



Singapore Association of Administrative Professionals

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A Voice for the Administrative Profession: The Inspiring Journey of Ser Cher from SAPES to SAAP

Beginnings and Journey with SAAP

You joined SAAP in 1987, when the association was still known as SAPES. What first motivated you to become a member and what drew you to stay committed over the years?

I joined SAAP back in 1987, when it was still known as SAPES. Starting out as a “Girl Friday”, I was eager to learn, grow and connect with others who understood the challenges and importance of our profession. The association offered exactly that – a supportive community where I could network, share experiences, gain new skills and feel part of something bigger than myself.

What has kept me committed all these years is the sense of belonging and the friendships I have built along the way. Being part of SAAP has not only helped me professionally, but it has also given me confidence and pride in the work we do as administrative professionals.

How has the role and recognition of administrative professionals evolved from when you first joined to today?

Looking back, one of the most defining transformations I have experienced is the shift from the traditional role of a personal and executive secretary to the dynamic and multifaceted role of an administrative professional.

When I first began, the personal and executive secretary’s role was largely clerical – typing, filing, managing correspondence, travel arrangements and supporting one executive directly. It

demanded shorthand skill, precision, discretion and dedication, but was often seen as limited in scope.

Over the years, the profession has evolved tremendously.

Today, administrative professionals are expected to be versatile, tech-savvy and strategic. Our responsibilities now extend to project coordination, event management, stakeholder communication, technology integration and even leadership. Rather than working quietly in the background, we are recognised as essential partner driving efficiency and success across entire teams and organisations.

For me personally, this transformation has been empowering. It has allowed me to grow in confidence, expand my skill set and take pride in being part of a profession that continues to adapt and thrive. The journey from personal and executive secretary to an administrative professional reflects not only the changing workplace but also the resilience and commitment of those of us in this field.



2006: Administrative Professional Award Winners and their bosses

Transforming SAPES to SAAP

You played a key role in facilitating the transition from Singapore Association of Personal and Executive Secretaries (SAPES) to Singapore Association of Administrative Professionals (SAAP) in 2006. What prompted this change, and why was it important?

The transition from SAPES to SAAP in 2006 was a deeply meaningful milestone for me. By then, the role of personal and executive secretary had already expanded far beyond traditional clerical duties. We were no longer just working quietly behind the scenes. We had become

professionals managing projects, coordinating teams, supporting organizational strategy and embracing new technologies.

Several member associations within The Association of Secretaries and Administrative Professionals in Asia Pacific (“ASA”) had already renamed themselves to reflect this evolution, and it became clear that we too needed to take this important step. The name “Singapore Association of Personal and Executive Secretaries” no longer captured the scope and importance of our work. Changing to “Singapore Association of Administrative Professionals” was both timely and necessary. It signaled recognition of the profession’s growth, gave members a stronger identity, and aligned us with international standards.

For me, being part of this transition was both inspiring and affirming. It was not simply about changing a name, it was about recognizing the growth of our members, validating their contributions and ensuring that our association remained relevant and forward-looking. I felt proud to help shape this new chapter, knowing it would empower administrative professionals in Singapore for many years to come.



2004: Representatives from Australia, New Zealand and the United States, IAAP (International Association of Administrative Professionals)

What challenges did the association face during the rebranding and repositioning, and how were they overcome?

The rebranding and repositioning of the association was not without its challenges. One of the biggest hurdles was the initial resistance from some of our senior members, who felt a strong attachment to the original SAPES name and identity. For many, the title “personal and executive

secretary” carried deep personal meaning, and changing it felt like letting go of part of their professional journey.

Another challenge was ensuring that all members understood the rationale behind the change. We had to communicate clearly that the transition was not about diminishing the past, but about embracing the future - reflecting the expanded scope of our roles and aligning with international standards.

We overcame these challenges through open dialogue, consultation and reassurance. By sharing examples of how other ASA members had successfully repositioned themselves and by involving members in the process, we gradually built consensus and support.

In the end, the rebranding became a unifying milestone. It honoured our history while positioning us for the future, and it gave our members renewed pride in belonging to a profession that continues to evolve and gain recognition.

2006: Administrative Professional Week Closing Hi-Tea (Rebranding Launch) - The team that see through the rebranding exercise.



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👑 Leadership & Service

Serving three terms as SAAP President is no small feat. What leadership principles guided you throughout your presidency?

Serving three terms as SAAP President was both an honour and a deeply personal journey. I am deeply grateful to have worked alongside a dedicated team of members who selflessly volunteered their time and talents, helping us achieve the goals we set for each term. I learned so much from them, and I always reminded myself that leadership was not about holding a title, but about learning, representing and uplifting the standing of SAAP.

One principle that guided me strongly was inclusivity. I made it a point to listen to members from different backgrounds and experiences, because I truly believed that every voice mattered. Some of my most rewarding moments came from seeing members' ideas grow into initiatives that benefitted the entire association.

I also held firmly to adaptability. Our profession was evolving quickly, and I felt it was my responsibility to ensure SAAP kept pace - whether that meant embracing new technologies, expanding training opportunities, or rethinking how we positioned ourselves for the future.

Above all, I tried to lead with integrity and consistency. I wanted members to feel they could trust me, and to know that decisions were made with their best interests at heart. Looking back, I feel proud that these principles helped us grow stronger together, and I am grateful for the friendships, lessons and shared achievements that came from this journey.

You have also led and contributed to numerous subcommittees and major initiatives. What keeps you motivated to continue serving in different capacities?

What has kept me motivated to continue serving in different capacities has always been the people and the experiences I have shared with them and learned from them. Being part of the 16th ASA Congress Organising Committee was a huge undertaking, and at times it felt overwhelming. But working side by side with members who were equally passionate reminded me why I chose to serve — the camaraderie, the laughter during late-night planning sessions, and the pride we all felt when the event came together successfully.



2004: 16th ASA Organising Committee



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Moments like these reaffirmed my belief that service is about teamwork and shared purpose. Each initiative I have been involved in has given me the chance to grow, to learn from others, and to see how collective effort can create something truly meaningful. The friendships formed, the lessons gained, and the joy of seeing members benefit from our work continue to inspire me to give back.

Ultimately, what motivates me is knowing that every role I take on contributes to the strengthening SAAP and uplifting the profession. It is the sense of community, the shared achievements and the impact we make together that keep me passionate about serving in different capacities.

Championing Community and Milestones

You have been instrumental in Admin Professional Week celebrations and are the leader of SAAP's 55th Anniversary celebrations this year. What does this milestone mean to you personally?

Being part of Administrative Professional Week celebrations over the years has always been a highlight for me, but leading SAAP's 55th Anniversary Celebrations this year feels especially meaningful. Personally, this milestone is a moment of deep pride and gratitude.

It represents not only the longevity of our association, but also the resilience, growth and collective spirit of our members across generations. For me, it is about honouring those who have contributed to the success of SAAP, reconnecting with and thanking members who have moved on, and building stronger bond with current and younger members who will carry the association forward.

This anniversary is more than a celebration of the past - it is a reminder of the journey we have taken together and an inspiration to continue shaping the future of our profession with passion and unity.



2007: Administrative Professionals Week Road Run amp; Pre-training in Bukit Timah Hill



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What has been one particular meaningful event or initiative you've led that left a lasting impression on you?

There were countless meaningful and memorable events through my journey, but a few stand out deeply.

One of my most meaningful experiences was serving as a Member of the Business and Services, Academic Advisory Committee of the Institute of Technical Education for a 3-year term, from 2007 to 2010. It gave me the opportunity to contribute industry insights, support curriculum development, and strengthen collaboration between education and industry. Helping to shape future talent was truly fulfilling.

Another defining moment was serving the Organising Committee for the 16th ASA Congress. Leading the Secretariat team for a five-day international event – after two years of planning – was both challenging and inspiring. Working alongside dedicated members and 20 enthusiastic ITE Bishan students from the Business School, who grew tremendously through the experience, reminded me of the power of community and mentorship.



In 2006, receiving the Most Active President Award from the Singapore Professional Centre.

 Voice of the Profession

You have represented SAAP across newspapers (The Straits Times, Lianhe Zaobao), radio (93.8 Live), and television. How did it feel to be the voice of administrative professionals on such platforms?

Representing SAAP across newspapers, radio and television was both an honour and a humbling experience. Each platform gave me the chance to share the voice of administrative

professionals - not just speaking on behalf of the association, but showcasing the value, resilience and professionalism of our members to a wider audience.

I still remember our first radio interview on 93.8 Live: a few of us sitting nervously in the studio, yet excitement to speak directly to the public about the importance of our profession. The questions were challenging, but they gave us the opportunity to highlight the skills and contributions of administrative professionals in a way listeners could truly appreciate.

Another memorable moment was appearing live on television in “Zhan An Ni Hao” with one of my ex-bosses, Mr Steven Ng. It was not pre-recorded, which made it even more nerve-wracking. Yet I was deeply grateful for the support of all my bosses who encouraged my involvement in the association. They reminded me that advocacy is most powerful when leaders stand together to elevate the profession.



Live on television in “Zhan An Ni Hao”

Each interview carried a deep sense of responsibility. I wanted the public to understand the critical role administrative professionals play in every organisation, and why our contributions deserve recognition and respect. These experiences left me with lasting memories of how powerful it can be when our collective voice is heard, and they reinforced my commitment to continue advocating for our profession.

What key message about administrative professionals do you always hope the public takes away from these interviews?

The key message I hope the public takes away from these interviews is that administrative professionals are far more than “support staff” - we are essential partners who drive organizational success. We contribute strategically, ensuring smooth operations, fostering collaboration and solving problems behind the scenes. Most importantly, we take pride in our work and the impact we make. By elevating the visibility of our profession, I want to inspire respect, appreciation, and a deeper understanding of how vital administrative professionals are.

Guidance for New and Aspiring Members

What advice would you give to new members joining SAAP for the first time?

My advice to new members joining SAAP is to embrace every opportunity to connect, learn and grow. SAAP is more than just an association - it is a community where friendships are built, knowledge is shared, and members support one another both professionally and personally. Get involved early, whether by attending events, volunteering, or reaching out to fellow members. These experiences will deepen your understanding of the profession and help you form bonds that last a lifetime. Most importantly, keep an open mind and learn from others - every member brings unique perspectives and value.

Joining SAAP is the start of a meaningful journey, one that will help you grow as a professional while becoming part of a family that uplifts and inspires.

The Future of SAAP

With your unwavering support for SAAP over the decades, what are your hopes and aspirations for the association's future?

I truly hope to see more administrative professionals step forward and join our community.

Looking ahead, my hope for SAAP is to grow into an even more vibrant, engaged and collaborative association - one where administrative professional from all backgrounds feel welcome to contribute, learn and connect. I aspire for SAAP to continue being a strong platform that nurtures professional development, encourages the sharing of knowledge and experience and builds a supportive network that benefits all our members.

Above all, I hope SAAP remains a place where members feel proud to belong, empowered to participate, and motivated to help the association evolve. With more passionate administrative professionals joining us, and with continued support of long-time members, I believe SAAP's future will be bright and full of meaningful progress.

How can members collectively contribute to keeping SAAP relevant, vibrant, and impactful?

Members play a huge role in keeping SAAP relevant, vibrant, and impactful. When we all participate and contribute in our own ways, the association grows stronger. Here's how every member can help:

- Stay engaged and involved - Attend events, share ideas, and participate in discussions - your voice helps shape SAAP's direction.
- Support one another- Share knowledge, offer guidance, and build connections. A supportive community makes SAAP a place people want to be part of.

- Volunteer when possible - Whether it's helping with events, joining a project, or contributing your skills, every bit of support adds value.
- Be an ambassador - Spread the word about SAAP within your networks. Personal recommendations are one of the best ways to grow our community.
- Embrace new ideas and innovation - Staying open to fresh perspectives helps SAAP remain relevant and adaptive to the changing needs of professionals.

Together, our collective energy and contributions ensure SAAP continues to thrive and make a positive impact for years to come.

♥ Closing Reflections

What does SAAP mean to you beyond being an association?

To me, SAAP is more than just an association - it is a community, a support system, and a shared identity. It's where people who understand the unique challenges of our profession come together to learn, share, celebrate, and lift one another up.

I still remember one of my earliest SAAP events. I walked in not knowing anyone, unsure of what to expect. Within minutes, someone welcomed me, introduced me to others, and made me feel instantly at home. By the end of the evening, we were exchanging stories, laughing, and realising how much we had in common - not just in our work, but in our journey, our struggles, and hopes for the profession. That moment showed me what SAAP truly is at its core.

At its heart, SAAP is a big family - one that supports, encourages, and grows together. It is a place where belonging turns into pride, and where collective strength transforms into progress.



2006: Fellowship Day at Sofitel Johore Bahru