

Strengthening the Administrative Foundation at the University of Notre Dame



The University of Notre Dame – Administrative Support Services

Industry – Higher education

Established – 1842

Headquarters – Notre Dame, IN

Division – Administrative support for
collegiate institution

Footprint – Approximately 550
administrative professionals out of
approximately 4,700 staff and faculty

Business Challenges

- Need to develop and update both functional and technical skills of administrative assistants
- Need for programs specifically developed for administrative professionals

Solution Results

- New skills and techniques being applied to daily jobs
- Higher manager interest and engagement in training process
- Development of productive networks among those who have participated

Executive Summary

While the source of Notre Dame's strength is its faculty, the administrative assistants are a key foundation to its success. There are approximately 550 administrative professionals employed at Notre Dame, supporting over 4,700 staff and faculty members. On a daily basis, they provide planning, coordination, and support of administration and faculty activities, record keeping, and student customer service.

Creating Strength With Knowledge Development

An internal study conducted at Notre Dame by the Academy (the provost, deans, and associate deans) determined a need to develop and update both the functional and technical skills of Notre Dame's administrative assistants. The administrative assistants also expressed a need for training customized specifically for them.

Kara McClure, manager of learning and organizational development for Notre Dame, looked to National Seminars Training (NST) for a solution.

"They had an existing series that advertised much of the same content that we were seeking to provide. They were willing to customize some of the content to best match our needs," says McClure.

NST worked with Notre Dame to take an existing administrative assistant certification program and develop it into the university's specialized program called Today's Administrative Professionals (TAP).

Nearly 200 administrative assistants have participated in TAP, giving positive feedback and appreciation for a structured course customized for them. They also acknowledged that others within Notre Dame could benefit from courses similar to the TAP program.

There are plans to develop further training for the administrative professionals along with other custom programs for other areas of Notre Dame.

According to McClure, “We’ll continue to offer TAP until it becomes apparent, through participation numbers, that we have satisfied the need. We will also begin to assess the next level of needs for this important group of contributors and expect that some of the needs will be technological. We have, and will, utilize NST for our additional training needs for other staff on campus as our skill needs require.”

Measurable Results Prove Training Makes a Strong Impact

Participants and managers have seen tangible improvements thanks to the TAP course. Notre Dame has reports from participants and managers of new skills, more confidence, and new techniques applied to the job – from being more organized to taking more initiative (taking notes, offering to do new tasks, preparing agendas without being prompted, and researching information).

There is markedly higher interest and engagement from managers at each new TAP session kickoff, interim talks, and program final events.

To measure the application and impact of the TAP program, the University of Notre Dame contracted with the Corporate Executive Board (CEB). Leveraging the Training Effectiveness Dashboard, a survey tool developed by CEB’s Corporate Leadership Council, the TAP program produced the following results, as rated by managers:

- **29 percent improvement in participants’ overall performance (many already were good)**
- **34 percent improvement in specific skills and knowledge that TAP was designed to improve**
- **44 percent of materials and content have been applied to the job**

In addition, administrative professionals from all areas of Notre Dame come together and meet one another. “TAP alumni have developed productive networks with each other to share ideas and practices,” said McClure. “They appreciate the opportunity TAP offers to get together and grow personally and professionally.”

About NST

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