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Who is really in charge in your workplace? While your boss will take the hardest hit when something goes terribly wrong, if you are a successful administrative assistant, you know your leadership skills are invaluable. Stay organized, say seasoned administrative assistants. Delegate, control your technology and be humble because your most important task is making everyone else look good. You, in turn, will look awesome, and your long, successful career will be your reward.

Trusted administrative assistants usually have their hands full, and rarely have the project management training to support their efforts. The secret to managing multiple responsibilities is twofold: stay organized, of course, and do not try to complete every task on your own. When you catch yourself trying to cram ten hours of work into an eight hour day, it's time to think about who might be available to help you out. A co-worker who seems to chat on her phone all day might be looking for more challenge. Other departments might be better suited than your own to run a report or handle analysis of a spreadsheet.

When your boss delegates something to you, it means she wants the thing done. It doesn't necessarily mean you are the only person who can do it. Clarify your plans with your boss. Do not overpromise, and do stay accountable for your projects; if the person you turn to does not come through, then it becomes your fault and your problem. So stay in touch, and be prepared to return the favor when asked. While it might seem easier to do everything on your own, occasionally sharing tasks can keep the corporate wheels moving in the right direction.

If you have ever argued with your boss over, say, a missing file or a calendar lapse, you know that staying organized is priority number one. And the best way to do that? Control your technology. You can recycle all those post-it notes above your desk if you start using your programs the way they were designed.
Take the time to learn every available shortcut. Did you know that in an Outlook calendar, you can type the word "today" in the date box, and today's date will populate the box? Type "tomorrow" and you get, yes, tomorrow's date. Reminders are good if you respond to them. Task lists are great when you use them consistently. Perfect your knowledge of the electronic search process so you can find the file someone else saved to the wrong folder.

Finally, when you find that lost folder, be humble. Even if you know it all and could run the place single handedly, remember that you don't. Your boss is human and has bosses and customers leaning on him or her, too.

Please send your career planning questions to Julie@insightnews.com