

Are you a project manager and don't even know it?



Administrative professionals' day-to-day responsibilities require them to take over the tasks time-consuming, yet essential, tasks that help keep the office running smoothly. More often than not, these tasks fall to administrative assistants. However these aren't the only tasks being handed off, many admins are actually taking on more intensive project management tasks.

Maybe you're a project manager and don't even know it. The differentiation may not sound important, but it can be. Approaching a complex task from a project management perspective will bring a level of clarity and organization to it that you otherwise may not have. This can greatly improve the quality of your work, while also reducing stress levels by ensuring you're able to keep track of all the complex moving parts of a project.

Let's differentiate between an administrative assistant and a project manager's roles and core competencies, so you can determine where you best fit and how to handle each assignment.

What is an administrative assistant?

Administrative assistants typically manage the time-consuming day-to-day tasks of those in higher-up positions within the company. Because administrative assistants take these tasks off their to-do lists, these higher-up employees can focus on their job's specialized duties.

What is a project manager?

Project managers maintain a leadership role on their team by ensuring everyone is up to date on what's needed to complete important projects within the company. As their name implies, project managers hold lead positions related to critical projects and see it through from conception to completion.

Project manager tasks

You can expect a project manager to complete tasks related to the conception, coordination, implementation, execution, and completion of projects within the organization. Their duties require that they focus on completing the task and the strategy behind it. They must consider how it's helping to reach the organization's overall goal.

Project manager core competencies

Here are the core skills expected of a project manager

- Planning and organizing
- Decision-making
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Communication
- Leadership
- Delegation
- Collaboration
- Negotiation
- Conflict resolution

Project manager duty checklist

Here are the common duties and responsibilities for a project manager

- Lead the planning of the project
- Lead the implementation of the project tasks
- Determine the project scope, goals, and deliverables
- Set specific project tasks
- Determine resources required to complete the project
- Develop high-level project plans
- Coordinate staff to complete the project
- Manage the project budget
- Manage resource allocation
- Develop and monitor a timeline for the project
- Track project deliverables
- Support and lead staff working on the project
- Monitor quality of project deliverables
- Provide project reports to stakeholders
- Manage project changes as needed
- Evaluate and assess the results of the project upon completion

Administrative assistant tasks

The duties of an administrative assistant can vary widely depending on the needs of the company. Here are some duties and responsibilities you might complete as an administrative assistant.

Administrative assistant core competencies

Here are key skills required of an administrative assistant

- Administrative writing
- Supply management
- Inventory control
- Verbal communication
- Typing
- Attention to detail
- Telephone skills
- Teamwork
- Patience
- Inventory control
- Ability to multitask
- Analysis
- Problem-solving

Administrative assistant duty checklist

Here are the common duties and responsibilities for an administrative assistant

- Organize and schedule meetings and appointments
- Produce and distribute memos, letters, faxes, and forms
- Answer and direct phone calls
- Develop and maintain a consistent filing system
- Inventory and order office supplies as needed
- Organize travel arrangements, including hotels, flights, conference rooms, taxis, etc.
- Maintain and update contact lists
- Take minutes during meetings
- Create presentations
- Complete necessary filing, typing, scanning, copying, writing tasks
- Submit expense reports
- Manage incoming and outgoing invoices
- Support new administrative staff as they transition into their role
- Ensure equipment is maintained correctly by scheduling repairs and completing preventative maintenance
- Maintain and expand professional knowledge as needed by attending workshops and trainings or participating in professional organizations for administrative assistants
- Coordinate a system for office procedures to improve efficiency
- Receive, sort, and distribute mail and packages
- Supervise the work of junior administrative assistants
- Greet and direct in-person visitors to the office

Where does your project fall?

While things may seem more clear-cut on a list, when it comes to real-life it's a bit more difficult. After all, work tasks don't always neatly fall into one category.

For example, you may be tasked with overseeing a portion of the annual budget update process. On one hand, this could involve following strict directions and an outlined process. On the other hand, it could be more open-ended. If you're required to come up with a process for getting new budget proposals from each department,

tracking the process, creating a timeline, and ensuring you have all the necessary documentation in on time — then you're doing much more than just simple administrative work.

In this case, you may want to take a more project management-oriented approach to the task. Consider outlining a project plan, highlighting key dates, and using a project tracking tool. It might just save you time, energy, and a little frustration down the road.

Additional resources:

- [How to apply Agile project management principles to your work.](#)
- [How to use Waterfall project management to improve your efficiency.](#)