

It's my turn to run the admin meeting: How do I choose a topic?

Question: "We have a meeting with all the administrative assistants every two or three months. The office administrator usually takes the lead in deciding what subjects we are going to discuss. Now, she has given the 'privilege' to each individual admin to take charge of the meetings. I dread my turn. I'm just a humble 'secretary' from the old school and some of the admins have more education and experience. Can you give me some suggestions as to what topics to discuss? I know that there are a lot of great articles in the Administrative Professional Today newsletter, but I don't want to come out as if I'm teaching these gals." — *Lydia*

Carol July 21, 2009 at 10:58 am

Well said!

Trudy Baker CPS/CAP June 23, 2009 at 1:40 pm

I would rather see it titled "The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly." BMW isn't something that I would like to be associated with. The format can be the same, but without the unprofessional connotation.

Fran March 27, 2009 at 4:17 pm

Our AA meetings are once per quarter. I organize the meeting, give agenda items based on what is brought to my attention throughout the quarter, and the final item on the agenda is "open table discussion". We have a potluck and one of the perks – sharing recipes.

Peggy January 20, 2009 at 4:49 pm

I have found that if I keep our AA Meetings at the fourth Wednesday of every month, make it a lunch meeting (company paid for) the Admin. Assistants look forward to attending. I send out a "Request for Agenda Items" a few days before the meeting. Most of the time I have a few responses. I direct the meetings but all contribute.
Peggy

Pat December 19, 2008 at 2:06 pm

I just wish we even HAD an admin meeting! We never get together and some of us have never even met! Lucky you!

Erika December 17, 2008 at 12:06 pm

More education doesn't make them better – nothing can top life experience, in my opinion! I've learned more from the people I've worked with than I did getting a degree.

Kari Kitley May 2, 2018 at 11:59 am

Completely agree!

Mary December 15, 2008 at 11:20 am

Lydia,
Maybe choose something you realize needs to be discussed and let it be something you are comfortable in sharing. That way it would build your confidence. Also, you mentioned you don't want to come across as "teaching" them....it is all in the attitude. The way you sound, I don't think that is a problem. Some people come across like "I want to set you straight" and that is the attitude. People have an automatic "turn off" button when it comes to an attitude like that. Be enthusiastic in what you share...that is a key to presentation. If you are blah, they will be blah with response. If you are excited, they will respond in like. You'll do great! Be prepared...that is the confidence.

Samantha December 12, 2008 at 5:31 pm

Our admin team meets about once per month. On the agenda each time are the following items: Calendar Review (we discuss any upcoming vacations or conferences that our bosses will be out of the office for), Update on Current Departmental Events/Happenings, Recent Tip/Shortcut Learned, Sounding Board (where we can vent if needed, ask for advice, etc.). We sometimes invite a guest speaker from inside the organization, e.g. at our last meeting we invited an IT person to come and talk about the change from paper to electronic forms. Hope this helps!

Ilja Kraag December 12, 2008 at 4:20 pm

Why not try an old fashioned BMW session. BMW stands for Bitching, Moaning, and Whining. It is amazing how some perceived huge problems can be solved by a group. We often have the tendency to put ourselves in a box. Encourage yourself and your colleagues to get out of the box, put your problems, irritations, pet peeves on the table and see the miracle of solutions coming down. Sometimes it works just by being able to vent. Give it a try.

Sandra December 12, 2008 at 2:39 pm

I too am from the "old school". Organization and Time Management is always a good topic. There are many tips and tricks out there. Better yet have them bring a few of their own to the meeting.

Also, depending on how large your office is and if each division enters their own payroll, have the Payroll Manager give a brief review of entering payroll, discuss time away from the office, when a doctor's note may be needed, distributing of payroll checks/stubs, etc.

You could also hold a session on Microsoft Tips and Tricks...you have a number that are to be presented and have them bring some of their own tips and tricks. This also helps determines each individuals strengths and weaknesses.

Victoria Rum December 12, 2008 at 2:29 pm

Each of us have an expertise in our professional jobs; in order to grow in them we should all want to learn as much as we can, endure it all. I recommend focusing your meeting around one of those skills. Think of it as training instead of running a meeting.

Bea December 12, 2008 at 2:25 pm

At our AA meetings we ask everyone to bring a tip to share. It is amazing how one AA's tip is new to another AA. The conversation has turned to different ways of accomplishing the same item.

NCM December 12, 2008 at 2:05 pm

Several ways -

- * Use it as a training/refresh time on a computer program (IT person would have to be on board)
- * Just brown bag lunch and let people just get to know each other
- * Ask for a list of daily, weekly, monthly, yearly duties email to boss by an end time. This will help management review PD (also helps when someone leave position)
- * Ask for each to share what they are involved with currently then encourage them in some way, let them know they are appreciated
- * Give them tips on how to stay organized, personally and with work
- * Suggest that staff take 15 min. each day to clean out email, old computer files, paper files, organize desk
- * Review policies and ask if anyone doesn't know about it (again report findings to management to be aware of communication gap)
- * Winter season - remind all to please do not come to work sick and share the loveliness - no one appreciates it - that is why you have sick leave
- * Remember - it isn't about you - meeting with support staff are to help them.

Diana December 12, 2008 at 2:05 pm

You probably have areas that you excel in, so why not focus on that? Are you especially good with Excel tables, charts, or spreadsheets? How about PowerPoint, or Outlook, or mail merges? You can share anything you've learned recently. You can discuss issues that are giving people trouble. Find out what people want or need to know and research it and present your findings. If you don't feel proficient in technical areas, focus on soft skills. You might discuss the differences in doing things the "old school way" versus how things are done now. I'm sure you can come up with some pro's and con's, and probably bring humor into it. Think about what you know, would like to know, or want others to know, and go from there. Good luck, and enjoy your time in charge. You may find you like it.

Debbie December 12, 2008 at 2:02 pm

You could choose three topics and send an email solicit the group on their interest. Take the topic that received the most votes and go with it. You could ask someone in the local community speak to the group on the topic chosen. Or you could use internal staff – say officer level and above. i.e., if one of the topics is investing, check with your finance/investment division to see if someone would provide some basic investing information. Treat this opportunity as a chance to shine. The office administrator is giving everyone a chance to grow through this opportunity. And we ALL need to grow.

Dee December 12, 2008 at 2:01 pm

Lydia, you can provide an informative meeting even though you have less experience or education than other admins. Your idea to highlight a topic from Admin Pro is a good one. Find something that you are passionate about use that to drive the discussion. You can gain information as well as dispense it without anyone feeling you are holding yourself up as an expert. Some of them may even appreciate knowing about the Admin Pro Newsletter.

Linda December 12, 2008 at 1:58 pm

Like Tara, our group of 14 Executive Assistants meet once a month. Last month, the assistant facilitating the meeting had called a restaurant in the downtown area and requested that we all meet there for lunch, and they could present their banquet menu items and show us their meeting facilities. Needless to say it was a huge success. I was once asked at the last minute to facilitate a meeting; as there were no new agenda items, I presented a diversity training that also was very well received.

Patty December 12, 2008 at 1:55 pm

I love what both Tara and Bee had to say and they are so right.

You could also talk about any health and safety issues that might come up in your department or company, new software applications that are available, with associated training requirements, e-mail etiquette, telephone etiquette and the list can go on. Talk to people ahead of time and do Internet research if necessary.

I'm sure you'll do well; just be creative. Use a PowerPoint presentation if you have that capability in your meeting room.

nicole December 12, 2008 at 1:51 pm

Why don't you turn the tables right back on them with giving them projects within your meeting? Maybe suggest ways of cost savings projects, equipment, energy – lights, etc. like does the kitchen light need to be on, or stay on, see the savings you'll come up with. or office supplies, price them out, would you save more elsewhere? or downtime, what do they each do with down or slow time, make a list of projects to attack during that time?

Bee December 12, 2008 at 1:50 pm

Don't sell yourself short! Maybe you could talk about the changes you've seen the position take from old school to the current situation. More education or experience doesn't automatically mean smarter or better. You being you gives you a different perspective than anyone else in that office.

Tara December 12, 2008 at 1:47 pm

We have a monthly EA (exec assistant) lunch meeting and we all contribute to the agenda. We talk to our bosses (executives) and ask if they have anything they'd like us to discuss (issues, thoughts, comments, etc.) and we also all have 1-2 subjects that we discuss (PTO discussions, parking issues, company-wide email sending, etc.) and if an action plan needs to happen, someone gets assigned and reports back to the rest of us.

It's really bonded us as a team this year and the amount of trust that we have with each other is unlike any other admin team I've ever been on.