



# Administrative Services

*The administrative services industry encompasses a diverse set of occupations that support organisations across all WA industries to do business efficiently and effectively.*

## Industry Developments and Workforce Issues

**Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI).** The trend towards a mixed cloud environment,<sup>1</sup> system integration and automation of routine tasks continues as companies look to improve cloud-based visitor management, streamline cross-operational processes, boost efficiency and cut costs.<sup>2</sup> Use of central data management systems, application of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software for common business process management, automated AI customer relationship management platforms and growing reliance on social media channels to maximise client engagement and connectivity are reshaping occupations across the administrative services industry, requiring an increasingly hybrid skill set across occupations.<sup>3</sup> A recent global report on human capital trends anticipates a rapid increase in use of AI, cognitive technologies, robotic process automation and robotics, pointing to tomorrow's jobs being more digital, more multidisciplinary and more data/information driven.<sup>4</sup> While well-resourced companies will have greater scope for implementation, smaller players will not have the same capacity. They will need to find affordable, relevant solutions to streamline processes, maximise their capability and gain business efficiencies. To this end, adoption of technology will be unevenly distributed across various industries and organisations.

**HR Cloud.** Cloud-based Human Capital Management (HCM) computing and advances in technology have made HR systems more engaging, personalised and data-driven, supporting the integration and automation of core HR functions such as candidate attraction, recruitment and selection. Over time, transforming companies will need to implement new platforms, automation and AI tools for HR professionals to have the capability to support large workforce and organisational changes and improve workforce experience; drive a stronger connection between performance, learning, development and rewards; and provide greater analytical insights across the organisation. As jobs, work design, open talent economy and leadership are restructured and teams, networks and new approaches to rewards drive business performance, HR will need to adapt and be responsive to these changing needs.<sup>5</sup>

**Transforming Workplaces.** Technology, mobile devices, cloud computing and software are increasing worker mobility, allowing workers greater flexibility on when, where and how they do their work. Growing freelance, gig and remote working arrangements will help offices stay lean, and see companies introducing Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) and Internet of Things (IoT) schedulers,<sup>6</sup> adopting Computer Aided Facility Management (CAFM) software and developing Bring-your-Own-Device (BOYD) policies. Together with applications of office management software and activity-assigned workspaces, these are starting to transform office management in large organisations, increasingly requiring skills elasticity to navigate a changing landscape.<sup>7</sup>

**Talent Acquisition.** Evolving work demands and skill requirements are creating a new capability frontier beyond a combination of technical and soft skills within a given role. Deloitte point to an emerging

<sup>1</sup> Forbes, [Modern Digital Workplace: 5 Current Trends Making Waves In The Office](#), 26 September 2018.

<sup>2</sup> The Receptionist, [7 Trends in Modern Office Management](#)

<sup>3</sup> Robert Half, [7 must-have administrative skills you need to up your game](#), 4 May 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Deloitte Insights, 2019 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends, [Leading the social enterprise: Reinvent with human focus](#).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Forbes, [Modern Digital Workplace: 5 Current Trends Making Waves In The Office](#), 26 September 2018.

<sup>7</sup> The Receptionist, [7 Trends in Modern Office Management](#)



formation of *superjobs* which combine responsibilities from multiple traditional jobs and use technology to expand scope of work performed to encompass a number of work domains. These *superjobs* rely on increasingly complex technical and human skills, shifting the way companies are approaching talent acquisition.<sup>8</sup> Capability requirements are becoming so diverse that companies are finding it difficult to hire people with the relevant experience as well as the broad adjunct skills and capabilities being sought. This is particularly the case for large competing businesses integrating technological advancement across their supply chain and diversifying portfolio activity. HR professionals need to better understand evolving business and operational needs for improved recruitment and team building outcomes. This will see companies needing to look for people in alternative workforces and apply more flexible hiring practices towards those who have an aptitude and desire to learn in order to add value as the needs of the organisation change. It will be paramount that AI-powered recruitment does not disadvantage non-traditional applicants and that human skills, resources and methodologies are applied to de-bias AI and meet non-standard operating requirements.<sup>9</sup>

**Modern Learning.** A greater focus is also expected on mobilising and developing people internally for enterprise-wide moves between functions, jobs and projects. Companies are increasingly directing efforts into innovative work-centred learning programs through a range of flexible platforms for targeted skill set acquisition and shifting to build a culture that supports lifelong learning in a modern world. Seen as a shared responsibility, effort is being concentrated on motivating people at all levels to *take advantage of learning opportunities and a focus on helping individuals identify and develop new needed skills*.<sup>10</sup> Modern learning is becoming more personal and more integrated with work, consumed in smaller doses and more accessible formats. Technology such as cloud connected mobile and wearable devices, video, voice activation and augmented reality are enabling new approaches to real-time and virtual learning, giving people choice of how and when they learn. These tangible methods are shifting the way people view acquisition of learning and personal development. As they consume information and develop skills in the natural course of their work (both as individuals and in teams) barriers start to shift and they become more receptive to further learning and more able to transform their skills and capabilities to meet changing organisational needs, critical in a changing landscape. This is particularly important for SMEs who are increasingly relying on hybrid skill sets to support business growth and transformation. While internal capacity for these methodologies are limited for small organisation, it is important they provide flexible, bite-sized learning opportunities for staff to develop new skills to integrate into their day-to-day work. Micro-credentialing, using short pieces of training delivery, provide skill-set acquisition to address skill-gaps.<sup>11</sup> SMEs will need to look at blending innovative learning solutions such as podcasts and TED-talks with these targeted skilling modules to support changing work environments. In order for businesses to support up-skilling and cross-skilling of current staff, relevant micro-credentialing needs to be both flexible, affordable and timely.

**Soft Skills Balance.** A 2019 global survey of CEOs identify a skills shortage amongst their workers as the third largest threat to their growth.<sup>12</sup> Human skills such as creativity, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, empathy and imagination are critical in balancing technology with person-to-person connection. People need to be able to adapt to a fast-changing work environment, be proactive in finding solutions, resilient to ambiguity and uncertainty. A rising leadership shift in hierarchy towards adopting a team model of engaging with each other is changing the traditional leadership culture and developing many leaders.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Deloitte Insights, 2019 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends, [Leading the social enterprise: Reinvent with human focus](#).

<sup>9</sup> The Australian HR Institute, [How to remove AI bias in recruitment](#), 11 March 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Deloitte Insights, 2019 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends, [Leading the social enterprise: Reinvent with human focus](#).

<sup>11</sup> PwC Skills for Australia, [Industry Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work: Business Services](#), March 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Business News, [Time team human put tech to work](#), 5 April 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

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## Industry Workforce Priorities

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**Technology and Digital Literacy.** Offshoring and the implementation of digital and automated solutions continue to impact entry level roles with clients seeking more cost effective alternatives for functions associated with routine administrative tasks. Strong digital literacy demands continue filtering across administrative roles and blended entry level roles are becoming more prevalent encompassing reception, administration, accounting support and data entry. Office support professionals are increasingly in need of up-skilling to broaden their ability to respond to AI, automation and non-routine tasks.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, evolving technology and system implementation continue to drive a demand for office managers, executive assistants (EA) and personal assistants (PA) who are digitally-literate and able to work with a variety of software platforms and digital tools. This can include assisting others develop their digital literacy using work-based technology. Emerging technology continues to change the way organisations and recruitment service providers advertise roles, source candidates and recruit new personnel. This includes the evolving niche of HR analytics<sup>15</sup> to reduce cost and enhance effectiveness of recruitment and on-boarding processes. Application of HR specific information management systems is critical for any HR professional, particularly those engaged by medium to large organisations.

**Enterprise Skills.** Those in the administrative services sector need a range of well-developed skills to ensure the organisation runs efficiently and staff are supported to meet project objectives and growth initiatives. This relies on a strong suite of enterprise skills particularly around complex internal and external communication, team work, customer service delivery and stakeholder management. Companies expect high competence across all Microsoft Office programs, the ability to work autonomously and a strong focus on results. Employees in administrative roles are required to adapt to and implement use of changing technologies such as Enterprise Resource Planning (including financial and payroll software) and have a strong working knowledge of data management systems with developed skills in information and data management. Administrative support employees often manage the company's social media presence.<sup>16</sup>

**Leadership Skills.** HR practitioners support operational functions in recruitment, workforce planning, people management, learning and development and dispute resolution.<sup>17</sup> Internal HR professionals are increasingly working at a senior executive level, supporting CEOs with change management, the development of leadership skills to work in the increasingly digital world of work and communicating value of HR strategy to shareholders and key stakeholders.<sup>18</sup> Changes to tax and super reporting requirements (Single Touch Payroll) for small business are requiring HR specialists (particularly in small businesses) to ensure businesses processes are compliant with industry and legislative standards.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, with growing levels of responsibility and ambassadorship, executive assistants (EA) and personal assistants (PA) are taking on more leadership and increasingly provide project-based support. Those working in the area of change management must be experienced in advertising, interviewing, reference checking, creating contracts and on-boarding new staff with little administrative support.<sup>20</sup>

**Professionalisation.** The industry remains highly feminised and is dominated by an aging workforce. Although entry level qualifications such as Certificates II and III in Business are highly utilised in WA secondary schools, students (and young people) do not view administration and clerical roles as career entry points and have little interest in pursuing the relevant occupational outcomes. It is critical for schools to suitably guide students into realistic career pathways for those undertaking vocational study as part of their WACE. Industry associations (such as the Australian Institute of Office Professionals) continue to strongly push for the professionalisation of office professionals performing administrative functions, particularly executive assistant and personal assistant roles which rely on a highly diverse and complex set of skills and capabilities which continue to evolve and rely on sophisticated technical, enterprise and leadership skills. There is a strong desire for roles that are growing in complexity to be

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<sup>14</sup> Hays, [Hotspots: Office Support Jobs in Demand in 2019](#).

<sup>15</sup> Australian HR Institute, [What makes HR analytics effective?](#) 20 May 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Half, [7 must-have administrative skills you need to up your game](#), 4 May 2019.

<sup>17</sup> PwC Skills for Australia, [Industry Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work: Business Services](#), March 2019.

<sup>18</sup> The Australian HR Institute, [3 things CEOs want from HR right now](#), 15 May 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Australian HR Institute, [Tax and super reporting requirements to change for small businesses](#), 18 March 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Hays, [Hotspots: Human Resources Jobs in Demand in 2019](#).



viewed as such and an interest in promoting administration as a career pathway to leadership and management roles. This is driving an increase in networking opportunities with strategies being developed that include consideration for educational pathways and preferences. The Diploma of Business Administration is considered most applicable to those seeking to work in this field.

*Virtual Assistants.* Growth continues in the area of virtual assisting within the administrative and support services industry. This requires a strong suite of skills in consulting, contracting, entrepreneurship, business development and small business. While it provides small businesses with a cost effective way to engage support staff without the need for direct employment and individuals with flexibility, variety and better earning potential, the lack of face-to-face engagement can negatively impact relationships and personal trust. The Australian Virtual Assistants Association and Australian Association for Virtual Industry Professionals are two membership organizations for virtual assistants (neither appear to have a physical presence in WA). There are also a number of online virtual assistant networks supporting this sector and its workforce.

*Payroll Tax Exemptions.* Loss of payroll exemptions has severely impacted the employment of trainees in the administrative services industry. These incentives enabled businesses to up-skill workers into office administration and middle management roles. Traineeships would be more attractive to employers if financial incentives were available to offset some of their costs in a tight and competitive economic climate.