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T H E J O B C E N T E R

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT



Administrative assistants, administrative coordinators, executive assistants, and executive secretaries make up a crucial part of the work force. They must understand the operation and organization of a workplace.

The situation is typical in most workplaces: If you need a document typed, faxed, or filed, ask the secretary. If you need to order a piece of office equipment, ask the secretary. If you need an appointment scheduled or travel plans arranged, ask the secretary.

Today's workplace requires more complex skills from a secretary than just sitting behind a desk and answering the phone. A vital part of this job is to understand the complete operation and organization of an office or workplace.

Since those employed in this occupation are usually in charge of several administrative tasks in an office, the preferred job title has changed from secretary to include administrative assistant, administrative coordinator, executive assistant, and executive secretary.

Secretarial service professionals are responsible for a wide variety of office tasks: greeting clients,

typing, organizing and filing office documents, arranging meetings, and operating office equipment, such as computers, phone systems, fax machines, and photocopiers. They also may train and supervise other secretarial staff members.

With the advancement in office automation, secretaries and administrative assistants have seen an increase in their responsibilities that may include conducting research on the internet or proficiency with a personal computers for spread sheets and desktop publishing.

Secretaries often specialize. For example, along with administrative duties, legal secretaries may also conduct legal research for lawyers, and medical secretaries are required to have knowledge about procedures and terminology. Others may travel with their employers to business meetings and conferences.

Q&A

Q: Applying for financial aid for college seems so confusing, and I'm not sure I'm doing everything right. Do you have any advice?

A: The first thing you should remember is that you are not alone in what may seem like the financial aid jungle. Key Education Resources, one of the country's largest education lenders, details the following pitfalls you should avoid:

- Sticker shock. Being overwhelmed by the initial cost of the university you wish to attend is natural. Students should talk with financial aid administrators to estimate their expected family contribution and focus on covering that cost, not the total cost of education.
- Lack of eligibility. Do not assume you are not

eligible to receive aid. Families can be eligible for financial assistance through special grants and government or private loans.

- Doing it alone. The financial aid administrator at the university of your choice can be a great resource when it comes to answering questions and working with you to help find scholarships or grants.
- Lack of financial aid knowledge. Every student who plans to receive financial aid must first complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Renewal FAFSA form each year. Pay attention to government and university deadlines. Financial aid works on a first-come, first-served basis, so don't delay.
- Not researching loans. Consider repayment options before taking out a loan. Not doing so could cost you more than it should.

SKILLS REQUIRED

Those in the secretarial field should be reliable and organized. Communication skills and customer service skills are essential.

WHERE/HOW TO GET TRAINING

Schooling

Almost all employers require those in secretarial services positions to have a high school diploma. Job applicants with high school educations will qualify for most entry-level secretary jobs. Those interested in administrative positions that include more responsibility, such as administrative assistants or executive secretaries, have a better chance of employment if they have a two- or four-year college degree.

High school students interested in secretarial service should take business classes in typing, shorthand, accounting, and business English. Many community colleges and vocational schools teach secretarial skills.

As the workplace becomes more automated, computer and desktop skills are essential to anyone in secretarial services. Knowledge of word processing,

spreadsheet, and database management computer applications is also important. Potential secretaries should have a strong knowledge of grammar, spelling, and English.

Certification for both entry-level and experienced secretaries is available through national associations such as the Professional Secretaries International.

Financial Aid

Grants, scholarships, loans, and work/study programs are available for post-secondary students. For most of this aid, prospective students must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid, which is available from high school guidance offices and post secondary education financial aid offices.

For more information on federal financial aid programs, or to apply electronically, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.ed.gov>.

For information on federal student aid, call: (800) 4FEDAID

FUTURE JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Job opportunities in this field are expected to have slightly lower than average growth as compared to other occupations.

However, opportunities will be more plentiful for those with college degrees and practical experience.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Those in secretarial services typically work in reception areas, business offices and other

professional settings. They wear professional business attire, such as suits and dresses.

RESOURCES - HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

BOOKS:

• Administrative Assistant's & Secretary's Handbook
 By James Stroman, Susan H. O'keefe, And Kevin Wilson

ONLINE:

• <http://Adresnet.Com> (Administrative Resource Network)
 • www.ascs.org/ (American Society Of Corporate Secretaries)

GENERAL:

• International Association Of Administrative Professionals
 10502 Nw Ambassador Drive
 P.O. Box 20404
 Kansas City, Mo 64195-0404
www.iaap-hq.org

LOCAL:

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YOU HAVE THE POWER

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JOBS IN THIS FIELD

Job titles	Place of work	Kind of work	Average salary*
Secretary	Businesses, offices, other professional settings	Performs a wide variety of administrative and clerical tasks in the operation of an office. Drafts and types letters, reports, and spreadsheets; screens phone calls; greets clients; organizes.	\$19,530-\$28,120
Executive secretary administrative assistant	Businesses, offices, other professional settings	Performs administrative and clerical tasks, along with larger responsibilities, such as scheduling meetings and conferences, making travel arrangements, conducting research, desktop publishing, ordering office equipment, training and supervising other clerical staff.	\$24,970-\$38,370+

*Salaries may vary depending on region, experience, and type of responsibility. Sources: Occupational Outlook Handbook, National Association of Executive Secretaries.