

GLOBAL PA NETWORK PA CASE STUDY

Alicia Benito, Executive PA at Santander

Q.1. Describe your Role and how many people you work for?

I have two bosses – one is the principal one and the second boss does not give me much to do. I also support the team of 12 people and its growing. The role is very varied and I do diary management for both bosses but one is very self sufficient. I organise travel, events, translate documents from Spanish and manage the e-mails. I do a lot of telephone work and liaise with Madrid and the PAs there and handle calls and filter them and I am bi-lingual. Santander in the UK has 100 people and there are 5 PAs and they are all bi-lingual. The other divisions are the former Abbey and the PAs there are not bi-lingual. The PAs in Madrid speak English but not perfectly and sometimes send e-mails in Spanish. Only one PA in Abbey that I am aware of is learning Spanish. The operating systems between Abbey and Santander are different which is complicated and I am not aware that the bi-lingual PAs are earning more.

Q.2. Describe your relationship with your boss?

Our relationship is very professional and we get on well and he has a good sense of humour and is focused and fun. The relationship with both bosses is the same. I was interviewed for the role in a very in depth way and it took over 1 hour but I felt very comfortable and had nothing to hide and he wanted to know how I would react to situations and cope with pressure.

Q.3. Describe a typical day?

Before I leave home and on the way to the office I am checking my blackberry as I like to be on top of everything. I continually check Graham's diary as his plans can change and the day tends to flow with travel bookings, room bookings, events to organise. I print out the Outlook diary and we go through it and print out each week and month and plan ahead. Graham is meticulous about keeping ahead of his workload. I also act as the Team Secretary and will do photocopying and scanning for members of the team if required. I have not had many unusual requests from my bosses but did have to source bullfighter outfits once which proved difficult in the UK. In a previous job in another organisation I was asked to clean the kitchen and Hoover the office.

Q.4. Major challenges in my role?

A major challenge is change management and the mergers and acquisitions that have happened and the new process systems we have to learn. We also

have a challenge with lack of resources e.g. lack of available meeting rooms and there is also stress amongst staff with employees moving areas. There have been no corporate messages on change management.

Q.5. What opportunities does your business offer for promotion?

My boss would be very supportive if I wanted to progress but the rest of the culture is not so progressive and it would not appeal to me personally. One PA has moved to being an Analyst.

Q.6. How often do you attend training courses?

I attend training courses on my own initiative. I have just completed a Marketing Diploma Course which was supported by Santander and I attend PA events and we are allowed 5 days a year study leave. We also have training days we can use. My Manager is preparing a 2 day course for his team on Communication Skills to which I am invited. Budget per person for training is over £500 per head per annum.