

**TRANSCRIPT**

**PODCAST #8: GET READY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS WEEK**

VOICE-OVER: Here is this week's Raising The Bar podcast for Business To Business Magazine with Business Development Coach Robin Hensley.

ROBIN: Every year, during the last full week of April, all around the world, businesses stop to recognize administrative professionals and the contributions they make to the success towards which we are all working. This year, that week is April 20<sup>th</sup> through April 26<sup>th</sup>. Wednesday of that week is set aside for special events and recognition as Administrative Professionals Day®. Those celebrations will occur on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, which will soon be upon us,, so it's not too early to be thinking about how you will recognize your administrative professionals when you need to.

Hello and welcome to this week's Raising The Bar podcast. I'm Robin Hensley and together we'll be looking at how to make this potentially high impact event a meaningful experience for you and the administrative professionals.

Let's start with a little history. The term "secretary", which has now come to be called Administrative Professional, derived from the Latin word *secemere*, meaning "to distinguish" or "to set apart" and eventually came to mean someone who was responsible for overseeing business in a confidential manner, usually a powerful individual. Men dominated the field from the Renaissance until the invention of the typewriter in the 1880's, when more women entered the work world as secretaries. Since World War I, the role of the secretary has been more associated with women than men, but, the work of the secretary and its newest sobriquet, Administrative Professional, is by no means populated by women only.

Administrative Professionals Week has been observed every year since 1952. Originally organized as National Secretaries Week, it was the brainchild of the National Secretaries Association, in conjunction with Harry Klemfuss of Young and Rubicam and a consortium of office products companies. It was Klemfuss, back in the day, who designed the week to promote the values and importance of the job of secretary and who has, through his vision, not only raised the stature of secretaries around the world but has created an image of the administrative professional as an attractive career. The Administrative Professionals Association, is now a 40,000 plus member organization with 600 chapters worldwide.

And let's face it, where would any of us be without the organization, dedication and know-how of the administrative staff that has supported each and every one of us at one time or another over the years?

OK. Let's turn our attention to the rewards and recognition that are at the heart of this event. Perhaps, about now, you are thinking, "Thanks, Robin, for reminding me. I'll just run out and get a card, maybe a pre-fab bunch of flowers would be nice, oh, and yeah, a lunch (with me!) might be good, too." Too bad you can't delegate the task to your admin! If you could, they just might give you an earful on what they think about that!

Contrary to what you might believe, your administrative professionals are not panting for flowers, candy and a nice lunch. Nor are they desperate for massages, gift cards for dinner or Oh No -- you didn't -- self-help books or time management systems! On the other hand, a carefully chosen assortment of chocolates for a chocolate lover, a gift card to a local nursery for an avid gardener, or a gift card for dinner at a favorite restaurant for a foodie will make a lasting impression. A book lover might really appreciate a gift card to Barnes & Noble, Border's or amazon.com. A dog or cat fancier might relish a gift card from PetSmart. What's important is to take the time to make it personal and meaningful. When in doubt, it's always a good idea to ask your company's HR professional, firm administrator or the individual's own significant other for suggestions.

You also might be interested to know what administrative professionals have said they really want, even though their wants and needs very seldom translate into what companies and individuals do to recognize them.

When surveyed, most administrative support staff say they prefer observances that recognize their professional role or provide opportunities for professional learning and growth. The IAAP suggests that employers consider these ideas:

- Hold a company-wide observance or special event for administrative staff, such as a presentation by a professional development speaker, or a group recognition of administrative professionals by the chief executive,
- Provide registration for a professional development seminar to build the individual's technical, interpersonal or business skills,
- Support membership in appropriate networking and professional associations and,
- Encourage study for and attainment of professional certification.

Additional gift suggestions include appropriate business-related items such as personalized business cards...gift certificates...Hey, an iPhone or Blackberry might be nice...or

a monetary bonus for exemplary performance. Just be sure whether it's a trendy but useful device or a practical tool, it should be what the person really wants. By the way, candy, flowers and lunches? They were dead last on the list.

You might be muttering to yourself now, that the company plans to do all this. Why should I bother? Please. Please. Please. Don't pass the buck! It brands you as selfish and lacking in both appreciation and respect for the important work your administrative staff provides. Am I being too hard on you? Maybe you don't fall into the category of uncaring oaf. But, believe me, I have heard too many horror stories from shocked, disappointed and under-appreciated support staff to think these things don't happen. They do. And, they are a contributing factor to retention issues and overall low productivity and morale. No one wants to feel their work is of so little value that a carelessly selected card, generally chosen by someone else, tossed on the desk is enough to keep them motivated throughout the year. Bah! The truth is, your company's gift or recognition may not always hit the mark. Your administrative staff wants to know that the person they work hard for all year- that would be you -cares about them.

Here's an idea that costs nothing but can mean everything and that is, a hand-written note. Add to your gift-giving strategy, a hand-written note that is heart-felt and expresses your sincere appreciation and gratitude. It makes a brilliant finishing touch.

Oh, and don't make it just once a year, either. Just because there is one "official" day set aside to recognize your administrative staff doesn't mean you have to limit yourself to a one-time-only effort. There are many opportunities throughout the year to recognize your admin staff. Build reminders for service anniversaries, birthdays and other important milestones, into your calendar as you would your planned activities, just as you would for business development and other important commitments. Remembering these events will help create a working environment that inspires loyalty and commitment.

Well, gotta run now. Just have time to get that perfect something for my own stellar and irreplaceable administrative professional.

Until next time, this is Robin Hensley, with Raising the Bar.

VOICE-OVER: You have been listening to a Raising The Bar program on preparing for Administrative Professionals Week with Business Development Coach Robin Hensley. For a full transcript of this program, stop by the Business To Business Magazine website at [btobmagazine.com](http://btobmagazine.com) or go to [raisingthebar.com](http://raisingthebar.com).

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