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Today is Administrative Professionals Day. It is a time to recognize those who make our workdays so much easier on a day to day basis. These smart women are the glue of your department or small business. It is they who keep the work flow moving, know who is where, how to keep customers and clients attended to, and how to protect the time and access of key players.

"Air-traffic" controller, relationship-builder, gatekeeper, confidante - it is the administrative professional who makes the business hum on a day to day basis. Competent AP's are worth their weight in gold. Here are some ways to support and acknowledge them not just today, but all yearlong:

***Communicate priorities clearly:*** Taking on mountains of tasks from all directions is all in a day's work for a busy administrative professional. Especially with multiple people to support, it can be confusing as to which projects and issues take priority. Don't leave her to guess or assume where the priorities lie. Take the extra time for communication - it can make a significant difference in timely and appropriate responses and results.

***Communicate the whereabouts of key people who she supports.*** This seems like a basic issue, it is frequently overlooked or ignored. AP's understand that not being able to relay information in a timely manner can have a negative impact on the customer, department or the company. Offer shared schedule access or cell phones to allow everyone to be on the AP's "radar screen" and enhance her ability to be responsive.

***Communicate the big picture where appropriate.*** It is helpful for her job performance and makes the AP feel valued to be included in the larger framework. When she can put her role into the perspective of where her tasks fits into the larger goals, she is better able to utilize her judgment as she performs her assignments.

***Communicate performance feedback, both positive and constructive.*** Learning to give feedback is an art and a science. Both must be balanced, so that the administrative person can feel appreciated for the positive work done, and learn in what areas she can be more effective. This should not be done just once a year at performance appraisal time, but rather on an ongoing basis with continual and open dialogues.

***Invite her to participate in the planning process and staff meetings wherever possible.*** An AP has a unique perspective, given her access to see and hear what is going on that frequently goes unnoticed by the other professional staff. Particularly if her physical location or role has proximity to interface with clients, customers or employees, the AP can offer some valuable input to the team that frequently is overlooked.

***Grow her responsibilities and give her proper training and support.*** Not only will she be kept from becoming bored or stagnant - the more she is able to do to enhance her contribution, the more the people she supports will be freed to focus on other responsibilities. This will also contribute toward her feeling both valued and valuable.

You can send flowers, offer a bonus day off, take her out to lunch, buy her a gift certificate to the mall or a local spa. Beyond treating her special for just this one day or this week, remember: this exceptional person who makes you look good all year long desires and deserves to be respected, included, valued and appreciated.