

# Office and Administrative Support Worker Supervisors and Managers

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## Significant Points

- Most jobs are filled by promoting office or administrative support workers from within the organization.
- Office automation will cause employment in some office and administrative support occupations to grow slowly or even decline, resulting in slower-than-average growth among supervisors and managers.
- Like those seeking other supervisory and managerial occupations, applicants are likely to encounter keen competition because their number should greatly exceed the number of job openings.

## Nature of the Work

All organizations need timely and effective office and administrative support to operate efficiently. Office and administrative support supervisors and managers coordinate this support. These workers are employed in virtually every sector of the economy, working in positions as varied as teller supervisor, customer services manager, or shipping-and-receiving supervisor.

Although specific functions of office and administrative support supervisors and managers vary considerably, they share many common duties. For example, supervisors perform administrative tasks to ensure that their staffs can work efficiently. Equipment and machinery used in their departments must be in good working order. If the computer system goes down or a facsimile machine malfunctions, the supervisors must try to correct the problem or alert repair personnel. They also request new equipment or supplies for their department when necessary.

Planning the work and supervising the staff are key functions of this job. To do these effectively, the supervisor must know the strengths and weaknesses of each member of the staff, as well as the results required from and time allotted to each job. Supervisors must make allowances for unexpected staff absences and other disruptions by adjusting assignments or performing the work themselves if the situation requires it.

After allocating work assignments and issuing deadlines, office and administrative support supervisors and managers oversee the work to ensure that it is proceeding on schedule and meeting established quality standards. This may involve reviewing each person's work on a computer—as in the case of accounting clerks—or listening to how a worker deals with customers—as in the case of customer services representatives. When supervising long-term projects, the supervisor may meet regularly with staff members to discuss their progress.

Office and administrative support supervisors and managers also evaluate each worker's performance. If a worker has done a good job, the supervisor records it in the employee's personnel file and may recommend a promotion or other award. Alternatively, if a worker is performing poorly, the supervisor discusses the problem with the employee to determine the cause and helps the worker to improve his or her performance. This might require sending the employee to a training course or arranging personal counseling. If the situation does not improve, the supervisor may recommend a transfer, demotion, or dismissal.

Office and administrative support supervisors and managers usually interview and evaluate prospective clerical employees. When new workers arrive on the job, the supervisor greets them and provides orientation to acquaint them with the organization and its operating routines. Some supervisors may be actively involved in recruiting new workers—for example, by making presentations at high schools and business colleges. They also may serve as the primary liaisons between their offices and the general public through direct contact and by preparing promotional information.

Supervisors help train new employees in organization and office procedures. They may teach new employees how to use the telephone system and operate office equipment. Because much clerical work is computerized, they also must teach new employees to use the organization's computer system. When new office equipment or updated computer software is introduced, supervisors train experienced employees to use it efficiently. If this is not possible, they may arrange for special outside training for their employees.

Office and administrative support supervisors and managers often act as liaisons between the clerical staff and the professional, technical, and managerial staff. This may involve implementing new company policies or restructuring the workflow in their departments. They must also keep their superiors informed of their progress and any potential problems. Often, this communication takes the form of research projects and progress reports. Because supervisors and managers have access to information such as their department's performance records, they may compile and present these data for use in planning or designing new policies.

Office and administrative support supervisors and managers also may have to resolve interpersonal conflicts among the staff. In organizations covered by union contracts, supervisors must know the provisions of labor-management agreements and run their departments accordingly. They may meet with union representatives to discuss work problems or grievances.

## Working Conditions

Office and administrative support supervisors and managers are employed in a wide variety of work settings, but most work in clean, well-lit, offices that usually are comfortable.

Most work a standard 40-hour week. Because some organizations operate around the clock, office and administrative support supervisors and managers may have to work nights, weekends, and holidays. Sometimes, supervisors rotate among the 8-hour three



*Administrative support worker supervisors and managers plan work and supervise staff to ensure that the work remains on schedule.*

shifts in a workday; in other cases, shifts are assigned on the basis of seniority.

### Employment

Office and administrative support supervisors and managers held 1.5 million jobs in 2002. Although jobs for office and administrative support supervisors and managers are found in practically every industry, the largest number are found in organizations with a large administrative support workforce, such as banks, wholesalers, government agencies, retail establishments, business service firms, healthcare facilities, schools, and insurance companies. Because of most organizations' need for continuity of supervision, few office and administrative support supervisors and managers work on a temporary or part-time basis.

### Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Most firms fill office and administrative support supervisory and managerial positions by promoting office or administrative support workers from within their organizations. To become eligible for promotion to a supervisory position, clerical or administrative support workers must prove they are capable of handling additional responsibilities. When evaluating candidates, superiors look for strong teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, and communication skills, as well as determination, loyalty, poise, and confidence. They also look for more specific supervisory attributes, such as the ability to organize and coordinate work efficiently, to set priorities, and to motivate others. Increasingly, supervisors need a broad base of office skills coupled with personal flexibility to adapt to changes in organizational structure and move among departments when necessary.

In addition, supervisors must pay close attention to detail in order to identify and correct errors made by the staff they oversee. Good working knowledge of the organization's computer system also is an advantage. Many employers require postsecondary training—in some cases, an associate or even a bachelor's degree.

A clerk with potential supervisory abilities may be given occasional supervisory assignments. To prepare for full-time supervisory duties, he or she may attend in-house training or take courses in time management or interpersonal relations.

Some office and administrative support supervisor positions are filled with people from outside the organization. These positions may serve as entry-level training for potential higher level managers. New college graduates may rotate through departments of an organization at this level to learn the work of the organization.

### Job Outlook

Like those seeking other supervisory and managerial occupations, applicants for jobs as office and administrative support worker supervisors and managers are likely to encounter keen competition because the number of applicants should greatly exceed the number of job openings. Employment is expected to grow more slowly than the average for all occupations through 2012. In addition to the job openings arising from growth, a larger number of openings will stem from the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations or leave this large occupation for other reasons.

Employment of office and administrative support supervisors and managers is determined largely by the demand for administrative support workers. Continuing office automation due to new technology should increase office and administrative support workers' productivity and allow a wider variety of tasks to be performed by more people in professional positions. These trends will cause employment in some clerical occupations to grow slowly or even decline. Supervisors will direct smaller permanent staffs—

supplemented by increased use of temporary clerical staff—and perform more professional tasks. Office and administrative support managers will coordinate the increasing amount of administrative work and make sure that the technology is applied and running properly. However, organizational restructuring should continue to reduce employment in some managerial positions, distributing more responsibility to office and administrative support supervisors.

### Earnings

Median annual earnings of office and administrative support supervisors and managers were \$38,820 in 2002; the middle 50 percent earned between \$29,960 and \$50,660. The lowest paid 10 percent earned less than \$23,630, while the highest paid 10 percent earned more than \$65,180. In 2002, median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of office and administrative support supervisors and managers were:

Insurance carriers .....	\$48,720
Management of companies and enterprises .....	45,090
Local government .....	40,500
Offices of physicians .....	37,510
Depository credit intermediation .....	35,500

In addition to typical benefits, some office and administrative support supervisors and managers, particularly in the private sector, may receive additional compensation in the form of bonuses and stock options.

### Related Occupations

Office and administrative support supervisors and managers must understand and sometimes perform the work of those whom they oversee, including bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks; cashiers; communications equipment operators; customer service representatives; data entry and information processing workers; general office clerks; receptionists and information clerks; stock clerks and order fillers; order clerks; and tellers. Their supervisory and administrative duties are similar to those of other supervisors and managers.

### Sources of Additional Information

For a wide variety of information related to management occupations, including educational programs and certified designations, contact:

- ▶ American Management Association, 1601 Broadway, New York, NY 10019-7420. Internet: <http://www.amanet.org>
- ▶ National Management Association, 2210 Arbor Blvd., Dayton, OH 45439. Internet: <http://www.nma1.org>
- ▶ International Association of Administrative Professionals, 10502 NW Ambassador Dr., P.O. Box 20404, Kansas City, MO 64195-0404. Internet: <http://www.iaap-hq.org>