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# Administrative Office Procedures

## THE CHANGING RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OFFICE PROFESSIONAL

Take a few moments and search out an episode of a television show that shows the inside of an executive office from just 10 years ago. How have offices changed? Certainly computer monitors have gotten more compact, as have telephones. The workplace is more high tech, with a constantly growing number of functions and applications. The biggest changes, however, are ones that you may not be able to see on the surface. Instead, they're in the responsibilities of each office professional.

Today's workplace often extends beyond its city, state, and even nation. Businesses are reaching across geographic boundaries, often via the Internet, and having a worldwide impact. In the process, your job is apt to expand in responsibility and demand a wealth of new skills from you. Not only will you have to become comfortable making complex and often hurried travel plans for your supervisors and co-workers, but you may also order and receive supplies, materials, and services that originate in other countries. You may find yourself setting up *webinars* (online seminars) and coordinating conferences over the Internet. In some cases, you'll be face to face with clients and customers from foreign countries—people who speak a different language, wear different clothes,

come from a different culture, and have different customs. All of these situations will require you to demonstrate the skills you've learned and ensure that you're an office professional who is easily able to fit in today's global workplace.

## TRAITS OF A SUCCESSFUL ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONAL

### Defining the Work Ethic

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Think of someone you know who has a positive work ethic. How does this person feel and act about his or her job? A *work ethic* is a belief in work as a moral good. A person with a positive work ethic feels good about his or her job and performs it well.

You have a lot of knowledge about the office and many skills to offer an employer. However, you'll need to exhibit more than just job skills to stay hired and get promoted. To succeed as an office professional, you need to develop a positive work ethic.

In this section of the study unit, you'll learn how to act appropriately in an office—how to be flexible, interact with other people, accept change, and function as part of a team. These traits will help ensure that you maintain a positive work ethic in your new career. As you learn the proper way to think and act in an office, analyze your own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors about work. Remember, with a little effort, you can change or modify most negative or incorrect behavior.

### Discovering Expectations

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As an effective employee, you must discover what your supervisor wants, needs, and expects from you (Figure 1). You do this not to impress your supervisor, but to make sure both of you are on the same track in thinking. If you don't find out exactly what your supervisor expects of you, you might



**FIGURE 1**—The first step to developing a positive work ethic is to find out what's expected of you.

perform badly—not intentionally, of course, but out of ignorance. In addition, you might miss opportunities to succeed at your job.

Just about every supervisor values efficiency and effectiveness. *Efficiency* is being productive without wasting time or resources. How do you know if you're productive? Ask. *Effectiveness* is being useful and valuable. How do you know if you're being effective? Ask.

## Handling Project Coordination

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Just as a juggler must keep multiple balls in the air, you may find yourself juggling multiple projects—or the many steps involved within a single project. Being able to multitask, keep track of details, and not “drop” any of them is a skill that will increase your value as well as your confidence.

## Seeking Feedback

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*Feedback* is positive and negative information you receive from people about how you're performing. When you seek feedback, you have an opportunity to give yourself a pat on the back and acknowledge that you're doing well. You also

have the opportunity to see where you might use improvement. Knowing this, you can make adjustments that will help you succeed.

When you ask for and receive honest, objective, and helpful feedback, you can grow. Getting feedback from your supervisor will help make your job more manageable, because you'll know what to do and what not to do. Don't be afraid to ask for feedback. Make sure, however, that you can handle it well. It's easy to accept positive feedback, but not as easy to take negative feedback. Remember not to take it personally—no one is trying to hurt your feelings or make you angry. Instead, they're trying to show you a way to be a better employee. Listen and learn from it.

## Using Your Time Wisely

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Time is an organization's most valuable commodity. How you manage your time forms the basis for how your supervisors will perceive you. If you want to create a good reputation for yourself, you need to manage time wisely. This topic will be covered thoroughly later in this unit.

Proper time management begins with arriving for work on time, all the time. It means keeping to your scheduled lunch and break times and not taking longer than company policy dictates. It also includes not wasting too much time talking with coworkers or conducting personal business on company time. Staying focused on a task and doing real work in the time allotted is important.

When you manage your time well, you show others that you're mature enough not to expect them to manage it for you. In other words, you don't need your supervisor or coworkers to keep you on track. Using your time wisely at work means being responsible and not wasting company resources.

## Setting the Tone

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The office professional is one of the people who determines the tone for the entire office (Figure 2). This tone can be either negative or positive. For instance, the way the office professional says, “Good morning” may really convey, “It’s a bad morning, and I don’t care how you feel,” or, “Hey, I’m ready to go, so let’s get this done!”



*FIGURE 2—An office professional with a positive attitude deals with everyone in a positive way.*

## Taking Pride in Your Work

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What you do can reflect favorably or unfavorably upon you and the company you work for. Your written communication (memos, letters, reports, e-mails, faxes, and other documents) will be seen by a number of people, and your work needs to be professional. If you take pride in your work, others will think of you in a positive way. They’ll increase their confidence in you and give you additional kinds of challenging

projects. Also, this attitude can be a major factor in determining whether or not you'll be promoted to a higher level within the company.

## Being Cooperative

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No matter where you're employed, your job will be more pleasant and rewarding if you know how to get along with others (Figure 3). Getting along with people in an office isn't always easy. People have good and bad days, just as you do. However, if you're informed and aware, you'll be better able to handle touchy situations as they arise. For instance, if one of your coworkers is upset over what a supervisor said, he or she may take it out on you. This colleague may become uncooperative at a time when you're working together to finish a task. Be considerate of his or her feelings, but don't get involved.

Be a good listener, as your coworker may simply need a sympathetic ear. Then perhaps the situation will be forgotten, and you can both resume your joint task without further interruptions.

**FIGURE 3—Professional office employees learn how to get along with others.**

