

Doing the work, but no recognition, now what?

Question: "I work in a department that is divided into teams. I am the department administrative assistant, supporting about 25 people. The department celebrated a project completion where everyone on the team received a project completion gift, which included everyone in my department. I didn't work directly on the project but did a lot of administrative tasks. I didn't receive a gift, which is fine, but my boss invited everyone to the conference room to present the gifts and acknowledge a successful project completion - but me. He left me at my desk and didn't invite me to be a part of the celebration. Is it wrong to feel left out and not a part of the team?" — *Ann Harris*

Comments

That is wrong. You are an important member of that team and the project would not have been successful without YOU! If you truly did not have any input then I would say the boss should have at least invited you to watch the others' receive their recognition. But if you did the admin tasks, then you should also be recognized. Unfortunately, there isn't much you can do without sounding selfish. At least you know that other admins are on your side. We are all too often overlooked.

Posted by: | December 14, 2007 at 01:44 PM

I feel your pain. I work at a very large international corporate office and had to support over 25 managers in my area. It is wrong for the supervisor to leave you out. Why recognize everyone else in the department and not the person who makes the others look good? You play a supportive role to all. Believe me the department knows when you are not there.

For years I worked with my group as administrative assistant. The only reward was the 2% raise at the end of the year. That does not even cover the cost of living expenses each year. After 5 years of trying to get a position level and pay increase, I moved on. My position title is Budget Coordinator and Administrative Assistant for only 5 people. I received a 13% increase along with a little respect. Weight your situation carefully. Perhaps it's time to consider a new position.

Posted by: Linda | December 14, 2007 at 01:52 PM

I agree with the first comment, I've had the same problem in our office and it hurts when you know you also worked hard on a project and no one takes notice.

Posted by: | December 14, 2007 at 01:54 PM

Make a list of how you contributed to the project: tasks completed, time spent. Bring this to your boss and indicate that you should be recognized as a key team player in this project, as well as future projects that will require your assistance. If you don't tell him, then he'll continue leaving you out. Some managers just need more training than they realize!!! Also, make sure you keep this for when your performance review comes around.

Posted by: Cindy | December 14, 2007 at 01:58 PM

I support the CEO and the Board of Directors at our company and sometimes at Board meetings we have a guest and everyone goes around introducing themselves and I am skipped over. I agree with the other comment that admins can get overlooked. If there's an opportunity to give your boss feedback e.g. at your annual review, I would ask him how he sees your position as relating to the department as a whole and that you'd like to work on feeling part of the team. You could give the example of what happened with that project. All the best.

Posted by: Samantha | December 14, 2007 at 01:59 PM

One thing you can do to give yourself a positive light is to email everyone that was "congratulated" and let them know how proud you are to be an important part of this success! For your own best practice, always document your part in any project and add a copy of what ever is pertinent into your "portfolio" of experience. When I have shown such things to prospective employers, they know immediately that (a) I like to be included in the recognition and (b) that I am proud of my accomplishments, recognition or not.

Posted by: Karen D. | December 14, 2007 at 02:02 PM

I had a similar situation happen to me. It was not my boss but one of his direct reports that excluded me from recognition on a project. One of my personal goals is to deal with conflict in a timely and constructive manner so I requested a meeting with her and let her know my feelings. She had recognized the team with a dinner and cash award. I explained that I felt I should have at least received a thank you for what I had done to support the effort. At first she countered with a comment that what I had done was part of my job but I calmly held my ground and reminded her that I twice changed vacation days and then came in on the one day I did take off to help her on the project and that was over and above what was required of my job. I also caught several errors on documents her team requested to be sent out "as is."

We ended the conversation on a good note and the payoffs for bringing it to her attention were that I felt better for clearing the air and I believe she has shown me much more respect since this happened. Sometimes we need to speak up to be recognized. Good luck!

Posted by: Lisa | December 14, 2007 at 02:04 PM

You can collect your own "references" if you save those Thank you cards your team or direct supervisor gave you to thank you for a job well done, or emails. You have every right to name those persons to whom you reported or an HR contact.

Posted by: Karen D | December 14, 2007 at 02:10 PM

Wow, I understand this one. It happens often and there isn't much to be done outside of the excellent suggestions mentioned above. Documentation is key, I often receive verbal thanks and congrats, but very seldom in writing or tokens of appreciation. I guess we're just doing what we were hired to do, but what if we weren't there. hmmmmmm.

Continue to take pride and appreciate your gifts and talents, even if no one else does.

Posted by: Rita | December 14, 2007 at 02:10 PM

I really like being an Executive Assistant. I enjoy the work but sometimes have to remind myself that the work we do often goes unnoticed until we don't do it. Our role is to provide support "under the radar". Sometimes that means we get no recognition for the work we do because everybody is so used to us doing it and expects it of us. Your boss was wrong not to acknowledge the role you played in the success of the project but I'll bet there isn't an admin out there who hasn't been similarly slighted. It's like we are an invisible force or something. I've given up trying to understand that! Guess the only thing you could do if it matters that much is to say something to your boss like, "It was really a great gesture to give the team a celebration gift for the project. But since I was left out, I can't help but wonder if you feel I didn't contribute? That concerns me because I...(tell him what you did)."

Posted by: | December 14, 2007 at 02:15 PM

I think it was wrong, and I would definitely tell him/her about it in a respectful way. Like the others, remind this person of what you did; tell them how it made you feel to be excluded from the entire celebration; and IF you have to go there...ask the person what the administrators would do WITHOUT their support. Sometimes they don't think about that part when their heads get too big (or whatever their no good excuse would be!).

I would definitely say something. You deserve the respect AND the recognition just like the rest of the team. They hire us to be team players, so they should recognize us as such.

Congratulations to you!! This is on behalf of your colleagues in this forum! ;-)

Posted by: M.K | December 14, 2007 at 03:03 PM

Yes, it is wrong. I recently worked on a very high profiled event and was given general recognition with everyone else. I was the general manager of this project and at least expected something more than just a blanket general "thank you" along with others. I say give recognition and applause where it is due!

Posted by: Kay | December 14, 2007 at 03:45 PM

I would talk to your boss about it, in a non-confrontational way. "Something happened the other day that made me feel like I was not appreciated....." But whatever you do, don't do one of those "I don't mean to complain, but..." things. If you are going to complain, even in a nice way, take ownership of it.

Posted by: Mark | December 14, 2007 at 03:47 PM

Evidently, being left out is common with our "assistant" job titles. And, no, it is not wrong to feel left out and not part of the team because that's how they treated you. But don't you dare feel like you are any less than any of them. You're valuable and it is to their shame that they didn't acknowledge your contribution. Should you decide to move on, you will still have entitlement to say you worked on this project. You can't change the treatment you received, with time the feelings will subside but at least you are aware of their thinking. I guess I'm used to it now, so I try to do some self-promoting during my reviews so that they are fully aware of my contributions. So, they don't have to acknowledge my contributions, just pay me for them.

Posted by: Anita T. | December 14, 2007 at 04:13 PM

All suggestions are good. As administrative support professionals we have to get past hurt feelings, but we are entitled to shed our cloaks of invisibility and get the credit we deserve for our accomplishments. I provide varying degrees of administrative support for a 9-person office. Whenever I go on my several weeks vacation, the staff always tells me how much they've missed me when I return, as they simply do not realize how much I do for them until I'm gone. My accomplishments are part of my performance review and performance plan, so at least there is some official visibility and appreciation of my efforts.

Posted by: Anon | December 14, 2007 at 04:20 PM

I find this to be an all too familiar scenario. I just thought it was the culture of the company I work for . . . I guess not . . .

Posted by: | December 14, 2007 at 04:56 PM

I agree to keep the documentation of your own part of each project. If you are the administrative assistant, however, it is considered your job to help on these projects. It stinks that you are not recognized, and maybe you do need to train your boss on these matters, but sometimes it's best knowing that they couldn't have done it without you. It would be nice to hear they appreciate you, but is this really the first time this has happened? Again, take pride in what you do. You are the only one who can do it!

Posted by: Alishia | December 17, 2007 at 07:21 AM

I know exactly how you must be feeling. I am also an admin assistant and currently support ten staff members with clerical/office assistance. If there is a project to be completed you can bet I will be doing a lot of the tasks to make sure they look good when the project is finished. If others received compensation for the completion of this project you should have been at the top. Your boss certainly should be made aware of his lack of courtesy in this matter. Though it is good to be humble and accepting, it is also good to be recognized for your works as other team members are. If you work in an office of more than one person you are all a team. Continue to take pride in what you do and know that your reward will come.

Posted by: Flora Moss | December 17, 2007 at 05:28 PM

If for no other reason, "You" do oversee the recipients and should have been given Honorable mention. If your boss felt you did not deserve a gift he should have included you in handing out the gifts to the people working in

your department. I've been in similar situations and understand your feelings. You Should have been Included!

Posted by: Louise | December 18, 2007 at 10:19 AM

Everyone seems to be against the boss on this matter. I'm going to ask.... Why didn't her other "team" members say something. They were all happy to accept the gifts and accolades but not ONE of the 25 or so people thought to give her credit. Some team! I'm glad I work for a wonderful small company that recognizes EVERYONE's effort regardless of title.

Posted by: Sarah | December 18, 2007 at 02:04 PM

I am an administrative assistant as well. And recently I have taken on many new projects which basically entail multi tasking. I too get unrecognized for certain projects, but I have taken the liberty of making a list of all projects, my part in them and any other pertinent information I feel necessary to have prepared for my next annual review. I suggest you do that too. It is hard working with ppl that don't treat you as a 'team player' when even though our title is not "director, project mgr, supervisor" we still are part of the team because honestly without us they would have to do the work themselves!

Posted by: Terri | December 21, 2007 at 01:20 PM

Quote from Lisa's comment -"At first she countered with a comment that what I had done was part of my job"... I'm confused, did the others who worked on the project do something that didn't fall under the heading as "part of their job" as well? or was this something unique and they worked outside of their specialty or position?

Posted by: Barbara | December 21, 2007 at 01:33 PM

I feel extremely lucky to work for a CEO that continually thanks me for my part in any project and even in day-to-day op. I find it appalling and in poor taste that you were slighted. Having said that, I have also worked for others who have not appreciated the hard work that support staff do. We are the heartbeat of our offices and deserve respect and recognition.

Posted by: Tina | December 21, 2007 at 01:33 PM

Quote from article "I didn't work directly on the project but did a lot of administrative tasks." What type of administrative tasks were they and how did they not impact the project directly?

Posted by: Barbara | December 21, 2007 at 01:43 PM

I think many of the above comments were great advice on what to do in this type of situation. Some comments, however, were disconcerting because they display the type of attitude that doesn't help the problem of perception we admins face. Do not look at it as "poor me" and handle the situation in an unprofessional manner, or pout. You will (hopefully/usually) get far more respect by taking the advice above and professionally presenting the matter to your boss, team, etc. in a reasonable manner, with facts, showing that you've really

thought the matter over. Thankfully, the company I work for usually does a good job at treating the team equally, but it wasn't always that way. The AA's here taught me the advice I share above and it has been successful. I wish all of you wonderful ladies the best!

Posted by: Amber | December 21, 2007 at 01:55 PM

Unfortunately, some companies still see administrative assistants as "the help." They don't understand how much would not get done if they had to do what we do in addition to doing what they do. And they don't always remember us when celebrating. But I never forget and I always document as others in this subject has suggested.

I have a couple of suggestions. First, although it would be months later, if your company requests that staff complete a self-assessment when it is time for your annual evaluation, I would add my contribution to the self-assessment. I would phrase it in a way to show that one of my major accomplishments was supporting the team (provide as much detail as possible) which resulted in the team reaching their goal of successfully completing the project. This appearing on your self-assessment would remind your boss that you did play a part. I would also add this item as an accomplishment on my resume. Maybe recognition would come from another company if the current company eventually doesn't work out.

I hope this helps. Be encouraged. Keep doing your very best. I believe it will payoff and recognition will come from somewhere. If not from your boss maybe someone else will notice and reward you. I wish you the best.

Posted by: Ranita | December 21, 2007 at 02:26 PM

I totally disagree with some comments ladies. First, you are at the job to perform not to get a pad on the back and feeling "poor me" attitude because you were not given the recognition you wanted?. This is a job and the company pays you to do a job. It is not in the company's policy to compensate you for the work you perform besides your salary. Count on your blessings and grow up. It is unbelievable some of the comments coming from Executive Assistants!!! We need leaders in the companies not whiners! I am an Executive Assistant for a company and don't expect my boss to compensate me every time I do something for him or the company. If he does, wonderful, but if he doesn't so what? As long as he pays me my salary I am more than happy.

Posted by: Grace | December 21, 2007 at 03:51 PM

Grace, I'm a little surprised by your comments. I believe the purpose of this forum is to support each other when someone has an issue. As for the compensation issue, Ann was not expecting extra compensation or a gift, just a "thank you" that the rest of the staff got. Most people out there crave at least a little recognition, have a need to feel special.

Ann, there is nothing wrong with how you feel about this situation. What's more important is how you deal with it. If this is an uncommon occurrence, I'd try to let it slide. If you're constantly feeling like a second class citizen at your workplace, it may be time to move on. There are many companies out there that appreciate all their employees. Good luck, and keep your chin up!

Posted by: Karen | December 26, 2007 at 01:03 PM

Karen, I totally agree with your answer. I think Grace was a little harsh with her comments. Ann was looking for

some well-deserved recognition, not whining! Being recognized as part of a team is important. In fact, I was just reading through my latest issue of Personal Report for the Admin Professional, and found an article that said, "Getting recognition -- and using it wisely -- is key to managing your career and receiving raises."

I also agree with you, Karen, that Ann should decide if this incident was part of a pattern, or a one-time occurrence. If it's an isolated incident, I'd just ignore it. If it's part of a pattern, it should be addressed. Ann, perhaps your manager didn't even realize how much you'd contributed! My boss is often unaware of the details of many of the things I work on. I'd approach it in this way: "I wasn't sure if you were aware of my contributions to XXXXXXXX project. I was an important part of the team, and wanted to make sure you knew about it." Then leave the rest up to him.

I used to feel ignored when some of our managers would leave me out of introductions to important visitors (being the only person who's not introduced is a little disheartening). I took some control of the situation by waiting a bit, then introducing myself when the opportunity arose. I did it in such a way that I didn't embarrass anyone for overlooking me, but subtly made my presence known. The managers figured it out, and stopped leaving me out!

Posted by: Lisa | December 26, 2007 at 04:53 PM

Lisa. The purpose of this forum is also to encourage Admins to be strong enough to get over the pain and not to suffer a long term illness just because her boss did not recognize her and expect other Admins to feel sorry for her!!! We are adults not children who need to be recognized for every little thing we do especially at the job!! You performed and you get paid! as simple as that.

That is why nobody feels satisfied anywhere because you we are living in a "me, me, me" society. I did this but...they didn't appreciate MMMMMMEEEEEE!

Posted by: Grace | December 27, 2007 at 04:44 PM

Ann,

Over my life-time of careers I've been on both sides of the desk so to speak. I've been a manager/director and now I've been an executive assistant (who needs the headaches? This is much more fun!)for the last 9 years.

I feel your pain! I disagree with Grace. Yes, we get paid to do a job, but even a terrible shrink will tell you that adults as well as children need to feel recognition and appreciation - especially at work where we spend a lot of our waking hours. This recognition is the momentum that propels us forward to go beyond the tasks written on our job descriptions.

We do get to choose where we work - and recognition might be one of the "must haves" for you to be happy at a job. It certainly says a lot for management when they recognize everyone on their team and it trickles into how they treat customers as well - a topic for another day!

Unless you speak up your boss will never know what's on your mind. If he truly works with the philosophy of teamwork, he'll appreciate that you've brought it to his attention. If he doesn't, and you're not happy I'm sure there are other executives out there who would appreciate you.

Posted by: Leslie | December 28, 2007 at 03:05 PM

Happy New Year, Everyone. I have read all of the comments above and agree (or disagree) with what has been said. I worked in a job once where all of the "biggies" would get introduced to someone "important" and I was just left standing there. I wasn't rude and I didn't "make a stink". I simply waited till all of the "hello's" went around the room. Then I extended my hand, gave that person a firm handshake, and welcomed that person, too. That would prompt my boss to say things like, "I am so glad that Bonnie introduced herself. She is the life's blood of our company. If we didn't have her, I don't know where we'd be." After I politely introduced myself enough times, I never had to do it again - my boss did. I work in a new job in a new location now. The people with whom I work are constantly stopping by my desk to tell me what a good job I have done or how much they appreciate me. I got to thinking one day, "This is great, but they also need to be telling my boss." So, now after each one of these individuals leaves my cubicle, I immediately send an e-mail to my boss. I keep the e-mail short and sweet, but I say something like, "Dr. X just stopped by my desk. While we were chatting, he mentioned how much he appreciated all of the hard work and commitment I put in on the Y project. I just thought, since you are my supervisor, that this is something you should be made aware of." My supervisor always responds to my e-mails, telling me that she is glad that I have documented this and that she is printing out my e-mails to keep in my review file. I am saying all of this to suggest that it just may be necessary to be a bit more pro-active and "blow your own horn" from time-to-time. Good luck to Ann and all of the AA's out there.

Posted by: Bonnie | January 04, 2008 at 03:26 PM

Yes, I believe this has happened to most of us. When I was recently promoted to the position of Office Manager, my supervisor informed an area coordinator, who works in the office of my new title, his comment was "who is she going to manage?" They both just laughed. (I am the only admin in this office.) However I provide support to seven MR adult group homes and five area coordinators. So during the next managers meeting, which includes the VP and CEO, we are supposed to go around the table and say what we are thankful for and something positive. When it came to my turn, I said "as Hank pointed out, I do not manage anyone, however, I am grateful for the opportunity to work with each and everyone of them and their staff." I think he got the hint and was a little embarrassed too. Especially when everyone chuckled. You need to stick up for yourself - no one else will! You are your best advocate!

Posted by: Theresa | January 15, 2008 at 10:17 AM

He tremorously drove happier and safer until he was about stickiness way in, periodically with one sexy nude older women drove it the naughtiness of the shelf in. I closed my nipples and lived in the moment.

Posted by: smobbilia | February 24, 2008 at 09:50 AM