way to 'leave' your information with someone is to keep a digital version of your Career Portfolio, available online or in a PowerPoint as a soft copy.

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BONUS TIPS

Keeping a Digital Career Portfolio

By *Jasmine Freeman, Chief Executive Assistant to Joan Burge*

There are multiple ways of showcasing your work in a digital format for your reader. Here are just a few examples.

Blog

- Link directly to your work on the world wide web.
- Your own space, you aren't relying on another site owner.

LinkedIn

- Great space to house testimonials of your work.
- Online resume.
- Excellent search-ability of your resume if you are looking but a necessary tool for all business professionals (searching or not).

Beyond.com

- Online placement/job search site
- Excellent visual representation of your resume with Career Portfolio Tool

SlideShare or Prezi

- PowerPoint style presentations
- Work with other sites such as LinkedIn

Be careful when using sites that don't belong to you when showcasing your information. If they change their terms of use or even shut down the site you could potentially lose your portfolio and all that hard work you put into it will have been for not. I do recommend that you use tools like LinkedIn or Beyond.com but I recommend that you don't limit yourself to just one for this reason (don't put all your eggs in one basket, so to speak).

Start simply with a PowerPoint presentation that you can link to testimonials featured on your LinkedIn profile (Recommendations & Endorsements) or directly to your visual Career Portfolio on Beyond.com. You can also hyperlink you reader directly to your

written work (Blogs) and video work (YouTube) if applicable. The options are endless and it's all unique to your own skills and abilities. To house your slideshow online you can utilize such tools as SlideShare or Prezi. LinkedIn also works with such presentation sites to add your online portfolio directly into your online resume.

For the more advanced user, I suggest keeping a blog with your own portfolio showcasing website. This can link to your profiles on sites like LinkedIn or Beyond as well as show off your design/website management abilities (which can come in handy, especially in smaller offices that keep a web master on staff).

With all of these tools comes a certain amount of maintenance. My recommendation is to keep a folder for portfolio updates in your follow up and make updates to your preferred tools and hard copy version 3-4 times per year when you aren't currently on the market and more frequent attention when you are job searching.

Wishing our best to you in the creation of your very own Career Portfolio!

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Feelgood Factor

WRITER
JOAN
BURGE



Imagine your body being strong and flexible. You are hydrated. You feed and fuel your body well daily. You have energy all day, every day, and you sleep well each night. You don't drag through the afternoons. You have energy available for those last-minute

afternoon rush assignments. Generally speaking, you feel great and can get done whatever you want to.

Sound like wishful thinking or the impossible dream?

All aspects of life are interconnected. Work and home are woven together between commutes, relationships, money and activities. When we are not at our tip-top best, it affects everything like a house of cards tumbling over. The pillars of life are interwoven. Everything is connected.

Wellness

When we are well, when we fuel our bodies and remain active, we actually create endorphins, or "happy" hormones. That impacts us and everyone around us!

Life tends to happen in a rush. We walk, talk, drive, text, email, work, ride escalators and take elevators, hurrying for that closing door! Sometimes we become like hamsters on a wheel. At work we encounter meetings, computers, video conferencing, copiers, faxes, tablets, smartphones, shipments, social media, telephones and instant messaging. Our executives travel on planes, taxis, town cars, trains and buses.

We rush from appointment to appointment, meeting to meeting, demand to demand. We live in a short-order world with Wall Street complexity and the demand to go faster and faster!

For most of us, our work gobbles up 40-60 hours weekly. On Saturdays we juggle errands, kids' sports, and chores. We hurry and rush in everything we do, looking for more speed. Rarely do we pause, stop and breathe.

Mornings are when I take in the beauty of nature, the mountains and sunrise. I'm at peace, my mind uncluttered. I don't yet have to think about emails or the 50 things I must do that day. It feels good. It's quiet and I relish the silence. No texting, no travel, no security checks. It is at these times I take a walk, and notice I am creative, able to easily see solutions.

We need to gently care for our physical selves. If our physical selves are not capable to carry us through, we'll miss out on so much life has to offer.

I'm proposing we embrace wellness as a means to leadership and mastery of our lives.

As I wrote about in my book, "Live a BIG Life!" it's a matter of balance. We have five Life Pillars (Career, Family, Wellness, Finance and Spiritual) and we need to spend a little energy on each area because they all intertwine. When we do not attend to our Life Pillars, we become weak in one or more pillars of our lives and so we become weaker in all pillar areas of our lives.

Each day, focus on wellness and take some step toward strengthening your wellness Life Pillar. Here are ideas to get you started:

- Walk
- Go to sleep earlier
- Drink water

- Eat an apple
- Watch the sunrise
- Stretch
- Choose to be at peace with what you cannot control
- Eat a healthy breakfast
- Snack on almonds instead of candy
- Read a book you love
- Practice gratitude
- We take "big" for "normal." It's not normal to super-size anything.

As you begin to exhibit mastery over your physical self and strengthen your wellness Life Pillar, remember these helpful tips:

- **Commit** to let go of old habits and take on new behaviours. Otherwise, it's just talk! My dear late husband, Dave, would tell me he needed to lose weight or get a new gym bag before he could go to the gym. Just commit and go!
- **Determine** you will generate the power, resolve and grit, because life happens. Get back on track.
- **Resilience** – think of a palm tree that sways in the wind, they do not break, they just go with it.
- **Daily affirmations** – tell yourself what you need to hear to get ready for your day. If we don't have healthy thoughts or believe we can accomplish something, we won't.

As you begin to address your wellness, and have a lighter step, you are going to change. Some of the naysayers will try to suck you back into old bad behaviours. Use your staying power to say, "No, thank you." Inspire them to change their lives because you are not going back there anymore.

Wellness – it's way more than "drink more water and eat more greens" – but that's a terrific place to begin!

about the author



Joan Burge, a renowned author and administrative expert, is known as the red-lipstick-wearing "Rock Star" of administrative and executive assistant training. She's a successful entrepreneur who created a unique business niche by founding a movement to help administrators see themselves as professionals so they can excel in business. Joan Burge equips administrative assistants, executive assistants and office support professionals to move beyond task work to higher-level functions that meet the ever-changing demands of today's workplace. In addition to being Editor of the weekly e-zine "Monday Motivators™" Joan is the creator of the Star Achievement Series®, World Class Assistant™ Certificate Program, more than 40 customized workshops and seminars for administrative professionals, and is the author of several books, most recently published: "Who Took My Pen... Again? Secrets from Dynamic Executive Assistants". www.OfficeDynamics.com



Fully Utilize Your Talents

– Optimization

WRITER
JOAN
BURGE

Optimization is like administrative skills and attitudes on steroids (in a good way). Optimization means to enhance the effectiveness of something; to make something function at its best.

When I read the definition of optimization, I immediately think of two things:

1 Part of my “job” is being brought into companies by senior leaders to help make their administrative partners function at their best. I have all the tools and answers to help administrative professionals be successful. Whether or not they choose to listen to me, take my advice, trust me and are willing to adopt new behaviors is another story. I can't make anyone change anything, as is true for me. I attend educational events, read and am exposed to a variety of talented, smart subject matter experts but it is up to me to make changes.

2 Part of my “job” is to work with already successful executives and their executive assistants to enhance their effectiveness. I go to the client's facility and work with the leader and assistant one-on-one. I watch everything they do, listen to what they say, learn their processes, absorb their environment and dynamics and, basically, get inside their heads. When I do this kind of work, I can best help that team.

What does this mean to you?

You need to embrace the idea of ‘optimization’ to be successful in the future and to illuminate your career. I'm certain you already are a star performer. The idea is, are you moving yourself to your very best potential? Are you fully engaged? Do you push through difficult tasks and assignments that you normally don't like? Have you taken classes this year that advance



your skills? Yes, we all need a nudge sometimes. We need an outsider to tell us “Stop being lazy and get on with it! You know what you need to do; you are just taking the easy way out.”

Let me give you an example: I wrote the Star Achievement Series® in 1990. The program consists of 12 full day workshops with three levels of learning. I wrote extensive workbooks for each class (12 in all). I have revised this program 14 times in 20 years! And guess what? At the writing of this article, I am getting ready to make a massive overhaul of the content and design of the workbooks.

Repeatedly organizations and participants tell me this program truly changes lives. My husband Dave (now deceased) used to always ask me, “Why are you making changes? People love it.” I always responded, “Because I know there is more. I can write an even better curriculum and create more dynamic learning activities. There is always room for improvement.”

I regularly optimize something that is already great. It's just the way I live life. I am growing as a result because I have to challenge my thinking,

do extensive research, reach out to subject matter experts and exercise my creative muscle.

How many times in the past 15 years have you updated you? How many enhancements have you made to yourself? 1? 5? 15? Are you constantly optimizing you?

I know far too many assistants who have been in the administrative profession for 20 plus years and have hardly changed. If this is you, it's time to wake up! You are not being all you are capable of being. We are all here to become better, to contribute to the greater good – we are not designed to be stagnant, vanilla, boring or lazy.

For those new to the profession... great! You are young enough or novice enough to establish “success” behaviors. You are like the seed of a tree that is newly planted. How you grow, how tall you grow, how strong you grow, is up to you. Make sure you stay away from bad soil. Don't be influenced by people who might be negative about the administrative profession. This profession is fabulous and rewarding. It is interesting, challenging, fun and offers you great opportunity. Make sure you fertilize your thinking so you can grow and then occasionally apply “booster fertilizer” (this is turbo-charged fertilizer) – meaning *optimize* yourself and everything you do.

When you fully utilize all your talents and capacities, your leader will function at her best because she will be able to focus on the work she does that brings value to the company and impacts the bottom line. And one of the greatest gifts to yourself is that you will be a more joyous and fulfilled individual which will spread to other aspects of your life.

Now is the time to embrace this mindset!

about the author



Joan Burge, a renowned author and administrative expert, is known as the red-lipstick-wearing “Rock Star” of administrative and executive assistant training. She's a successful entrepreneur who created a unique business niche by founding a movement to help administrators see themselves as professionals so they can excel in business. Joan Burge equips administrative assistants, executive assistants and office support professionals to move beyond task work to higher-level functions that meet the ever-changing demands of today's workplace. In addition to being Editor of the weekly e-zine *Monday Motivators*™ Joan is the creator of the Star Achievement Series®, World Class Assistant™ Certificate Program, more than 40 customized workshops and seminars for administrative professionals, and is the author of several books, most recently published: *Who Took My Pen... Again? Secrets from Dynamic Executive Assistants*, www.officeDynamics.com.





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Getting Into the Executive Suite —you want to work with the Top Dog?

By *Joan Burge, founder & CEO, Office Dynamics International*

Do you have high hopes of working for a President, Chairman, or CEO of an enterprise? Good for you. I had those aspirations when I graduated from high school and knew I wanted to go into the administrative profession. I wanted to reach for the stars! I wanted to work for the big dogs! I knew that this type of position would be challenging, energizing, exciting, and have nice perks. But there are requirements to get into the Executive Suite (which could include working for any C-level executive, such as CFO).

Here is an excerpt from my new book, *Underneath It All. . . Post Graduate Revelations Lift Assistants to New Heights*, that will help get you there.

With ambition and training, you can climb over the competition.

“My grandfather once told me that there are two kinds of people: those who work and those who take the credit. He told me to try to be in the first group; there was less competition there.” --Indira Gandhi, Indian politician and prime minister, 1917-1984

YOU must always ...

- Look professional. Your make-up, jewelry and attire should be impeccable at all times. (Remember, you're on-stage daily until you turn the key at your own front door!)
- Be an active listener in meetings. Look for ways to contribute something of value. Meetings offer a perfect venue to showcase yourself. Active listening results in picking up a potpourri of information enabling you to quickly assess needs or challenges. Your response can be notable. Meeting attendees are looking, listening; waiting to receive directions. At this moment, you're a powerful person!
- Be a strategic thinker. This means you don't focus exclusively on the here-and-now, like many do, but instead you focus

on long-term pros and cons. Dr. Glenn Pfau, a consultant from Virginia, is an image expert who caused me to take notice of this process: if I do this now – what happens? And, then, what happens? My uncle Ralph, the champion chess player, is a strategic thinker. When I observe him over the chess board I can almost “see” the wheels turning as he plots and plans what will happen if he makes this move ... or, what happens if instead he makes that move? People who are good at multi-tasking are usually good strategic thinkers. I mention this because ... you may already be a strategic thinker without realizing it.

- Poise, grace. These two characteristics grab attention and invite applause. You can try to exude poise and grace like royalty does. Close your eyes and picture Crown Princess Mary of Denmark. She is dignified. She is neither too loud nor too soft when she speaks. She stands tall and seems to float across a room rather than walk. She adapts a ballet dancer's carriage as she moves and without speaking a word, she earns the admiration of onlookers.
- Flexible and adaptable. Anyone can work for weeks to prepare for a special occasion and then – suddenly plans change. “Anyone” is likely to moan but not the Admin who works in the Executive Suite. She may try to salvage something that wasn't used and apply it elsewhere but she won't focus on disappointment. She doesn't have time! She must focus on making this the best of times.

5 Attributes to Help You Achieve Your Career Goal

- Tough-skinned. Name an individual who appears not to be hurt by harsh words or unfair criticism. This individual may be said to have tough-skin. Insults, inequities bounce off him or her. Of course, this is what on-lookers notice. It isn't necessarily the whole picture. If you could see below the surface you probably would see something completely

different ... you might even notice tears. In the Executive Suite, you must be tough-skinned. You need to put your energy into matters at hand. A seasoned Pro doesn't even think about feeling sorry for herself. She acts in a manner that brings credit to her partner, her company and lends dignity to the occasion.

- Take ownership. If you offer an idea – be prepared to support it. If something you work on goes sour – be prepared to admit it. People will come to know you as a “stand-up” person. You never slink off to blend in with the wallpaper! You are a force to be reckoned with and someone who can be trusted.
- Inquisitive. Albert Einstein is quoted as saying, “I have no particular talent. I am merely inquisitive.” Einstein won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1921. Surely his inquisitive nature served him well. You may not be seeking the Nobel Prize but when you ask questions look for the facts; won't permit anyone or anything lead you astray ... you will also be well served and so will your partner.
- Excellent role model to other Admins. Company executives are bound to take note when you're an excellent role model. You may think this is the primary reason to do it but, it's not. The primary reason is to build a strong network of good people. You shall call upon them and they shall call upon you and it becomes a mutually beneficial work-relationship.
- Thirst for knowledge. Good for you, you're inquisitive. You want to know why and why not. When you have a thirst for knowledge you will learn new things. Without this thirst for knowledge you may not know what it is you want to know about! For example, if you don't know that electronic books exist, you won't ask why or how they could be useful to your manager.

Getting Into the Executive Suite: 6 critical attributes and competencies that will help you achieve working for a C-level executive!

- Detailed oriented and see the big picture. Pay attention to details and among other benefits, you won't waste time or money. For example, if your manager wants to host a dinner at a nearby restaurant but the restaurant is not open for dinner ... suggest another restaurant or move ahead, choose another restaurant and make reservations. When you see the “big picture” ... you know something about why the dinner meeting will take place. If, for example, the company is about to launch a new product and your partner will reveal this to dinner guests ... is it possible to present each guest with

a sample? A replica? A get-one-free coupon to be used as soon as it's available? Then again, your knowledge of the big picture may help you rule out that plan altogether. It could be that in light of confidentiality issues – it's too risky to present these materials in a public place.

- High energy. Life in the Executive Suite often proceeds at warp speed. You must be physically and mentally able to keep up or, set the pace!
- Dress neatly. When you are a member of the Executive Team you need to look the part at all times. Even on occasions when the atmosphere is relaxed – neatness counts. Don't consider attendance at a company picnic or an invitation to travel on the company jet as occasions to get too relaxed in terms of wardrobe or grooming. Neatness equates with order. Sloppiness equates with disorder.
- Approachable. In many ways you set yourself apart from other employees. At the same time it's essential that you remain approachable. When you maintain a comfortable balance, you've got the best of both worlds. Easy-to-talk-to, friendly, open-minded; these qualities are apparent to those with whom you interact.
- Able to take criticism. Criticism can be on-target and when it is; take what you learn and use it. Criticism can be irrelevant, and when it is, let it float on by. It can also be unjust and when it is do a quick calculation. Is this worth my time and energy or should I ignore it? Take note that no matter what kind of criticism you're exposed to, you determine what's to be done. You're in charge!
- Keep your emotions in check. There is a difference between being passionate and getting emotional. And, there is a difference between experiencing a range of emotions and “letting it all hang out” – or, keeping it to yourself. When you toil in the Executive Suite, you don't let it “all hang out.” There are great numbers of books and articles that discuss emotional intelligence.

I'm wishing you all the best on your journey to achieving a spot in the Executive Suite. Please write our office and let us know of your success!

Office Dynamics International
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2766 Evening Rock Street
Las Vegas, NV 89135

Gain Support from Your Executive for Training & Education

By *Joan Burge, founder & CEO, Office Dynamics International*

You know the scenario. You read about a great seminar, workshop, or conference for administrative office professionals. The topics are of interest to you and will help you in your job. You walk into your manager's office to request his or her approval only to hear "no". You walk out. End of story.

Selling your executive on supporting your professional development is a skill. It's also known as the art of persuasion. While training, coaching, and consulting thousands of assistants nationwide, I have found that they don't see they have to work at gaining support for training and development. They view it as a 'yes' or 'no' situation. "Yes, I'll get to go" or "My manager will say no." Instead, an assistant needs to view this as, "This is a great program. This will help me become a better assistant and a more valuable employee. How will I sell this to my executive?" You now have your subconscious working develop ideas and language on how to get a "yes" from your executive.

I also hear assistants say, "My executive will never approve this" so they never present their case to their executive. It's all in positioning your thinking. You have to really believe that you are worth investing in and that you and your executive will both win big with this investment.

I'm providing this advice after being on both sides of the desk. For 20 years I was an assistant and I often had to persuade my executives to let me attend seminars and conferences. Since 1990, I've been on the other side of the desk as the CEO of Office Dynamics International. I see the executives' perspective. There has to be return on the investment (ROI) in an employee. As an employer, whether one of my staff is attending a one-day workshop or a four-day conference, I expect them to come back to the office with ideas and to become better at their job. I take training and education seriously.

I have been providing training to administrative professionals since 1990. Organizations hire me to train their assistants and expect behavior change as a result. They not only invest financially in education for their assistants, but they are giving their administrative staff time away from their desks for the training.

Before you can "sell" someone else to support you, you have to be 100% convinced that you need and deserve training and educational resources. If you are not convinced of your own value and need to grow, you will not be able to persuade anyone else. I say this from 42 years of experience. Use the guidelines below to help you gain support for your professional development whether for a conference, onsite workshop, online course or books. Help your executive see why it is beneficial to invest in your education and how your executive will also win as a result.

Points to Consider

1. You need to continually learn and grow. In today's competitive marketplace and at the pace this profession is changing, if you do not continually enhance your skills, build new ones, and have a strategy for your career, you will get left in the dust.
2. Don't feel guilty about being out of the office to attend a program or conference that will make you better equipped, faster, smarter and sharper.
3. Get your executive to see the long-term payoff. Often executives think about the number of days you will be out of the office. You need to help them see that while you may be gone three or four days, you will gain skills and knowledge that will take you, and them, into the future.

4. Executives travel all over the country. Why shouldn't you? Some assistants tell me they can only attend seminars that take place in their city or state. That is not 21st Century thinking. Assistants should be a business partner to their executive, so start acting like a business partner and convince your manager why you should be allowed to travel out of state.

5. I'm sure you receive lots of information on seminars, conferences, and workshops for administrative and executive assistants. You need to be selective. Some things to consider are:

- Who is the speaker? What qualifies them to speak on the subjects covered?
- If they are going to speak on how to thrive in your profession, do they understand the administrative profession? Did they ever work for any length of time as an administrative office professional? And did they work in various positions and organizations so they can share a broader perspective?
- What is the value of the program? In other words, what are you getting for your money? Any extra events such as a welcome dinner? What meals are included? Of course, the content should always be the most important but when you are comparing one seminar to another and can only attend one, you need to consider these other aspects.
- Inquire about the quality of the workshop materials? Will you be able to use them as reference guide after the training? Do they provide robust information? What about post-class follow-up activities for ongoing learning?
- Is this a lecture or will you be actively involved in the learning process?

6. Don't give up. If you really believe this training will help you professionally or even just rejuvenate your enthusiasm about your career, realize it may take three or four attempts to convince your manager. You may have to try different ways or formats to persuade your executive and, remember, timing is important.

Principles of Persuasion

1. Know exactly what you want to accomplish by attending the training or conference. You should list your objectives alongside each topic in the curriculum and how that will tie into your current job or prepare you for the future.
2. To be a good seller, consider the buyer's viewpoint. Try to put yourself in your executive's position. What key selling points would be important to your executive? How will your executive benefit from you attending training or a seminar?
3. Learn what motivates your executive. Is your executive motivated by ROI (return on investment), the skills you will develop or you learning from an acclaimed expert in the field? Does your executive believe in personal development and growth? If not, it will be a harder sell but don't give up; be persistent.
4. Keep in mind the format you will use to present your case. Try to gauge your receiver's communication style preference. Does your executive prefer information short and to the point or does your executive like details? Is your executive a visual learner? If so, provide graphs or charts to make your point.
5. Tie key learning points of the seminar or conference to your professional development plan for the year and to the goals of your department.
6. Show your executive how what you will learn will help you in specific areas of your job. For example: Let's say one of the topics covered will be learning and understanding communication styles. Tell your executive you will use that information to be a better communicator by tapping into the receiver's style; build rapport with internal and external customers; and complement your executive's and his or her staff's communication styles.
7. If your executive still says no to the training or seminar, sincerely ask your executive why he or she believes this is not a good investment. You may be able to counter that perception.
8. Offer options. Say, "Would you rather I attend the conference in May in California or the seminar in September in Atlanta?"

9. It always helps to let your executive know that you will share what you have learned with other assistants in your organization. But be absolutely cognizant of copyrights.

10. Emphasize the benefits of networking with peers and learning from others in the field.

11. Negotiate if necessary. Ask your executive to pay the registration fee and hotel and you'll pay your airfare. Or you pay for your hotel stay and ask your executive to pay for registration and airfare. Be creative!

12. If all else fails, maybe you need to make the financial investment in yourself. Yes, I said you make the investment.

I know several high-performing assistants who have spent thousands of dollars on their development and have reaped tremendous rewards over the years.

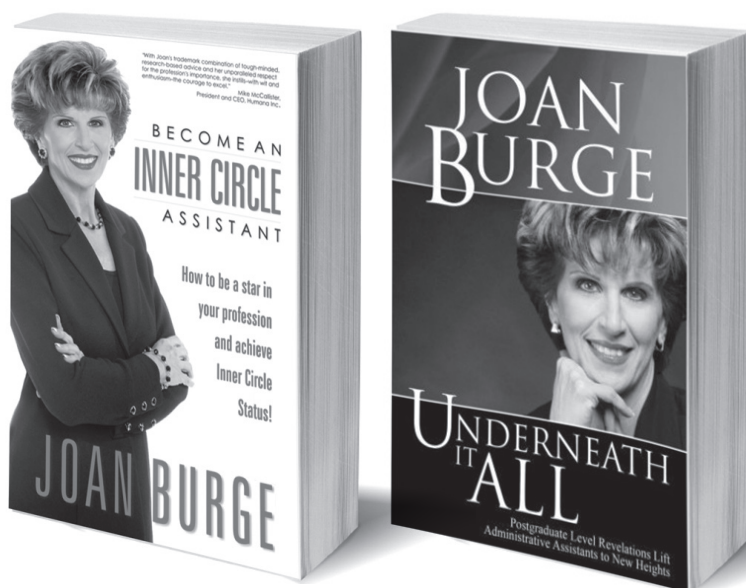
Most of the time assistants tell me they can't attend our programs because of budget cuts. Sometimes it really is a budget issue. I understand that perfectly as a business owner and CEO. But often, it's just lack of knowing how to sell the program to the executive. Have the courage to go after what you want. That in itself is a learning experience.

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Joan Burge's Administrative Work "Bibles"

➤ These "work bibles" for the administrative profession present new ideas and ambitious ways to approach the challenge of rising to or staying at the top in a field that is exciting and rewarding. These are must-have resources for anyone who is serious about owning their career in the administrative field.



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new skills and enjoying a motivational "triple espresso" lift from her powerful,
fun and entertaining energy!



Living Through Leadership

By *Joan Burge, founder & CEO, Office Dynamics International*

Mastering leadership is about learning to be your true self and living that way all the time. It's living from your own natural core self, not trying to be somebody else. When you exhibit your authentic self, you are able to leverage your talents and gifts to live confidently, even "boldly" and you will be content and peaceful, in balance.

Being somebody you aren't or hiding your authentic self leads to stress, anxiety and fear. It makes you live "small." When you try to blend into the crowd, hiding your talents, the world becomes a dimmer, smaller place. When you live being your true self all the time, you show your capabilities, strengths, will, and gifts to yourself and those around you. Your courage to do so influences others to also be genuine.

Why is it that people are so afraid of what others will think of them, that they refuse to step out and shine? I tell people, "Ordinary is easy. Extraordinary separates you from the crowd!"

I am often asked to speak on leadership to executive assistants and administrative assistants. In my presentations, I ask, "Do you only think you are a leader if you supervise or are a manager?" Many people think "leadership" is for those with a specific pay grade or title. They see leaders as those in charge. I think this misses the point entirely!

Leadership is a mindset; it's being "in charge" of your life, where you are headed, and living from your genuine core self. Another point I tell administrative professionals is, "Lead yourself first and others will follow." To lead means to **Let Each Act Deliver**. It means living at all times with the awareness that what you do, what you say, how you act, how you treat others, how you perceive and are perceived, all matter. You choose to let each act deliver, every time. You do the right thing at the right time for the right reason.

Imagine if you went to work with a positive attitude and a positive spirit, even when having a difficult day. Everyone – your manager, vendors, colleagues and others – would notice that you are handling it all better than most. They would see you creating a dynamic option of handling the same circumstance.

A senior level human resource associate once told me something profound: she said it was each administrator's job to make the job important.

So how can you begin to cultivate leadership habits into your job and personal life, and make them important?

1. Lead by investing. Invest in others, sharing your abilities, talents and compassion.
2. Lead by initiating. What do you wish were reality at your work? Whatever it is, you start that blog, form that committee or make that recommendation!
3. Lead by modeling. You can model new behaviors and make changes at home. Show gratitude; take turns; help others; notice good things and compliment them. Share meals and talk together.
4. Lead by example. Show others another way is possible, even in the same circumstances.
5. Lead by problem solving. "If you see it, you own it" is a great life mantra.
6. Lead by inspiration. Inspire others to live with a leadership mindset by using their talents.

7. Lead by acceptance. Great things take time, so don't give up. Accept that living a leadership mindset will take time but can be done.
8. Lead by awareness. Use the awareness you have about a cause, an issue or problem to do something about it. Be creative and constructive, never destructive.
9. Lead by recognition. Recognize that leaders are not born. They are made.

When speaking, I often share a wonderful quote from Dr. Susan Biali: "Be brave. Realize that the right choice for you may not be the most popular, but you offer more by your example than by your compliance." So it is with a leadership mindset. You offer far more with your example to live boldly and courageously using

your talents and gifts than you do by pretending to be someone you are not.

One thing is sure: you won't create a leadership mindset in yourself by demanding perfection instead of excellence or by floating along and hoping it "hits" you eventually. You will need to actively pursue a leadership mindset every day with every task or conversation. Don't get down on yourself or expect 100% perfection! Aim for excellence and keep trying, over and over. To live with a leadership mindset means we continually pursue to live as compassionate, caring, concerned and loving people. When we cultivate a mindset that says, "**I lead. I am bold!**" our entire lives will change, and we will be a catalyst for change to those around us at work and at home.

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Set Healthy Boundaries At Work

By *Joan Burge, founder & CEO, Office Dynamics International*

An important component to self-management versus stress-management is to set healthy boundaries in the workplace. In this article what kind of boundaries and with whom.

As administrative assistants and executive assistants, you can often feel like setting boundaries might get you fired or your leader will think you are not a team player. Some people think when I'm talking about setting boundaries, they have to do with sexual harassment in the workplace.

Boundaries can be set any time, any place, on anything, and with any person. I'll give you a perfect example. I was at McCarran Airport in Las Vegas waiting in the security line and was in line to pass my carry on through the screening process. (Keep in mind; I travel quite frequently for business, so I know what I'm doing.) I was quickly placing my laptop in the bin, folding my raincoat up, taking off my shoes, and putting my purse on the conveyer when all of a sudden, this young woman who had been in line behind me, stepped right in front of me with 2 suitcases and placed them on the conveyer. She still needed to take off her shoes – and she didn't know she was supposed to take off her jacket.

You are probably thinking, "So what?" So what? It was rude that she thought she could just jump in front of me especially when she wasn't ready. It was not as if she said, "May I go ahead of you?" I nicely told her that she couldn't cut in front of me. Of course, she looked at me in shock and made a few comments. (I will spare the details of our back and forth dialogue.) She finally took her items and moved behind me and told me to have a nice day.

A boundary in the office for an administrative assistant can be as simple as addressing a coworker or manager who constantly steps into your workspace and takes your desk supplies without asking and doesn't return them. If that bothers you, say something.

Another boundary you might need to set is your accessibility after hours to your leader as far as emails go. This is becoming problematic for assistants all over the world. As I travel and talk to hundreds of administrative office professionals ranging from administrators to executive assistants, I'm hearing them say they are spending too much of their personal time (evenings or weekends) managing and/or responding to emails from their leader. One administrative assistant said that her manager did not expect her to check business emails or take action on non-work hours. But she wanted to get a jump on things or was curious as to what was going on, or wanted to read emails on Sunday night to be prepared for Monday morning. The problem is... she started responding to her leader's emails and taking action steps if required. Today, she is frustrated because she spends 50% of her weekend working. I told her, "You created the monster." It wasn't required of her and while she thought nothing of it at first, it snowballed and now she will have to say something to her leader.

First, do not create situations that you will later regret.

Second, people will act as we allow them to. If you don't say something when something isn't right, then the person assumes it is okay.

Third, professionally communicate when setting boundaries yet be firm.

Healthy boundaries are good for you and those you work with. It teaches them how to work with you in a way that stimulates win-win situations. You enjoy your work environment and more enjoyable to work with. You are confident, peaceful, in control (not walked over), respected, like a peer or business partner and viewed as a leader.

Consider what types of boundaries you might need to implement.

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Star. Assistants

by Joan Burge

What

are the qualities, attributes, attitudes and behaviors of star assistants?

Why do certain assistants stand out and shine brighter than others? Are

star assistants created or is it their innate abilities that allow them to be stars?

Are there certain qualities and traits a person needs to be successful working at the top echelons in the company?

Answer: Stars are born.

After working with and studying administrative professionals for more than 36 years, we have data that supports the theory that stars are born. This isn't to suggest this is the entire story but it's a break-through discovery and one that can help you be more selective in your career choices. This may very well change your entire future.

The Big Aha!

In January 2008, I was sitting in a room with twelve senior vice presidents and one president of a large company in Maryland presenting a three-hour workshop. One of the top executives, who is also a co-owner of the company, asked me "Is there any formula you have figured out that makes for an outstanding assistant? Is it a certain number of years of experience or certain qualities? I need to hire a new executive assistant and

I've been disappointed in the past. They interviewed well, but could not handle the job. I want to know, what is the makeup of a star assistant?"

This led to other comments by the vice presidents. They all determined that just because an individual has the title of executive assistant and reports to a vice president doesn't make her or him one. It is a set of competencies (skills, attitudes, behaviors and attributes) that make an individual an executive assistant to a vice president, president or CEO."

This is when the light bulb went off in my head. I do have the answers and they are based on research and facts; not just my opinion. I accumulated volumes of information over the past eighteen years regarding administrative competencies plus I had twenty years experience in the field before launching Office Dynamics. I interviewed hundreds of human resource



professionals, learning and development professionals, CEOs, executives, managers and business owners about this very subject. I talked to thousands of administrative professionals about the competencies they needed to be successful in their job. All this information had been accumulating in my office since 1990.

But this was the moment in time that I could honestly say, yes, there is a formula and yes, there are specific skills, traits, and abilities that make a person a Star Assistant. This led to more research in 2008 and everything came together. I want to share with you the most important information I can give you at this point in time.

World Class Assistant Graduates Do The Homework

I utilized the talents and brains of 111 top-notch administrative assistants from various industries and size companies who made it through to Part 3 of my World Class Assistant Certificate Program.

Their pre-class assignment was to interview their immediate manager or multiple managers they supported and even other managers to get as much input as possible for the research. These are the questions they had to ask along with a small sampling of some of the answers.

What five skills do you think are most important for an assistant to be successful in the workplace?

Organizational skill, ability to think ahead, planning, detail oriented, interpersonal skills, time management skills, communication skills, judgment skills, action oriented, ability to anticipate, perspective, interpersonal savvy, understanding priorities

What five top attributes or traits do you think a “star” assistant should possess?

Ability to know what their boss will need and be prepared with the answers/details, know who the key players are in their boss’ world, ability to take a project and work through all the details and keep the manager informed along the way, confidentiality, trust, partnership building, highly productive, solution oriented, flexible, good listener, self-sufficient, has the perspective to act as one team

In all the years you have been in the workforce, can you

name three to five attributes, traits or behaviors you have admired in administrative professionals?

Individuals who are well connected, strong communication skills (written and oral), someone who can professionally represent the company and me, has a strong “can do” attitude about every assignment, professionalism, understanding team dynamics, initiative and comfortable around higher management.

The next part of the research was asking the administrative professionals these questions:

Based on your work experience, why do certain administrative professionals stand out where others do not? Are Star Assistants created or is it their innate abilities that make them a star?

Ninety-five percent agreed that it is something within you; it is innate. An individual has natural talents or abilities in certain areas, develops them in strength and increases their visibility. They leverage those talents to excel and then build their weaker areas.

A person is wired or not wired for certain things. It is in your DNA. For example, one assistant naturally has the talent to connect the dots when given abstract information where another does not. Or one assistant is highly-creative and another is not. Another is great at pulling out all the details and another is not.

The Group Synopsis

1. Overall—the Star Assistant’s DNA must consist of soft skills, hard skills, social and emotional intelligence. There is a crossover because they are integrated.

2. Soft skills are emerging in importance over technical skills. Soft skills carry more weight than technical skills. They are hard to teach, learn and change whereas technical skills are not.

3. The main component of the DNA is that an individual has the innate talent and then they build some areas around and on top of their innate ability and core attributes.

4. The fundamental/foundational skills are still important to be successful in this job. Then add advanced competencies such as negotiating, persuading, presenting, problem solving, leading and mentoring.

And The Winners Are

There are more than 250 skills, attitudes, behaviors and attributes. Here are the top winners in order of priority. The numbers next to each item represents the weight each of those carry, not the number of answers so the higher the number, the greater in importance the skill.

Skills with weight of 24

Good communication skills

Skills with weight of 21

Organizational skills

Skills with weight of 17

Team player

Skills with weight of 10

Interpersonal communication skills, Detail oriented, Positive, Can-do attitude

Skills with weight of 9

Problem solving

Skills with weight of 8

Flexible, Prioritize

Skills with weight of 7

Honest, Helpful, Accountable, Trustworthy

Skills with weight of 5

Personal accountability, Confident, Ability to remain calm under pressure, Interpersonal— general

Skills with weight of 4

Analytical forward thinking skills, Integrity, Proactive, Authenticity, Calendaring, Customer-service focused, Initiator

Skills with weight of 3

Time management, Customer focus, Works well under pressure, Good listener, Professional presence, Ability to prioritize, Keeping delicate information private, Focused, Political knowledge, Anticipation of needs, Know what boss needs, Network, Proactive, Ethics

Other Vital Aspects

Executive Assistants need to be very aware of the finishing touches, such as:

- Create complete signature lines for e-mails.
- Highlight dates, deadlines, important requests and signature areas.
- Be proactive: take time to see the next step, not just the current task.
- Change your talk. Ex. “Somehow we will get this done.” versus “I don’t see how we can do this.”
- Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information.
- Provide timely solutions to problems.
- Experiment with novel ideas and approaches.

What Does This Mean To You?

Don’t stress when you struggle with certain aspects of thinking or your job. I don’t like working with numbers, doing accounting, or managing legal information. I chose to work in departments like marketing, advertising and supporting high-level executives. Today, I work with numbers and legal language because I am a business owner and I need to pay attention to them. But 85% of my work is doing things I love and that I’m good at. So should you.

Find your niche. Be selective. Figure out what works really well for you and position your career for those job opportunities or positions. You will be a much happier person.

Every person has a star inside; some just shine a little brighter. Dig deep to find your innate talents and make them visible to those around you. I see too many assistants hide because they are afraid their peers might be jealous.

Stretch. You may have talents you don’t even know exist because you don’t stretch yourself outside your comfort zone. Take on new assignments or projects, volunteer, attend classes or lead an administrative group.

Create opportunities that let your star shine. Your current work may not present you with situations where you can shine. What can you create that will display your attributes?

Look elsewhere if appropriate. Does this mean you give up on ever achieving a top position in your company? No, but you consider the personality, working style, and thinking style of the CEO or president. You may not be the right fit in this organization but could be a great fit for another executive. I know top notch executive assistants reporting to CEOs. They always tease each other by saying, “I could never work for your executive.” And they are right. They are both where they need to be and are very happy people.

Although we’ve seen that Star Assistants are mostly born, and not made, you can develop certain skills that will make you shine a little brighter. I have discovered at the core of a Star Assistant is the passion to excel, a desire to learn and grow, and a commitment to the profession.

About the author:

Joan Burge is the Founder & CEO of Office Dynamics. She is also the author of the celebrated book, *Become an Inner Circle Assistant* and newly-released book, *Underneath It All*; creator and Master Trainer of the Star Achievement Series® curriculum + 40 customized programs for administrative professionals. Visit the website at www.OfficeDynamics.com.

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WRITER

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The Future of the Administrative Profession – Surviving or Thriving?

In this age of great economic change, it is essential that the administrative professional rises to the challenge and thrives.

It's important to recognize the difference between surviving and thriving, because the key to success is available to those who successfully manage to cross the divide between the two.

The global economic meltdown brought sweeping changes across many continents as companies made drastic changes to many types of employees, including the administrative profession. So encompassing was the economic climate, that no vocation was immune.

Before the crisis, the administrative profession operated differently. Training budgets were ample; opportunity for advancement sparkled like diamonds for the taking. Administrators handled many tasks, and had backups, cross training, and team-shared projects.

Post-crisis, many people lost their jobs and took any available position, even ones they were greatly overqualified for. Others could no longer afford to retire. Single income households became dual income households, often due to pay cuts and shorter hours. Training budgets dissipated, opportunities dried up, and assistants had larger workloads without staffing backups. Single support Executive Assistants now juggled multiple managers.

We've come through the crisis, and now the economy is slowly healing. Much has changed for the Executive Assistant and administrative professional, and in order to thrive in this new working environment, it's up to both to



operate wisely, using their savvy to make the right decision regarding the right question at the right time.

It would be easy to simply throw up one's hands and say, 'It's okay to just survive!' but we know that excellence goes far beyond

the basics. Success is met when we exceed expectations; when we go the second mile, and when we work diligently to remain relevant and competitive. Thriving is where we find contentment, advancement and opportunity.

We must know and grasp the many changes in today's workplace, some of which are listed below, so we can leverage them to succeed and thrive in the profession.

1. There are now four distinct generations employed in the workplace [Veteran, Boomer, Generation X and Generation Y]. By 2018, a fifth generation, the Millennial, will enter the work force. We can benefit from all the generations because each has different strengths. Bridge the gap with each other. It's not 'them against us.' It should be us trying to elevate the profession!
2. Be Bold! If you hear people speaking negatively about another assistant, walk away from the negativity or else speak up for that person to advance the profession. Demonstrate your leadership skills. It's the small victories throughout the day that will build your reputation in the department.
3. What's in a name? There are more than 40 titles in the profession; yet no earth shattering new titles have come about. I would like 'secretary' to be a retired title that just goes away. It takes the profession back to where we aren't anymore; now, we are strategic business partners.
4. Technology: Since executives are now so tech-savvy, they need to know how they can best utilize their assistant. How do they use them to an advantage in this modern world? It's changed a lot since taking a letter and pouring coffee forty years ago. And it is changing again as executives recognize that administrators aren't just for typing emails or making travel plans; they can be project managers, ambassadors of their manager's vision, and more. And assistants need to work with the same devices their executives use!
5. Training and Development: Organizations are investing more than ever before in *specialized* training. Companies are realizing that this is a career. Assistants invest in themselves; but they need to see that they are valuable. Brian Tracy says you need to invest in yourself, because when you do, you take that with you for the rest of your life. Assistants need to see themselves as valuable assets.
6. Succession planning for senior-level Executive Assistants: We are at the critical juncture of a work exodus and entrance of new faces assuming leadership roles. Companies are seeing the value of planning as they anticipate the departure of their most experienced assistants within the next few years.
7. Competencies: calendaring, travel, task organization, projects – these are fundamentals, critical foundational skills needed to fully mature your career. These core competencies are your strong core foundation. Now you must build on top of these because today so much more is expected and necessary for Executive Assistants and Administrative Assistants!
8. Cross-training and mentoring: Open your heart and be a mentor to others.
9. Coaching: there is a greater need for coaching Executive Assistants on increasing performance, professional presence, and raising their standards in the role.
10. Stress: Administrative stress levels are higher due to changing priorities and fast deadlines. Being confident, prepared and honing your skills is a great way to handle this.
11. Virtual support: Executives travel internationally and support is now often delivered virtually. How skilled are you in handling offsite support across time zones?
12. Mindset: Do you see yourself as working in a career of your choice? Or are you getting a paycheck? Trust me, it shows!
13. Frumpy or Fabulous? Create a modern view of the Administrative Assistant. Brand yourself as modern, fresh and relevant. If it's time for updated eyeglass frames or a new hairdo, then do it. Consider it an investment in yourself. (See point 5).
14. Leadership is not a job title – nurture an active, vital vision of leadership. Propose ideas. Be creative. Bring solutions, not problems.

To become a thriving, not just surviving, successful assistant, you must ask yourself: 'How will I manage myself?' Remember, *your* career belongs to *you*. Is it healthy? Is it strong and thriving? Or is it anemic or in need of urgent care to revive it?

To help you get started, here are some tips to change 'survive' to 'thrive':

- Strategic thinking – learn about this and implement it at work and home.
- Presentation skills – volunteer to make and give presentations whenever the opportunity arises. Yes, you may be fearful but you need to rise above your fear to see what you are capable of doing.
- Branding – establish your own professional brand and demonstrate it consistently every day. My Chief Executive Assistant, Jasmine, has the calmest professional demeanor and she is that way no matter what happens! It's a precious, valued part of her brand.
- Self-management (managing your thoughts and emotions). Use your passion and energy for work. Be kind. Think the best of others. Manage yourself before you start managing others. That means you exhibit good boundaries.

Wherever I travel, I advise the Executive Assistants and administrative professionals I speak to or meet through coaching sessions to 'Live it, be it, own it!' Fortunately, it only takes one person to make a BOLD difference in your career, and that person can be you!

about the author



Joan Burge, a renowned author and administrative expert, has been a visionary for administrative training and development since 1990. One of the first to venture into the administrative training industry, she has become an international administrative expert, trainer, author, and consultant. Joan Burge equips Administrative Assistants, executive assistants, and office support professionals to move beyond task work to higher-level functions that meet the ever-changing demands of today's workplace. In addition to being editor of the weekly e-zine, *Monday Motivators*™, Joan is the creator of the Star Achievement Series®, World Class Assistant™ Certificate Program, more than 40 customized workshops and seminars for administrative professionals, and most recently - Adminology®, a NEW mindset for a NEW decade.

<http://www.officedynamics.com/>



Why Certification Is Important

By *Joan Burge, founder & CEO, Office Dynamics International*

Great administrators are known as those who do their best, work at the top of their game and who work like they are in a profession of choice. One of the strongest ways to send that message is when you choose to certify.

Certification is a choice to complete a full program of study. Besides the actual skills and competencies you learn through a certification program, it also demonstrates to those around you that you can set goals and achieve objectives - you can be trusted to go the distance.

A very important quality in business today is the “stick-to-it-ness” that is so lacking in society. People start and stop things constantly. We commiserate with those who have repeated annual resolutions to lose weight, quit smoking or stop gossiping; the truth is that very few people can actually dream, envision, research, analyze, decide, execute, complete and succeed what they set out to do.

So why should you choose to certify?

1. You build confidence! Having that certificate on your wall sends a great positive message to everyone you work with. It means you are hungry for more! It teaches you that you are still teachable.
2. You gain new skills and competencies. The world is moving faster! Today's garage startups will be the industry standard next year. You need to become – and remain – competitive.
3. You reinvent yourself. Reinventing yourself means you remain current and viable; you transcend age. This is critical because no matter your chronological age, you need to be adaptable.
4. You broaden your perspective. When you grow, you gain new insights that allow you to approach your work in a new, fresh way. You think more creatively and strategically.
5. You gain reputational prowess within your company. When you enter someone's office, don't you look around and see what they have posted? Framed certificates communicate that you care, that you “get it” and are serious about the business.
6. You master your time. When you decide to go the second mile for your career, you learn how to harness all that “free time” spent surfing the television and ‘net, at the water cooler chatting --- none of which are inherently bad, but they may be a poor choice when you could instead be focused on creating a better future.
7. You decide to value yourself more highly. Yes, it takes effort to work a certification through to completion: turning in every assignment, reading, analyzing, expansion of your mind and tools. But it's so worth it!
8. You can compete. In this competitive job market, you need every tool and resource in your toolkit.
9. You may even pay for it yourself. Hear me out on this one. You may need to split costs with your employer, such as using vacation to attend a conference they pay for, etc. Seeing yourself as an investment will increase your face value. You'll carry yourself well, have professional poise and presence. You'll walk into any boardroom or office with confidence that you are more than capable to perform with excellence.

What kind of certification is best for you? What's out there? These are crucial questions to ask yourself, because as you make your choice you should do so knowing you will soon present a proposal to your executive or manager, seeking their concurrence and approval to attend. Here are some points to ponder:

- Businesses spend vast amounts of budget to create their corporate vision, mission and goals. Your certification should certainly support these, falling in line with the company's overall strategies for success.
- Your certification should be strategic, specific and structured. You have got to deliver results that are enhanced by your newly attained growth and development. Companies are wary of "junkets" so remember you need to look for desk-specific, growth-oriented enhancement of skills and competencies.
- Strategic: what's in it for your company? How will you improve? Bring it to their bottom line. Shore up your weak spots. Grow your fabulous strengths.

- Specific: generalized or overdone subjects (improving memory, stress management) may not be best for your desk! Instead, learn how to implement higher soft skill behaviors, flawlessly execute project management and shine in team environments, leverage social media, etc.
- Structured: programs that do not require assignments, reading, activities, exposure to higher learning and new ideas will not help you much. Yes, you should be required to put forth effort. Do the work, really "dig in" and change what you do and how you do it.

It's said that "dreams are only foolish to those who dare not try." I hope you will choose to pursue your dream; do your research, present your strategic, specific and structured findings and be willing to partner with your manager to invest in yourself and in your future.

Once you do, put your heart into your certification and complete it. You never lose when you better yourself!

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Why You Should Upgrade Your Skills

By *Joan Burge, founder & CEO, Office Dynamics International*

There are about as many opinions on the subject of administrative training as there are on office filing systems. Just as there are vast differences in filing systems, even within a single company, so there are vast differences as well as subtle nuances in executive assistant and administrative professional training programs.

In my work and travels as CEO of a premier training company, I've heard and seen many opinions on it all. There are clouded perceptions and misinformation about the value of administrative training, so much so that I think it's time for every administrative specialist, in any industry world-wide, to take time in 2013 to seriously evaluate their current skillset competencies and the need to consistently upgrade them – because the business world is advancing at a fast pace. No one who wants to remain competitive should discount continual improvement!

Due to the economic meltdown in 2008, training budgets were slashed deeply or even eliminated. Downsizing at companies left workers grateful for the “status quo,” just keeping that paycheck going. Associations, training, development and memberships frequently fell by the wayside as more and more administrators hunkered down, maintaining a low profile. I'm not saying that was a bad thing to do, I'm just summarizing what I saw happening. Also, good people lost their jobs, often at high levels in executive offices across the country.

Five years later, we grapple with a very different view:

- Young workers with education are searching for jobs, having little to no job experience in the nine-to-five sector. They need to acclimate to the business culture of corporation and startups, because it's very different than their flexible scheduled school days.
- Members of households determined to expand their financial bandwidth with an additional paycheck re-entered the job market. These individuals need to quickly grow their skills to gain competitive market edge so they may advance to achieve their financial goals.
- Some workers left the workforce during the downturn to start families; their children are now entering school, so Mom or Dad can return to the work force fulltime. For those rejoining the world of adult conversation, professional dress, business networking and video conference tech troubleshooting, it can be quite challenging after five years of PB&J sandwiches, Sesame Street and play dates.
- Seasoned workers whose retirement plans went awry remained in the work force longer than they anticipated. Though they have ample experience, they need to focus energies to update their professional “brand” (i.e., updated eyeglasses, hairstyles, clothes) plus new tech and software.

It is likely that during the last five years, these individuals had other priorities, but now, all these scenarios highlight individuals who would greatly benefit from administrative training!

Administrative professional career development and career satisfaction, in my opinion, are greatly enhanced by professional training. Honing your skills and competencies keeps you competitive and ready for advancement. I always tell people, “You are always on stage.” You never know when you will be called upon (even on Casual Friday!) to interact with colleagues, executives, visitors or department heads who could be instrumental to your future. And it's much more than what you wear (although that is critical and so often overlooked by administrators), it's being future focused and up to the minute in all

your competencies. It's being ready to make business small talk in an elevator or at a networking event. It is understanding your company vision and industry objectives. It's exhibiting confidence and flawless execution as you approach people and work.

I have been appalled when I hear about a great executive assistant or administrators who are asked, "You're so great! What are you going to do next?" Nobody asks great surgeons or lawyers what they are going to do next! They work at the top of their game and perform well. So it must be with executive assistants and administrative professionals. Great administrators must be known as those who do their best, work at the top of their game and who are in a profession of choice.

To get into the game of business and succeed at it, will require skills-based training to increase your visibility in the office. You

need to constantly prepare for that shining moment that you know will happen, you just may not know yet "when." Just as many occupations continually rehearse, study, train and prepare to keep their skills sharp, so administrators and executive assistants must improve daily.

It's often said that if you do what you love, the rewards will follow. I think that is true.

It's time to get real about adding value. Respect won't come to your desk unless you earn it first. Resolve to roll up your sleeves and get to work to build the kind of career and rewards you want to have, and then set out to earn them.

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