

Step up and thank your administrative professionals

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Crabby Office Lady

Hardworking and underappreciated? This week's column is dedicated to offering administrative professionals some help (for a change) and the recognition they deserve.

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You know them, you see them every day running all over the office, and you have probably — at one time or another — overloaded their inboxes with your requests for a new computer, a better office, and a way to hide (possibly in *their* offices) from the local chatterbox.

Who are they? Why, they're your administrative professionals, of course. And with Administrative Professional Day Week coming up April 21st, tell me: What have you done for your admins lately?

NOTE When I say "administrative professionals," I'm talking about "admins" — administrative assistants, office managers, receptionists, and all the others who keep the office — if not the company itself — running smoothly.

What do these people do, exactly?

Often, what admins do is in the background and not completely noticeable to the rest of us. (Some of us have higher profile jobs, such as executives who talk to the media, developers who create a fabulous piece of software and get a patent, and oh, I don't know, popular online columnists.) So they don't get the credit, thanks, praise, and devotion that they richly deserve.

Well, let me tell you a bit about what these people do, so that you can start your appreciation motors running.

- They arrange all of your travel.
- They keep a keen eye on the team's budget for the fiscal year. (We may complain to them about that, but it's not their fault that taking care of customer support issues comes before your bowling morale events.)
- They schedule your meetings, organize them, and find conference rooms (where there were apparently none to be had) to hold them in. And let's not forget that they also make sure your meetings are not snack-less.
- They keep the office supply room stocked with exactly what you need.
- They prepare computers for new employees and make sure that your computers are up to date and working properly.
- They manage your calendar and your inbox (if they've been set up as your delegate); in other words, they're your own personal e-mail filters.
- They help you prepare and set up your presentations — even at the last minute. (You know who you are.)
- And, if they're like our admins, they send out high-importance e-mails to the entire team broadcasting critical information, such as "I have chocolate for the taking, right outside my office."

Must I go on? Yes, I must. Because sometimes the load of work these folks do can be overwhelming and frankly, I'm not sure they're getting the help they need.

So, before I go on to tell you what you can do for your admin (particularly during that special week coming up), let me guide those of you who are admins reading along to the resources on Office Online that can make your lives easier.

Something from Crabby for you administrative professionals

Because you admins do so much, a little timely help with your daily, weekly, monthly, and even yearly tasks can be essential to freeing you up so that you have more time for ... you. Let me offer some assistance to you today.

The two wonderful admins for the team I work for are Nicki and Debbie. While I can't say I know what all admins do during their long days, I imagine that there are shared duties when it comes to this type of work, and I know a little bit about what our two folks do (just because I know how much they've helped me out). So, I've picked out some tasks that I know our admins are responsible for *and* that Office makes easier and faster.

- **Prepare computers for new employees** While it's hard enough to just find empty office space, getting a computer (and all the peripherals) set up for a new employee is quite another endeavor. Here are a few resources that may provide some insight on how to accomplish that task with a little less stress:

[Upgrade or retire an old computer](#)

- **Orient new administrative teammates** Having someone new on the team can relieve a bit of the burden you've been carrying. Just make sure that getting them all set up and oriented isn't going to cause you too much pain to start with.

- [Create an orientation schedule for a new administrative assistant](#)
- [New employee orientation checklist](#)

- **Manage meetings** One of the most important reasons that you were hired for this job in the first place is that you have great organizational skills. But even the world's greatest balls-of-fire juggler still needs a little help keeping everything up in the air. Meetings (like balls of fire) can really get out of hand — the agendas, the invitations, the meeting notes, and just finding a room that will house everyone can really suck up a lot of your time and energy (not to mention burn your hands).

- [Make an appointment or meeting private](#)
- [Meeting agenda](#)

- **Manage resources and inventory** "Can I have a window office?" "My neighbor spends all day cooing to his loved one over the phone; can I move?" "You said I could get a new computer two months ago ... where is it?" All of these questions are enough to make an admin's head explode. Here are some tools to help you keep your offices — not to mention your head — intact.

- [Equipment inventory list](#)

- **Help your manager prepare for a presentation** You are your manager's (or managers') right-hand man or woman. They know it, you know it, but they probably have no idea how you actually do those things you do. (Your secret's safe with me — because I don't really know how you do it, either). When it comes time to help your manager with a presentation, this is your chance to shine. You can not only help with the creation and design of the presentation, but also deal with all the logistics surrounding it (the where, the when, the how to enable video and sound issues, and so on). Again, your organizational skills really come into play here.

- [Help your supervisor deliver a great presentation](#)
- [Prepare a venue and equipment for a presentation](#)

- **General guidance** You want to make the most of your job, right? You want to do your best, feel good about your work, and have your manager worship you ... am I wrong? I'm here to help.

- [Staying ahead in the workplace as an administrative professional](#)
- [Administrative Professionals: Tips and templates made for you](#)

Now you have a better idea of the tools at your disposal when you are feeling over your head with lists, tasks, and demanding office workers. As for you demanding office workers — listen up!

What can I do for my admin?

A better question might be: Why haven't I done anything yet? Yes, your florist wants you to know that the week of April 20-26, 2008 is the designated Administrative Professionals Week. That's nice and everything, but I'm guessing that these good folks could use some recognition from you more than once a year. I mean, mothers get Mother's Day, but we also get the love and affection of our kids every single day. Same with St. Patrick's Day: When you're Irish, you're proud of it; March 17th is just a day to be even prouder. And International Talk Like a Pirate Day on September 19th? Who stops on September 20?

So ... here are some suggestions on how you can thank your administrative assistant or office manager all year long:

- Secretly keep restocking your admin's treat supply. You'll not only make his day, you'll let him take the credit for it.
- Recognize her birthday. She keeps track of and recognizes yours; who's keeping track of hers?
- Get the team together and get him a gift certificate to a day spa, a bookstore, or whatever. A few dollars from a few people can go a long way to making an admin's day.
- Speaking of day spas ... if you're her manager, flowers are nice and soothing; a day off is even nicer. (Surely you can survive without your admin for a day ... or two?)
- And last, but not least, don't forget your manners: Say thank you — often. Daily. Your needs would not be so well met and your life in the office would not be so efficient if it weren't for him, her, all of them.

"He who is carried on another's back does not appreciate how far off the town is." — African proverb

About the author

[Annik Stahl](#), the Crabby Office Lady columnist, takes all of your complaints, compliments, and knee-jerk reactions to heart. Therefore, she graciously asks that you let her know whether this column was useful to you — or not — by entering your feedback using the [Did this article help you?](#) feedback tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

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