

PA vs PA



GRÁINNE DALY
PA to Chief Executive, Paddy Power, Dublin, Ireland

How did you land your current role?

Paddy Power found my profile on LinkedIn and approached me a couple of times regarding the role, I didn't wait for them to ask me a third time.

Who do you support and how?

I support our new Chief Executive, Andy McCue. Andy has been in the role since January 2015, having been with the company eight years previous. Before he stepped into the role, I supported his predecessor. My job involves all the usual suspects - diary wizardry, travel-management, gate-keeping and most importantly their regular caffeination. I am adept at fetching skinny lattes while simultaneously extinguishing fires and booking travel for the masses! Multi-tasking... anyone?

What do you love most about your job?

It's extremely fast paced and no two days are the same! There's always a challenge, whether on a professional level, or personally - in trying to remain sane while the world is ablaze around you.

What's it like working at Paddy Power?

Cirque du Soleil with a serving of corporate! Paddy Power is made up of a bunch of intelligent, creative, highly driven individuals who constantly strive to be at the top of their game and give real competitive advantage. Our brand is a good reflection

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of this: recognisable, differentiated with a distinctly edgy feel that is uniquely 'Paddy Power'. Throughout our offices in Melbourne, London, Rome or here in Dublin, our teams are awesome and being part of the mix is a great feeling.

Are you ever tempted to gamble? If so, what is your weakness?

Yes, of course! - I have always enjoyed a flutter. My weakness is not being sufficiently clairvoyant to predict the winners. I have the odd punt on the ponies or on Gaelic games or football. Translating winnings into handbags is a hugely gratifying experience.

As a PA what is the most unusual thing you have been asked to do?

Some of my most notable requests were being sent to a boss's apartment to change a lightbulb, being flown over to London to buy a boss bedclothes, arranging a date for a boss then being in his bad books because it didn't go well and being asked by a boss on Christmas Eve to translate an entire book from Irish into English so he could give his daughter the translation for Christmas Day.

What have you done today?

A tonne of diary DIY, followed by a call to a cab driver in Rome who couldn't find my boss at the airport which ended up in an animated chat in Italian about how the Lazio game went last night, booked travel, and took calls about forthcoming meetings.

What's the one thing you'd like to change about being a PA?

There is a common misconception that a PA is a human Google. Although we quite clearly have amazing superpowers and are supremely efficient and talented operators, we do not have the time to be the general 'go-to' person when off-the-wall questions and all sorts of random requests arise in the business. It seems as though the PA is sometimes looked upon, by the wider office population, as a one person Admin Stop Shop / Information Bureau. Newsflash... we actually have a day job to do as well.

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INTERVIEW This issue we speak to a PA who helps you to save your pennies – and a PA whose role is to help you spend them **By Maria Fuller**



SANDRA THOMSON
PA to Managing Director, Bank of Scotland,
Community Banking, The Mound, Edinburgh

How did you land your current role?

It was all very unexpected but an easy decision to make to apply for my current role and a natural change of role for me. Having worked within the MD's office as PA to Commercial Director since November 2013 and providing support to the MD's PA in her absence, I successfully interviewed and secured my position in March this year.

Who do you support and how?

I provide PA support to the Managing Director for Bank of Scotland Community Banking, part of Lloyds Banking Group. In my view, the fundamental criteria and qualities required to be an effective PA are to have an ability to 'manage the manager' and have the capability to connect with people at all levels and efficiently manage all the demands on the executive's time. Having a broad understanding of the business ultimately helps me to be a more efficient PA.

What's it like working in financial services? Is it all about spreadsheets?

Certainly not! In my experience, it's just like any other business: customer focused and extremely busy! Throughout my career, having been PA to directors in manufacturing, NHS, and finance industries, I've found it's more about having that good working relationship with your executive and the team of people

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around you. Understanding my executive's requirements and what works for them to achieve their objectives and successfully do their job.

What do you love most about your job?

There are so many aspects I love about being a Personal Assistant but essentially, I love the variety it brings, being busy and the challenges the role presents daily. Having to be forward thinking, adaptable and being able to react positively to changes – life is certainly never boring when you work as a Personal Assistant!

You've worked in the financial services sector for a number of years – have you personally become a money saving expert?

I wouldn't consider myself a money saving expert however I do have a greater awareness of the products and services widely available and have an understanding of who to speak to or where to go, for seeking further advice when needed.

As a PA what is the most unusual thing you have been asked to do?

I've been involved in many various tasks throughout my career, from researching private schools, redesign of offices, nationwide events for celebrating colleagues' achievements etc. Possibly the most unusual task was when I was asked to meet and greet owners of a large international American company. It involved having to be escorted to their private jets at Edinburgh Airport and have chauffeured cars transport them to their hotels prior to visits to our facilities in Scotland – this was not an everyday occurrence I might add!

What have you done today?

Today I'm undertaking my role as secretariat for our Risk Committee & Leadership meetings by coordinating with various areas of the group through pulling meeting papers together, generating meeting agendas, writing of meeting minutes and action trackers for both meetings.

What alternative environment would you like to work in?

Interior Design and Event management has always been of interest to me. I thoroughly enjoy the process of co-ordinating events, from managing budgets, venue visits, planning timelines and experiencing a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment once the event comes to fruition. ■