

# Personality Dimensions and the ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONAL

## A Flexible Tool for an Essential Field

— by Lisa Trudel

If you are a career counsellor working with unemployed or employed clients, it is possible that you are assisting people who are looking for work as administrative professionals or who want to improve skills in order to shift into the administrative field.

### Invisible Glue

Did you know that administration is one of the largest occupational sectors in Ontario? According to Employment Ontario's most recent statistics outlined in Occupational Employment by Industry compiled in 2006, the occupational group of "business, finance and administration" is listed as one of the largest career areas. Twelve percent of those in this occupation work in the manufacturing industry, 21% in the service industry, 9% in the construction industry and 6% in primary industry.

During my 10+ years as a Career Counsellor and Workshop Facilitator with the Office Workers Career Centre in Toronto, I assisted hundreds of unemployed administrative professionals with career planning and interview preparation that led directly to employment. This success would not have been possible without the group workshop assessment tool Personality Dimensions (PD). We used PD during a two-week career self-discovery program that ran from 2003 to 2010.

One of the peculiarities of administrative work is that it falls into almost every employment area under various job titles. For example, you can find Administrative Assistants, Receptionists, Project Coordinators and Medical Office Assistants working in offices ranging from law, finance, and insurance, to public service and education, to healthcare and the film/entertainment industry.

Like invisible glue, office workers are essential yet often undervalued. They are everywhere and Canada's economy would not prosper without them.

### Gold... and Orange, Green and Blue

By using PD we were able to determine that the primary colour for the most successful administrative and business management professional is "Organized Gold". This is not a big surprise since the major skills of an Organized Gold are planning, handling details, coordinating and patiently cooperating, which are also some of the top skills needed in administrative jobs.

Yet many of our clients had primary colours of "Resourceful Orange", "Inquiring Green" and "Authentic Blue". They were a plaid colour scheme as the PD philosophy highlights, but many were very top-heavy with Organized Gold.

Along with confirming strengths and weaknesses, which is necessary knowledge for any job interview, PD also helps in defining an appropriate job target. Many of our clients were simply knocking on the wrong company door and once learning about the four colours and their primary one, they were able to successfully redirect their job search.

For example, one of our clients was an Executive Assistant with a plaid colour scheme of Orange, Gold, Blue and Green. She was full of boundless extroverted energy but after eight years in the corporate office of a major retail company, her self-esteem was diminished due in part to adhering to rules, regulations and initiative restrictions. Using the knowledge from PD, together we reshaped her job direction. After a few months of volunteer work in the local film/entertainment

industry—needed to build new experience and credibility—she was able to find administrative work with a television station where she uses her "Resourceful Orange" skills of creativity, ingenuity and leadership.

PD re-confirmed her natural skills, provided her with a starting point for her 30-second networking commercial, helped her recognize communication preferences and, most of all, gave her the self-worth to revise her job target without returning to school or changing her career. PD was a significant part of her interview preparation and job search.

If you are encouraging your clients to accept responsibility for employment success, then consider adding PD to your job search program. Just remember that it is not the assessment results that are important; it is what a person does with them that brings success.

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