

Administrators learn to handle stress

When all else fails, try humor

By Darren Meritz / El Paso Times

Humor goes a long way in ensuring that administrative assistants can navigate challenges from bosses, customers and staff, speakers at the fifth annual Administrative Professionals Conference said Thursday.

About 350 administrative professionals from throughout El Paso and the region heard from speakers Thursday and participated in exercises at the Camino Real Hotel specifically geared toward helping support staff to feel relaxed, re-energized and appreciated.

"People are truly more and more stressed out and they have to find more coping mechanisms to deal with it," said Lois Barth, a speaker at Thursday's conference who specializes in life coaching. "Offices often recreate family dynamics, so what is a big stressor for people is there are a lot of dynamics going on in the office that nobody's talking about."

The presentations at the two-day conference were an inspiration for Nancy Valles, an administrative assistant for the El Paso County legal department.

"The speakers were very energetic," she said. "Basically just being happy, simply being content where you are at this time in your career, basically that's what's going to get you through."

Aliana Apodaca, the conference's organizer, said administrative professionals are facing changing dynamics

in today's workplace, especially as technology is speeding the flow of information and as companies are requiring administrative professionals to complete more duties.

"The diversity of duties is unbelievable," she said. "I think sometimes they have that support, but I hear more and more that they are required to do more with less."

Administrative professionals can make their own lives easier by engaging in exercises that relieve stressors and making sure they have fun on the job, Apodaca said.

Bosses would do well by their administrative support staff to use humor as well, while also praising their employees from time to time, even if only informally, she said.

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For more information: International Association of Administrative Professionals, www.iaap-hq.org.



Leslie Jones, left, talked with Becki Flores during the 5th Annual Conference for Administrative Professionals Thursday at the Camino Real Hotel Downtown. The conference provided professional development workshops and expert speakers. (Debra Gulbas / El Paso Times)