

HOW TO BE

I^{ndispensable} TO YOUR BOSS

The art of being an effective assistant

By Patty Martino Alspaugh

Behind every good boss is a good assistant. Here are 12 tips that will make you indispensable to your boss.

1. Have pen and paper whenever you are with your boss. This reassures her that you'll follow instructions to the letter.

2. Organize yourself so you know immediately where to look when your manager needs something.

3. Don't clutter her day with small details like faxing and handling telemarketers. Take care of these details yourself.

4. Read trade journals and highlight pertinent articles. You'll expand your own knowledge while helping your boss.

5. Write phone messages thoroughly, accurately and clearly. Give them to your boss in a timely manner.

6. Record names and numbers your manager gives you for future reference. Inevitably, she will need them again. If the name is a vendor you are unfamiliar with, try filing the name generically (travel agency under "T") as well as by the company name.

7. Keep one appointment book for all your manager's appointments, including personal ones.

8. Keep a tickle file. This is especially good for filing letters you or your

boss want to respond to at a future date.

9. Know the names of your boss's clients, prospective clients and vendors. Know their businesses as well as the names of their assistants. Make sure receptionists and temps know their names.

10. Know what your supervisor is working on so you can assist clients when she is unavailable.

11. Let her know what's going on with employees. Most employees are too intimidated to go directly to the *big boss*. If you know your boss can do something about a complaint, or if she should know something exemplary that an employee has done, mention it.

12. Double-check your work. Many managers are too busy to spend the time needed to edit and proofread. Double-check names and addresses on letters. Don't bother your boss about grammatical errors, just fix them.

Remember that an assistant's accountabilities may vary. The smaller the firm, the more likely you are to have multiple duties. And some managers want you to take on more responsibility than others. Be sure to ask what your boss expects of you.

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