



Administrative Professionals Staffing Practices

by Susan Malanowski

Introduction

This paper provides benchmark data on the relationships of the number of administrative professionals to the number of total employees, the number of executives that administrative professionals support and related information. We conducted a survey of members of the New England Compensation Consortium (NECC) in June 2009, and supplemented this report with both data from another survey conducted by the International Association of Administrative Professionals, and a report on administrative professionals from the Bureau of Labor statistics.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 4.2 million administrative assistants in jobs in 2006, making it one of the largest occupations in the U.S. economy. A majority of secretaries and administrative assistants are employed in service providing industries with the minority working for firms engaged in manufacturing or construction. Employment of executive secretaries and administrative assistants is projected to grow faster than average for all occupations between 2006 and 2016. Growing industries—such as administrative and support services; health care and social assistance; and professional, scientific, and technical services—will continue to generate the most new jobs.¹

New England Compensation Consortium Survey Results

Twelve organizations responded to the special survey sent to over 200 NECC members. The following is the data associated with the questions asked.

How many total full time equivalent employees are there in your organization?

▪ Average	6,199
▪ Median	3,309
▪ 25 th	1,421
▪ 75 th	7,059
▪ High	23,656
▪ Low	461

How many full time equivalent Administrative Assistants, Executive Assistants, Secretaries, etc. are there in your organization?

▪ Average	156
▪ Median	118
▪ 25 th	24
▪ 75 th	262

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- High 479
- Low 14

If the number of administrative professionals is divided into the number of employees for each organization and the various percentiles are calculated, there is one administrative professional for every 34 employees at the median and one for every 42 employees on average as described below:

- Average 1:42 employees
- Median 1:34 employees
- 25th 1:26 employees
- 75th 1:54 employees
- High 1:91 employees
- Low 1:15 employees

Indicate if your company is for-profit or not-for-profit

- For Profit 7
- Not for Profit 5

Not-For-Profit of the above statistics are as follows:

	<u># Employees</u>	<u># Administrative</u>	<u>Ratio</u>
Average	2,385	115	1:30
Median	1,728	30	1:26
25 th	500	19	1:20
75 th	2,822	189	1:33
High	6,412	322	1:58
Low	461	14	1:15

For-Profit of the above statistics are as follows:

	<u># Employees</u>	<u># Administrative</u>	<u>Ratio</u>
Average	8,924	186	1:51
Median	4,384	152	1:39
25 th	3,033	54	1:33
75 th	13,935	274	1:66
High	23,656	479	1:91
Low	494	16	1:25

Describe your primary industry

The reported industry for each organization was used to categorize the organization into a general industry category:

- Insurance 3
- Education 1
- Healthcare 2
- Life Sciences 1
- Manufacturing 2
- Research and Development 1

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- Retail 1
- Technology 1

Indicate your last fiscal year's revenue or operating revenue if not-for profit.

- Average \$ 4,069,000,000
- Median \$ 1,189,000,000
- 25th \$ 658,000,000
- 75th \$ 1,870,000,000
- High \$ 23,000,000,000
- Low \$ 350,000,000

How would you describe your organization's practice for staffing Administrative Assistants to individuals, departments, locations or functional areas?

The following are selected comments received from several of the participating organizations with editing if needed to maintain the organizational confidentiality:

- "Our practice is not based on a certain number or ratio; it's based on need and appropriateness of the position. Not every department has an administrative assistant and we challenge our managers on looking at all positions to see if it's possible to do things different and consolidate when appropriate."
- "Requests for administrative professionals are reviewed on a case by case basis. Most of vice presidents have administrative assistants, but not all. If they do, they generally have responsibility for the whole department. A couple of the larger departments have more than one assistant."
- "There is no consistent practice at our organization. All senior management, most vice presidents, and some director-level managers have administrative professionals. Administrative professionals for those below the vice president level tend to be used more broadly for group support."
- "Department heads and key staff typically have administrative assistants."
- "Administrative professional jobs are difficult to count because they have evolved into hybrid jobs with both administrative and other responsibilities under a different title, e.g., Human Resources Assistant."
- "Culture and technology have a significant impact on the number of administrative professionals. If the senior positions are not technologically savvy, then they tend to have more need for administrative professionals."
- "There are no standard practices currently - typically offices by major location have an office coordinator in them coordinating and supporting all workers in that area (processing HR paperwork, finance reimbursements, time reporting, etc.)"

International Association of Administrative Professionals

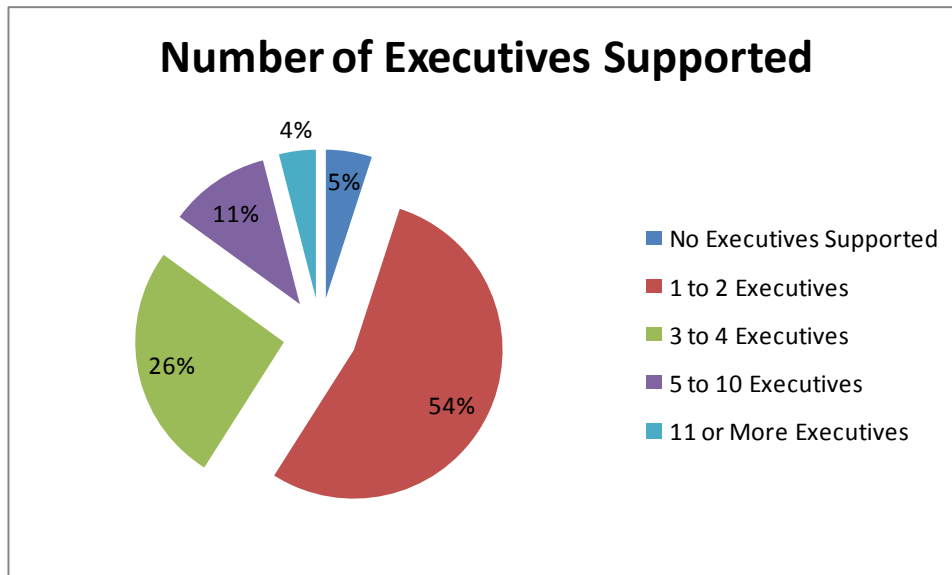
In February 2005, a total of 15,000 members of the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) were randomly selected and asked to participate in a benchmarking survey designed to gather current data on job titles, key responsibilities, average salaries, job satisfaction, technology usage, training needs, other key issues relating to today's

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administrative professionals and the number of executives supported. A new survey was administered in 2009 and the responses are in the process of being compiled.

IAAP commented that staffing ratios of management/executive staff in relation to administrative support staff depends on several factors, such as work volume and the nature of the tasks and responsibilities delegated to the administration support level, how work flows in the organization and many other factors. Over one-half of administrative professionals report supporting one or two executives. The full survey results regarding the number of executives supported are as follows.²



Summary

The number of administrative support staff that an organization has depends on a variety of factors. The smaller the number of employees in an organization, the smaller the number of administrative professionals tends to be. As the IAAP indicates, the staffing level of administrative professionals depends on several factors, such as work volume and the nature of the tasks and responsibilities delegated to the administration support level, how work flows in the organization and many other factors. In addition, findings from the NECC survey indicate that the number of functional areas, office locations, senior management, culture, and the level of technological knowledge and ability senior management uses in their jobs also impacts the number of administrative professionals. Usually administrative professionals support not only a senior manager but also the whole department. In addition, administrative work is often combined with another role, resulting in a hybrid job and no longer part of the administrative professional job family.

The most significant findings relative to the number of administrative professionals in an organization is that over half of administrative professionals support one or two executives. There is one administrative professional for every 34 to 42 employees. The administrative

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assistant remains a fast growing occupation in administrative and support services; health care and social assistance; and professional, scientific, and technical services.

¹Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-09 Edition*, Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos151.htm> (visited all June 15, 2009).

²International Association of Administrative Professionals, IAAP February 2005 Benchmarking Survey, on the internet at http://www.iaaphq.org/resources/keytrends/2005_IAAP_profile_of_administrative_professionals_survey_RESULTS-2.html (visited June 15, 2009).