



**TRANSCRIPT**

**PODCAST #21: FORGET APRIL 15<sup>TH</sup>. IT'S APRIL 22<sup>ND</sup> YOU NEED TO BE READY FOR**

VOICE-OVER: Hello. I'm Business Development Coach Robin Hensley. Welcome to this edition of your Raising the Bar podcast with Executive Coach Mariette Edwards of Star Maker Enterprises. Mariette and I have teamed up to bring you even more information and resources to help you reach your business development goals. And now, here's Mariette . . .

MARIETTE: This edition of the Raising the Bar podcast is focused on keeping you out the doghouse – not with the IRS, although that would be a neat trick, wouldn't it? No, the doghouse I'm talking about is the one you'll find in your office if you forget your administrative assistant during Administrative Professionals Week. Consider this your wake-up call that the clock is ticking and you have only a few days left to plan a meaningful recognition for those individuals that help make your business a success.

The last full week of every April is designated as Administrative Professionals Week. Celebrated around the world, businesses take time to recognize the contributions of those individuals. This year, it's April 19<sup>th</sup> through April 25<sup>th</sup>. Wednesday of that week is set aside for special events and recognition as Administrative Professionals Day®. Celebrations will occur on April 22 this year. The Administrative Professionals Week theme for 2009 is Excellence in Action. Are you ready?

Hello. I'm Mariette Edwards. Did you know that there are more than 4.1 million secretaries and administrative assistants working in the United States and that there are an additional 8.9 million people working in various administrative support roles? That's according to U.S. Department of Labor Statistics. And while the economy continues to sputter, the International Association of Administrative Professionals (the IAAP) reports that the outlook for administrative professionals is bright.

Reaching back to an earlier podcast on this subject, 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.

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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 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.

OK. Now, let's take a look at the rewards and recognition that are at the heart of this event. Perhaps you are thinking, "I'll just run out and get a card, maybe a bunch of flowers (didn't I see some at the grocery store the other day?) and hey, we could go to lunch at that restaurant I really like." It's a shame you have to do all this yourself when your admin would be so much better at it and a lot more thoughtful, too.

It may be a shocker, but admin professionals don't really care about flowers, candy and a nice lunch—especially if it's at *your* favorite place. They're not pining away for massages, gift cards for dinner or don't even think about it--self-help books or time management systems! On the other hand, you still have time to plan a meaningful gift for the person or persons who are responsible for helping you and/or your firm, achieve success. According to the IAAP, and they should know, your administrative professionals would prefer that you recognize them with gifts that support their success and that show you care enough to reward them with something they will value.

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...say, how about an iPhone or a Blackberry? A monetary bonus for exemplary performance would certainly be appreciated in today's economic climate and carries out this year's theme of Excellence in Action. Just be sure whether it's a

trendy but useful device or a practical tool, it is what the person really wants. A few other ideas include gifts that take their professional and personal interests into consideration--items that recognize them as individuals, that say they mean enough to you that you took the time to get them something they would really use and enjoy. Assuming they haven't devoted their entire life to the job, you might consider a gift to enhance their free time. For example, a book lover might really appreciate a gift card to Barnes & Noble or amazon.com. A movie buff might enjoy a gift card from AMC or Regal Cinemas or tickets for the Atlanta Film Festival. A season subscription to the opera, ballet, symphony or theater might be just the thing for someone who enjoys those entertainments. A carefully chosen assortment of chocolates for a chocolate lover, a membership in the Atlanta Botanical Gardens for an avid gardener, a membership in the Michael C. Carlos Museum for that amateur archeologist or perhaps a gift card for dinner at a favorite restaurant for a foodie would make a more lasting impression than any haphazard gift that means nothing to the receiver. 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 firm's administrator or the individual's significant other for suggestions.

You might be saying to yourself that the company plans to do all this. Why should I bother? 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. If high productivity, morale and retention are important to you, you'll take the time to do things right. No one wants to feel their work is of so little value that a carelessly selected card, generally chosen by someone else, and tossed on their desk is enough to keep them motivated throughout the year. Ugh!

If you don't have the time, imagination or even the cash to find a special something then here's an idea that costs nothing but that can actually mean everything and that is, a hand-written note. A heart-felt hand-written note that expresses your sincere appreciation and gratitude makes a worthy stand-alone or brilliant finishing touch.

And one more thing. 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 and treat them as you do your other important commitments. It will go a long way toward creating a working environment that inspires loyalty and commitment.

Hope you are fired up and ready to make this year extra special. I'll just sign off now so you can start planning. Until next time, I'm Mariette Edwards for Raising the Bar.



VOICE-OVER: This is Business Development Coach Robin Hensley. You have been listening to a Raising The Bar program with Executive Coach Mariette Edwards. For a full transcript, stop by the Business To Business Magazine website at [btobmagazine.com](http://btobmagazine.com), go to my website at [raisingthebar.com](http://raisingthebar.com) or the website for Mariette Edwards at [starmakercoaching.com](http://starmakercoaching.com).

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