

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

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 smart phone. 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.



PA's to be organised, efficient, self-motivated, and IT literate.

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

Tips on being an effective PA

- **Prepare yourself.** Being a personal assistant is mentally, emotionally and physically draining. You are a receptionist, a secretary, a maid, a travel agent, a calendar, an organiser, an alarm clock, a waitress and a confidant.
- **Organise.** Nearly every aspect of personal assistant work has to do with organisation and scheduling. Prepare your boss's calendar daily, weekly, monthly and yearly. Remind him or her of upcoming events. Stay up on VIP dates and keep track on personal and business events.
- **Ask questions.** The more you know, the better your performance will be. Asking specific questions will make your job easier and save time later.
- **Avoid arguments.** Personal assistants spend a lot of time with their bosses. You will not agree with everything and if you are tempted to speak your mind, chances are, you will open up a whole can of worms. So cool off and save yourself a lot of stress.
- **Anticipate.** No matter what else you do, anticipating the needs of your boss will score you major points and make the job much, much easier. Mistakes are crucial. Try to learn from them. Initial mistakes are good - they are bound to happen and act as excellent learning opportunities. Try not to repeat the same mistake twice.



HOW TO BE A GOOD
PERSONAL ASSISTANT