

# Praise where praise is due

Each year, the PA of the Year Awards recognise the achievements of personal assistants. We ask some of the 2007 winners what it means to them to be a PA.

Not all professions get an awards ceremony of their own, but last November saw the fourth instalment of the pa-assist.ie PA of the Year Awards. There were six winners in all: one over-all winner and five from different business sectors (finance, professional services, medical and pharmaceutical, sales and marketing, and training, education and HR).

These awards confirm that the role of

the PA has changed dramatically over the years. PAs today are not only valued within a company, but are nationally recognised.

Those put forward for an accolade were highly recommended by the people they work for. And indeed, they themselves have an appreciation for their chosen career – all are proud to be a PA.

This is proof that the role is no longer

associated with short skirts and the constant filing of nails. Far from it, these dedicated workers are highly skilled and motivated. Their job is to ensure that everyone and everything runs in working order, and to do so with the utmost professionalism.

The awards will take place again in November 2008. Venue and further details should be announced on assist.ie in April



**Caitriona Redmond,**  
PA of the Year  
CB Richard  
Ellis, Dublin

I'm the type of person who likes to be extremely organised and prepared for

contingencies, and I like to be challenged everyday. With this job, there is always something new to do, a new project to tackle or a problem to be solved.

I never stop learning on the job so it's perfect for me because I have a hunger to learn new skills. I can honestly say that I have never gone home in the evening and thought that I can't face work the next day. There is no job too big or too small for me. Be it finding an archived file or organising a corporate event, I try to treat every task with the same level of attention.

To be a PA in CB Richard Ellis is extremely fulfilling; my skills are recognised and rewarded and I'm considered an integral part of my team and the wider company. Being involved with pa-assist.ie has allowed me to raise the profile of support and administrative staff who often are the unsung heroes of business, not only in my company, but beyond.

I have found a role that is a perfect fit for me!



**Jo Fox, Financial**  
PA of the Year  
CIT, Dublin

A top PA/executive assistant today is very much a key part of the senior management team of any company. You are your boss's

secret weapon! The essence of management, regardless of your title, is making things happen, and any PA worth their salt makes things happen.

Your job is about managing people, planning for the unexpected and performing the impossible. Countless traditional management roles are wrapped up in this title; you are a researcher, a project manager, a sounding board, a diplomat, an event manager, public relations officer, a mentor, a problem solver, a bearer of good and bad news – and you do all this with passion, dedication, loyalty, discretion and a big dollop of good humour and resilience.

You are the creator of time; multitasking at the speed of light, prioritising a daily barrage of emails, and making decisions on behalf of your boss with finesse and confidence.

A broad business knowledge, together with developing powers of clairvoyance, is essential, because what can go wrong will go wrong and you need to be able to anticipate all the questions and, more importantly, have the answers.



**Fiona O'Neill,**  
Medical &  
Pharmaceutical  
PA of the Year  
Vhi Healthcare,  
Kilkenny

I believe that a PA can have a huge impact on the effectiveness of a

company. They can increase the productivity of managers and the rest of the team as well as ensuring that office life goes on.

I try to always create win-win situations and look for ways to develop a can-do philosophy in the team I work with. I find that by focussing on what I can do and not concentrating on what I can't, I can usually tackle most situations. I try to review processes to ensure that they are both time and cost effective, which ensures on-going improvement and better results.

My role has definitely changed over the past few years. I find myself making more administrative decisions quicker, and I'm sure that is the case for most PAs no matter what industry or organisation they work in. With the fast pace of Irish office life these days, I firmly believe that PAs really must be able to cope and adapt with change.

One of the great things about my role and that of the PA in general is that I have numerous opportunities to interact with different teams across the organisation, and also to incorporate new responsibilities into my role. ■