



## **Administrative Tips For Success!**

### **Proper Etiquette**

If first names are customarily used in your office, you must remember to use courtesy titles and last names when visitors are present. Keep personal phone calls and personal visitors to a minimum. Remember your manners. You should be careful, neither to interrupt others' conversations or not to finish their sentences for them. You should not whistle, hum, chew gum, mumble or talk to yourself at your desk. If you smoke, you should be careful to see that the smoke does not go directly into the face of someone else, and you should not smoke while others are eating. You ought not to be nosy – mind your own business.

### **Well-Groomed**

For guidance, watch what the top-level office administrators wear. Your appearance and clothes should be such that you could be asked to take an important visitor to lunch, sit in at a meeting for your executive, or greet an arriving dignitary at the airport. Remember that the image you present of your organization should be a businesslike one.

### **Punctual**

Observe your office hours scrupulously. If you have permission to begin work at a later hour some day or take an extra-long lunch break or leave early, be sure to let others in your area know the reason. Morale deteriorates speedily when workers see their coworkers supposedly getting special privileges that they don't get. Punctuality also means getting work done when you've promised it, if this is not possible, notify the person for whom you are doing the work, sufficiently far in advance, so that his or her plans can be adjusted.

### **Willing To Train Another To Take Your Place**

If you are inwardly secure in your job, it's best to see that someone else knows what you do and how you do it. This means training a co-worker or subordinate to take over when you must be absent due to illness, travel for your organization, are on vacation, or when the opportunity for advancement comes your way. This foresightedness is advantageous to you because your work will not pile up while you are gone. And it is advantageous to your executive who will not panic at the thought of your being away. Because you recognize the value of a desk manual in the training process, keep yours up to date and use it as a training aid. The contents of your loose-leaf desk manual should include current information on instructions and procedures relative to your duties. A well-organized manual appropriately indexed for ready reference might include topics such as: business associates, clients or customers, correspondence, data processing, forms, filing, office supplies, news releases, personal data, public relations, subscriptions, telegrams, telephone numbers, travel and word-processing.

### **Positive Traits of Top Office Administrators**

Lists of the desirable traits of a top notch office administrator have appeared frequently in many publications; none agree but all have features in common. As you read the following list, consider honestly the degree to which you possess these traits. Listed order has no significance since all are important. As you think about each one, resolve to increase your strengths and decrease your weaknesses.

To be effective in your dealings with people, you must be:

#### **Alert**

Communication is a two-way street. A good office administrator listens to instructions from employees and co-workers. Don't let your mind wander when others are speaking to you, and never assume that you know what they are going to say because that may keep you from hearing what they really have to say. Show by your attentiveness and your responses that you understand exactly what is expected of you.

#### **Polite**

It's easy to be polite to nice people, but it takes the skill of a professional to be gracious to one who is somewhat offensive. Politeness is remembering to praise in public and reprimand or criticize constructively in private. Politeness can be construed as patronization if your inflection is not right. Tact and politeness go hand in hand.

#### **Pleasant**

Using a genuine smile even if you do not feel much like smiling is important. Everyone has personal problems that can be unpleasant, but you should not bring those problems to the office. In short, do not entwine your business and your personal life. Your ready smile when asked to do something difficult will be appreciated tremendously. A cheerful greeting in the morning to the executive and to the co-workers whom you meet is expected. Even if you do not get an answer, continue the practice. And a cordial "good night" as you leave is proper.

#### **Friendly**

Be equally friendly to everyone in the office, do not have favorites and do not join cliques. Although you may have an especially good friend in your office, do not share business information with that person.

#### **Fair**

While you should take credit for your own work, you also should give credit to others for their ideas and their help with your work. In addition, you should mention to your executive the helpfulness of co-workers and pass along to them any compliments or words of appreciation your executive shares with you about them.

#### **Thoughtful**

Opinions that others have are important. It's wise to remember that in any argument or discussion between you and another, there may be your side, his or her side and "the right

side". Thoughtfulness is closely linked with courtesy. Stopping at another office administrator's desk before meeting with your executive; carefully considering word choice when giving instructions to be sure that your words reflect your executive's thinking and direction, are not merely your authoritative delegation or work – these are examples of professional thoughtfulness.

### **Cooperative**

You and your executive must work together and happily. Your executive is the most important person in your business life. He or she, too, is a human being with traits and behavior that are not always perfect. When he/she lets off steam and you are around to bear the brunt of the remarks, do not take the words personally and vow inwardly to get even, or worse, hold a grudge. Cooperation extends to working with others to get a job done even though some of the tasks you are asked to do are not "your job". It is always right to offer to help a fellow employee who is overloaded with work when you have time to assist unless you have been given specific instructions not to do so. When your employers asks you to perform a task you consider to be of a personal nature or to run a personal errand, you should cooperate willingly because you realize that by taking care of these time-consuming details, you free the executive to make the policies and decisions that are part of his or her job. If your executive is a woman, your cooperation is exactly the same as that which would accord a man; the executive's gender makes no difference.

### **Humble**

Humility means being able to accept justified criticism well and to look at it objectively for what it is meant to be; a signal to help you increase your value to your superior and to your organization. Humility also includes the ability to accept praise and compliments gracefully and with a genuine "thank you" as the response.

### **Tolerant And Considerate**

People differ in intellect, interest, goals, personality, character, appearance, physical and mental health and behavior. How dull this world would be if everyone were alike! Consideration of these differences will make your office a more livable place for everyone. Patience, pity, sympathy, empathy and kindness are traits of the tolerant and considerate person.

### **Loyal**

Dedication to your superior and to your organization is absolutely necessary in your business life. If you cannot be loyal to either, you should seriously consider finding another position. Confidential matters must remain so. A loyal employee never criticizes company policies to other persons. If you are loyal, you also are proud of your position, and take pride in what your organization is, does or produces.

### **Sensitive**

Sensitivity to those around you will develop on the job. You must be constantly aware, alert, and observant. You learn by trial and error, by experience, what pleases and what displeases your executive, when he or she wants to be interrupted, when he/she would rather be alone, when his/her actions speak louder than his/her words, where he/she prefers that you sit for dictation or

consultation, and where and in what form he/she likes finished work to be presented to him/her.

You thus begin to anticipate his/her needs

before he/she asks. You are sensitive to your own foibles, knowing that the tendency exists to look at the self through rose colored glasses while severely criticizing others who have the same traits. (If someone else oversteps the bounds of etiquette, he's rude, but if you do so, you're original!)

### **Courageous**

Do not be afraid to accept responsibility and reach out for additional duties that you know you can be responsible for. Offer your opinions or ideas when you have sufficient background and experience to have formed a reliable opinion that can be backed up with facts and figures if necessary. Do not wait to be asked to do something you know you can do—try it, realizing that you may be reprimanded if it does not go well but realizing, too, that this is the way to grow your job.

### **Honest**

In your dealing with everyone, never lie. If your executive is playing golf and his superior asks where he is, your answer might be, "He's with a group of men." If the superior asks, "Where?" Your answer should be, "I'm not sure exactly but I believe I can get in touch with him. Would you like me to try?" Honesty also extends to not appropriating company supplies for your own personal use. As a trustworthy office administrator, you admit your mistakes and neither make excuses for them nor shift the blame for them to others. You also can be depended upon never to feed the office grapevine.

### **Self-Controlled**

Self-control is a mark of maturity but not every mature individual is self-controlled! Self-discipline, the engaging of one's brain before putting one's mouth in motion, thinking of the consequences of one's words or acts before saying or doing them, keeping one's temper in check at all times, never resorting to tears in the office – these are attributes of self-control.

### **Flexible And Adaptable**

The ability to accept change willingly is of inestimable value. Changes in work surroundings, procedures, equipment, and company structure may come quickly. A flexible and adaptable office administrator accepts changes with a let's- give-it-a-try attitude and then does everything possible to see that the new arrangement works. Only the person set in his or her ways will say, "Why change?" It works fine the way it is," or "We've always done it that way," grudgingly tries the new way with no intention of making it work.

### **Endowed With A Sense Of Humor**

A sense of humor can make a tense situation less formidable. Stories in poor taste may be told in your presence and "holier-than-thou" attitude may set you up to be a target for those who may deliberately try to shock you. Let some situations roll off your back without much rebuttal.

### **Enthusiastic**

Although you may score well on other traits mentioned above, if you are not enthusiastic about where you work and about the possibilities for the future, you are like a cake without frosting- something superb is missing!

### **Responsible**

Responsibility is personal. You are responsible for getting things done on time and correctly. You are responsible for the careful proofreading and checking of dates, figures, and spellings of names. Responsibility has two forms: explicit (things you have been delegated or told to do or that were part of your job description when you were hired) and implicit (things you have taken upon yourself to do and which you have done so well that you are now responsible for them although no one has explicitly told you to be). Performing your explicit jobs well is expected of you. Performing your implicit tasks well makes you grow on your job and causes your executive to say, when someone asks him or her to release you for a more important job, "If you can find me somebody to take her place (not to do her job), I'll let her go."

As you become known as one who can handle responsibility beautifully, you may be called upon to be a problem solver. In every office things go wrong between human beings. Although you may not always be able to help to right the wrongs, you may sometimes be able to help solve the problems by (1) keeping calm, (2) getting all the facts from every side, (3) talking and listening to everyone involved, (4) sifting the emotional statements from factual ones, (5) seeking solutions from others as well as trying to brainstorm them yourself, (6) considering the advisability of a cooling-off period before suggesting anything, and (7) recommending solutions but not forcing them on anyone. In any discussion of responsibility the concept of authority and accountability, must also be considered. Authority is the right and/or obligation to command with the expectation of being obeyed. If someone is given the responsibility of doing something, then he must be given the equal amount of authority to get it done. Authority can be full (authority to decide something and carry it out) or limited (authority to carry something out only). When you give people full authority to decide how, when, or where, they will try to do their job in the best way possible to prove their judgment was good.

A word often misunderstood is accountability. You are always accountable for everything you do yourself and for the things anybody to whom you have delegated responsibility and authority does. In other words, you can be called to account for your actions, for those of your subordinates, and for those of your delegates. For that reason, accountability and control of supervisor are inseparably linked.