

Administrative Professional Jobs Have Rapidly Changed, But Remain Critical

6 Key Traits of Modern Administrative Professionals

Technology Will Empower, Not Replace, Administrative Professionals

TORONTO, April 24, 2019 – On Administrative Professionals Day 2019, Express Employment Professionals is releasing a closer look at the changing role of the modern administrative professional.

With technology, especially the advent of smart phones, transforming the way Canada's offices operate, administrative professionals have felt some of the most disruptive changes of any profession. Basic needs like typing, organizing and scheduling are no longer enough to fill the job description of one position. The most menial tasks are automated as technology streamlines once time-consuming processes. The result: administrative professionals are being called to take on coordination of more complex tasks, changing the skill sets that employers seek.

According to [Employment and Social Development Canada](#) more than 300,000 Canadians work in administrative professional jobs, with annual median earnings of \$50,000. Administrative professionals work in a variety of fields, such as government, colleges, universities and professional schools, the medical sector, and the financial services industry, which has the greatest concentration of professionals in executive support roles. Changes in this profession affect a significant portion of the workforce, meaning workers' adaptability will affect the broader economy.

Based on industry research and insights from Express experts, the top six skills needed for the modern administrative professional in today's workforce include:

- Technology proficiency
- Problem solving
- People management
- Business acumen
- Strategic thinking
- Project and event planning

Hanif Hemani, an Express Employment Professionals franchise owner in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan has

seen the changes in the role of administrative professionals firsthand.

“Administrative professionals require a much higher skill level when it comes to technology,” Hemani said. “They are not only required to multitask to a greater extent, but also take on a wider variety of responsibilities, for example, managing and maintaining websites, performing accounting functions, and providing sales and marketing support.”

In Edmonton, Alberta, Express franchise owner Jessica Culo has seen a similar trend.

“We do see employers looking to add administrative professionals to their teams that can impact their businesses in more complex ways,” Culo said. “We now often see administrative job descriptions that include accounting support components or digital marketing components. Gone are the days when the main requirements of an administrative job were answering a high volume of phone calls and filing. More companies are going paperless.”

Both Hemani and Culo agree that administrative professionals need to be technologically proficient, and technology is more helpful than harmful to the profession.

“Technology is a reality of the modern administrative professional’s job,” Hemani said. “There are many similar technological platforms that, once learned, provide a good foundational competency. How a company decides to use technology, and the training they provide their employees, will determine its effectiveness.”

“There has been a definite shift in the requirement of administrative candidates to have intermediate or advanced software enhanced skill sets,” observed Culo. “Many companies are looking for candidates with specific software experience that is unique to their business. Having this basis of knowledge helps employers to then cross train administrators in other capacities. But employers may also require other technological skills, such as experience with social media platforms.”

In addition to proficiency with technology, problem solving has become of greater importance to the role.

“From an employer’s perspective, problem solving skills may be the single most sought-after skill in administrative candidates,” Culo reported. “Lack of problem solving skills can come out in many forms, from mistakes, to not fitting in with the team, to not being able to keep up. While employers will recognize that problems at work do arise, what they are looking for is candidates to come to their leaders not just with the problem, but a proposed solution as well.”

“Problem solving skills are very important,” Hemani agreed. “There are challenges in every facet of business, but often there is no ‘manual’ that addresses them. So being able to solve challenges as they arise, while complying with legal requirements and corporate values, is essential.”

In addition to problem solving, people skills are vital.

“Most employers still want to see candidates come to them with strong interpersonal skills,” Culo said. “This is especially important for the companies that pride themselves on retention of employees. Retention is increasingly becoming top of mind for employers; therefore, they only want to bring in employees that are going to enhance their cultures.”

Despite major changes to the administrative support profession, these jobs remain crucial.

“Administrative assistants are often the ‘Chief Execution-ers’ of the company,” Hemani explained. “They are the doers of policy, strategy, and implementation.”

“Strong administrative professionals are vital to companies and executives,” Culo added. “These professionals are very often responsible for communication within organizations and between organizations and, while our methods of communication may change over time, there is no debating that communication will remain key. In a global economy, communication and documentation is actually more important than ever.”

“Today’s workplaces look vastly different from those 20 years ago, and the workplaces a decade or two from now will have changed dramatically, too,” said Bill Stoller, CEO of Express. “But there are skills that Alexa—or any ‘smart’ device will never replace and that will always be in demand, regardless of the changes we experience. Professionals who can foresee challenges and think critically are essential to businesses success, and as the administrative professional’s skillset evolves even more, he or she will be seen less as an ‘assistant’ and more as a partner.”

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Ana Curic at (613) 858-2622 or email ana@mapleleafstrategies.com.

About Bill Stoller

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the international staffing company has more than 800 franchises in the U.S., Canada and South Africa. Since its inception, Express has put more than 7.7 million people to work worldwide.

About Express Employment Professionals

Express Employment Professionals puts people to work. It generated \$3.56 billion in sales and employed a record 566,000 people in 2018. Its long-term goal is to put a million people to work annually. For more information, visit ExpressPros.com.