

20 Characteristics of the Administrator

The administrator is a born leader. He or she will emerge into leadership just as surely as Joseph, our biblical example, did.

We could have used other words for this gift: facilitator, organizer, ruler, leader, or superintendent.

1. Is highly motivated to organize that for which he or she is responsible.

Administrators love a challenge. They also love to "dig in" and develop or organize anything they're in charge of. The natural motivation is there - a creative desire to take "raw materials" and people and produce something that has never been. Examples of this are organizing an office, setting up a committee or developing a project.

An organizer-leader is by job requirement a "jack of all trades but master of none". He or she must have a wide range of interests and abilities, but those who carry out specific tasks **will** be more capable and specialized. In order to supervise effectively, he or she needs to know a little bit about a lot of things. I often praised the Lord for those with expertise in their fields. *Together* they can make a great team.

2. Expresses ideas and organization in ways that communicate clearly.

Administrators are excellent communicators. They look for ways to express what they want to say clearly and effectively. Believing that a picture is truly worth a thousand words, they like to use charts, diagrams, outlines, graphs and other visual aids.

3. Respects and handles authority well.

Administrators understand, honor and respect authority structures. They feel comfortable with them, whether they are at the top or somewhere within the system.

The centurion who came to Jesus to ask Him to heal his servant probably had the motivational gift of administration. When Jesus offered to go to the sick man's bedside the centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go, and he goes; and that one, Come, and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this; and he does it'" (Matthew 8:8-9, NIV).

Jesus commended the centurion's confidence in His authority, and the servant was

healed.

Administrators want to know how much authority they have and what authority they do not have, for they respect those limits. They like to have exact parameters defined, so they will not inadvertently step outside of them, and they like the freedom, within those parameters, to "be their own boss. They are creative and productive given this situation, stifled and inhibited without it.

4. Will not assume leadership unless it's delegated by those in authority.

Because of his or her keen respect for authority, the administrator will never deliberately usurp it. Therefore, in any situation where authority exists the administrator will not try to move in to utilize his or her skills-no matter how needed-unless those in authority ask him or her to do so.

There are lots of administrators who are not utilizing their abilities because of this characteristic. We encourage those in leadership positions to search out these facilitators and delegate areas of responsibility to them.

5. Will assume leadership where no specific leadership exists.

In situations where there is no existing leadership or authority structure, it is the administrators who will most naturally step in and take charge. Divide a large group into subgroups and give each a task to do, and it will be those with the motivational gift of administration who emerge as the spontaneous leaders of the individual units. True, they would prefer to be appointed ahead of time to take the lead, but when a group is floundering with no designated leadership, they will take the reins.

6. Especially enjoys working on long-range goals and projects.

While the server enjoys short-term goals, two days or two weeks, the administrator thrives on two-year projects. In fact, one administrator said confidently, "I really prefer a project that can take several years. I like something I can throw myself into, make long-range plans and establish shorter-range goals along the way".

When you ask a person with the gift of compassion to set a goal he or she says, "Whatever for?" He or she lives one day at a time-or more precisely, one moment at a time. It's the administrators who attend time-management seminars. They want to increase their skills in handling projects of significant size.

7. Is a visionary person with a broad perspective.

Proverbs 29:18 tells us, "Where there is no vision ... the people perish". Vision is needed to keep people in focus, whether in business or faith. A good leader is a

person of vision, and in upholding that vision for others to see he or she can inspire great accomplishment.

That vision can be anything from a revelation of God as to His particular purposes for a particular group to the simple ability to visualize how people can work together to accomplish a common goal.

8. Easily facilitates resources and people to accomplish tasks or goals.

Like one who loves to put pieces of a puzzle together, the administrator loves to fit people and resources together to facilitate a task.

Paul is a systems analyst for the Boeing Company. "I have to be an organizer, educator and motivator of various people if I am to accomplish the goals I've been assigned". Paul explains. "I enjoy using organizational ability, logic and persuasion as my basic tools for working with people to get the job done".

9. Enjoys delegating tasks and supervising people.

Administrators love to tell people what to do. We mean that in a positive sense. They easily see what jobs need to be done and they seem to know who can do them well. They enjoy distributing work in such a way that it will bring about maximum satisfaction and accomplishment. Marvin was asked to take over the leadership of a large Christian organization that was bogged down with ineffective workers.

Marvin's motivational gift of administration enabled him to trim the staff and place capable people in key positions. Then he delegated lots of responsibility, taught leadership principles to key staffers and trained them to supervise effectively. The organization was turned around from financial failure to an effective ministry.

10. Will endure criticism in order to accomplish the ultimate task.

Leaders get criticized! It seems to be part of the "occupational hazard" of administration. There are always those who feel the leader should do things differently, or slower, or faster, or more carefully, or more daringly or whatever. Administrators will not allow such criticism to sidetrack or stop them. They keep their eyes on the goal.

11. Has great zeal and enthusiasm for whatever he or she is involved in.

Enthusiasm emanates naturally from the administrator. The Amplified Bible says that administrators are to do their job with "zeal and singleness of mind." The Greek word is *spoude*, which in the King James is translated "diligence" and by Wuest as "intense eagerness and effort." From Strong's Concordance we learn

that the word also encompasses the ideas of speed, dispatch, earnestness, haste, intense effort and determination. It is as if God has given the administrator the ability to throw all of his or her efforts into a situation in order to see it to a conclusion.

12. Finds greatest fulfillment and joy in working to accomplish goals.

Servers work toward immediate goals, experiencing joy as each one is accomplished. For administrators with their longer-range projects, the point of joy is often "way down the road".

13. Is willing to let others get the credit in order to get a job done.

The mature administrator does not worry about getting credit for accomplishments. Like anyone else, he or she enjoys a pat on the back, but would rather share that credit with the whole group. He or she sees success as a collective achievement. It is not false modesty when administrators refuse accolades, insisting, "None of this could have happened if it had not been for the excellent work of my associates". They really mean it. They see themselves as facilitators, and the others as the real accomplishees.

14. Prefers to move on to a new challenge once something is completed.

Once administrators complete a goal, they're ready to move on. Some assume that once an organizer gets a business or a church group functioning, he or she would enjoy staying at the helm and continuing to coordinate. Not so. Once the system is running smoothly, he or she would rather turn it over to someone else and move on to new challenges.

15. Constantly writes notes to self.

This characteristic applies to all with the gift of administration without exception. They daily write reminder notes to themselves and make lists of things to do, calls to make and goals to accomplish. Administrators tend to have so many things on their mind that if they don't write something down when they think of it, they're apt to forget.

16. Is a natural and capable leader.

Is a bee drawn to honey? Does a cow come back to the barn? Just so an administrator is bound to lead - at least part of the time.

One of the things we have learned about administrators is that they do not do well in any kind of dual leadership. They have strong convictions about the way they lead. Each one has his or her own style and two leaders will clash. They far

prefer to be given specific areas in which they are in sole charge than to be placed in what they view as the no-man's land of tandem leadership. As one man put it, "I'd much rather follow than try to share leadership on an equal basis with another administrator."

17. Knows when old methods are working and when to introduce new ones.

In any group or organization where a method of operation has been established, people feel at ease with it. But when an administrator is placed in leadership, he or she may see that changes are necessary. Yet it is not easy to move people out of their "comfort zone". The adjustment calls for great wisdom, and administrators have it.

18. Enjoys working with and being around people.

Administrators are *people* people. They share this characteristic with the exhorters, except that the motivation in their case is not to encourage but to get to know, to learn from and to interact with. Administrators are great observers of human behavior and are constantly learning how to work with people more effectively.

19. Wants to see things completed as quickly and effectively as possible.

Administrators want to get the job done-fast! They do not like delays, red tape or people dragging their feet.

One administrator mother said, "I get very upset and frustrated when I can't finish a simple project around the home quickly. The greatest obstacle is not knowing where things are. With a family as large as mine [she has six children] it's amazing what disappears or doesn't get back to its rightful place."

Jenni, who has taken on the directorship of a girls' drill team, shared how frustrating it is when the youngsters do not pay attention or apply themselves. "They have the potential to be champions but that takes work. Often, they simply play at learning the formations. It's delayed our progress; I wish they wouldn't waste time."

20. Does not enjoy doing repetitive or routine tasks.

"Boring!" That sums up the administrator's opinion of repetitive work. No challenge. No interest.

We estimate that an administrator would last no more than one day on an assembly line job. Servers on the other hand might enjoy the security of a work routine where they knew exactly what was expected of them.

5 Problems of the Administrator

When people with the gift of administration carry their positive characteristics to an extreme, they can *become* problem areas. God has equipped administrators with enablings and giftedness to accomplish tasks and achieve goals. Yet if they don't slow down enough to "smell the roses" their gift scrunches life's priorities into configurations that were never meant to be.

1. Becomes upset when others do not share the same vision or goals.

When the administrator finds their co-workers have stunted vision that hampers the accomplishment of goals, it is to them as a millstone around their necks. One administrator, Ed, worked for an organization that was structured so that all seven people who headed up departments also served as the governing board. Their policy was not to move ahead on any project unless *all* were in agreement. It seemed an ideal way to govern, but in practice there were frustrations when the negative vote of one person became the determining factor.

There were several on the board who were quite conservative and automatically suspicious of any new ideas. Each time I'd present a proposal to increase the organization's effectiveness one of them was sure to dig in their heels and we'd hear, "Well, we've never tried it before, or, "We'd better put that on the shelf for now". "I would get so upset". Ed admitted. "Their lack of vision was absolutely frustrating. I finally blew up. I'm not proud of it but I told them we'd never make any progress if they continued to let the person with the least vision determine the level of our work. "The Lord dealt with me about my attitude, but He also showed me that that particular authority structure was not for me. I was able to move on to another job where I didn't feel so many restraints".

2. Can develop outer callousness due to being a target for criticism.

If it is true, as psychologists tell us, that for every negative word spoken against us we need four positive words to neutralize the negative effects, then it's dear why many administrators build up a callousness to protect themselves from the barrage of criticism their position invites.

3. Can regress into using people to accomplish own goals.

Administrators are so goal-oriented that they can forget people are not pawns to be moved about as in a game of chess. It's not that they mean to do this; it just happens. They can push a good quality to an extreme until they become inconsiderate of, or even hurtful to others.

4. Tends to drive self and neglect personal and family needs.

Priorities! That's what administrators need to keep in mind. As one told us, "I give myself one hundred percent to whatever I do." But this potentially admirable quality can also wreak havoc in other areas of life. Administrators can get overextended, be too committed to a task, or take on too much for either their own good or their family's well-being. Their zeal for their work or ministry can leave those they love the most feeling neglected. Some excellent advice is given in the beautiful description in Proverbs 31, "She considers a [new] field before she buys or accepts it [expanding prudently and not courting neglect of her present duties by assuming other duties]" (verse 16). Whenever administrators are considering new fields of endeavor, they need to take stock of their present obligations and take on new responsibilities only if they can do so without neglecting spouse, children, job or church commitments-and still have time for devotions, exercise and recreation.

5. Neglects routine home responsibilities due to intense interest in job.

I was tremendously relieved to learn that administrators do not have to love housework! I used to feel so guilty about it. I do get it done-eventually. But I'll have to admit that our house looks lived in. I procrastinate. I don't love dusting. I do it and the next day the dust just resettles on everything. I make the bed and then, of all things, we sleep in it, and I have to make it again the next day. There's no end to routine.

Housework must be done. But I have a cordless phone, so I can be loading the dishwasher while I talk on the phone. I listen to tapes while I do floors. I watch my favorite TV program while I fold laundry and iron. I've learned to make housework endurable.

For *all* of us administrators, we need to remember that our love for our job, our volunteer projects, our church work or whatever we're involved in must not make us neglect life's necessary responsibilities.