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Professional secretaries are making their mark

IN the 21st century, the professional secretary is playing an increasingly vital role in any office.

Today the job requires skills in management functions and technology including project management, computer software applications, organisation and scheduling, internet and intranet, preparation of documentation, storage and retrieval, customer service and public relations.

Many of the companies in this area are high tech 'blue chip' companies – leaders in commerce, business and industry.

As employers they expect their administrative staff to be skilled in emerging technology, to act autonomously, make decisions independently and manage their own work and schedules. As a result these professionals have less direct interface with their managers and more with clients and internal departments.

Executory: This is the name that leading secretarial recruitment consultancy, Office Angels coined four years ago in acknowledgement of the increased responsibilities of senior secretaries and PAs.

According to research carried out by

The role and responsibilities of the secretary is constantly evolving.

In advance of Professional Secretaries Week,

Richard Hill finds out why there's much more to being a secretary than taking a letter.

Office Angels, over half of UK bosses (56 per cent) believe they are now working a third more effectively thanks to the organisational strategies of their senior secretaries. The feedback from over 1,000 UK employers reinforces the awareness that 'executaries' hold a pivotal role in today's organisations. One in five (20 per cent) executaries are responsible for making middle management company decisions.

Sarah Anderson., manager of Office Angels in Slough, believes that secretaries at this higher level need broader skills, beyond the traditional scope of the secretary.

"I think the role attracts many more people who have good business acumen and who are much sharper and able to make decisions," said Sarah. "We're talking about people who are familiar with the 'dot com' world, the

internet and are very commercially aware."

With such increased responsibility, trust is implicit, which is reflected in the fact that almost one in three employers (30 per cent) are confident trusting their 'executory' with high-level company decisions.

"There are a lot of secretaries out there who are getting involved in, for example, project management," said Sarah. "By the very nature of that they're going to be able to make their mark on the company."

With responsibility and trust comes dependability, considered by many employers a key component in a successful working relationship.

Office Angels' research shows that 75 per cent of employers are totally confident leaving their 'executory' to hold the fort and make day to day decisions while they're out of the office.

Further information:

Professional Secretaries Week is from April 23-28 and is organised by the Institute of Qualified Private Secretaries (IQPS) www.iqps.org



■ AT THE TOP: Sarah Anderson, Manager of Office