

How to be a good personal assistant

BEING a personal assistant is one of the most challenging careers in the world. You work beyond the role of secretary or receptionist, or any other administrative term that comes to mind. It takes a thick skin and a steel resolve, but somebody has to do it.

This article outlines the skills and attributes that need to be developed to be a good corporate personal assistant.

The best corporate personal assistant positions command a good salary but getting to the top of the PA profession requires a number of skills and competencies.

Professionalism and confidentiality are the trademarks of a good Personal Assistant. Top end PA recruitment agencies expect PA's to be organised, efficient, self-motivated, and IT literate.

STEPS

1 Develop Good Interpersonal Skills - A good PA is unflappable under pressure. They are calm and able to think on their feet. The ability

to work well with others, particularly difficult personalities is essential as top level PA's work with CEO's, in very pressurised environments.

2 Develop Good Communication Skills - They are the first point of contact for customers and clients, therefore PA's need to be good verbal communicators, with a pleasant, yet professional manner. The ability to influence people is also essential, as PA's need to negotiate with others for time and resources. Good written communication skills are necessary because PA's often respond to communications on the boss's behalf, and sometimes write reports and executive summaries.

3 Develop Good IT Skills - A good corporate Personal Assistant is expected to have the following IT skills: Microsoft Word (Advanced); Microsoft Excel (Intermediate); Microsoft PowerPoint (Advanced); a good working knowledge of an email package like Microsoft Outlook, It is advantageous to have a good grasp

of a database software like Microsoft Access, and some knowledge of Microsoft Project.

4 Develop Good Internet Skills - PA's should also be internet savvy, as they may be required to do research or perform tasks which require a good knowledge of the internet environment. A good knowledge of e-commerce is a definite plus. An understanding of internet marketing and search engine behaviour will allow

PA's to add value to their role and provide the best possible assistance to their boss.

5 Develop an Interest in Office Technology - In today's technologically advanced society, it is essential that PA's have a good understanding of new technology. PA's should keep abreast of the latest office gadgets, and technology as they are expected to know how to fix the office photocopier and

understand the features on the boss's Blackberry. A good PA will recommend changes in office technology to improve efficiency. They will do the necessary research to understand how implementing new technology will be cost effective for the company.

6 Develop the Necessary Skills to: monitor the boss's email and respond on their behalf; delegate work on the boss's behalf; manage the boss's electronic diary; take dictation; prepare papers for meetings; book, manage, and minute meetings; organise and manage events; make complicated travel arrangements; prepare complex itineraries; manage a budget; attend events/meetings as the boss's representative; conduct internet research; prepare presentations; write correspondence, reports, newsletters and executive summaries; update intranets and websites; maintain effective office filing systems; quickly and accurately type documents; source office equipment and stationery; manage projects; supervise staff.

