

ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS AFFECTING JOB PERFORMANCE OF SECRETARIES

by

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Abstract

A well trained, skilful and intelligent secretary with a good IQ is indispensable to any employer. Such a secretary has the potential of being marketable in the labour market. However for efficiency and effectiveness to be achieved, a good [office environment](#), and availability of office equipment are key. It is a well known fact that the secretarial profession plays a very strategic role in the business world, and has significantly contributed in various ways to developing the Nigerian economy. Every business, be it public, private or public-private has a vision and a mission to achieve its set goals. The roles Secretaries play in achieving these goals cannot be overemphasized, hence the survival and sustenance of businesses depend largely on the effectiveness and efficiency of adequately trained Secretarial Professionals. This paper, lays emphasis on the factors affecting job performance of secretaries: towards achieving organizational goals. ways of enhancing job performance were proffered. It recommended among others that for secretarial staff to perform to the expectation of employers, working environment should be conducive, they should be continuously equipped and updated with modern office automation, trained and retrained for effective and efficient development of their knowledge, skills and competence toward achieving organizational goals.

Key Words: Assessment, Employer, Satisfaction, Job Performance, Secretarial Profession, Organizational Goals

Introduction

Secretarial profession has been in existence for several decades. It plays a very significant role in Nigerian labour market. Amoor (2001) observed that the professionals have acquired skills whose knowledge and competencies are needed in private enterprise, government establishments, parastatals and financial institutions therefore contributing immensely their quota for economic development and its

impact felt in various sectors of the Nigerian economy.

The secretarial position varies widely depending on the size of the organization, the number of workers employed, the nature of the business as well as the personal qualities. The position involves a widely variety of duties and responsibilities. In order to achieve the smooth and effective running of the office, the secretary must possess certain basic qualifications, undergo basic secretarial training as well as acquire some special personal qualities peculiar to secretaries. The secretarial job is not any job, for one to function effectively and efficiently are needs to possess certain basic qualifications and undergo basic secretarial studies

The importance of an office in the development of an economy cannot be overemphasized. It is the secretary that manages the basic office resources. He manages tangible and intangible human and non-human resources, such as personnel, machines, materials, money, time, information and methods. There is no profession that is as dynamic as the secretarial profession. This dynamic nature can be seen in innovation and invention pertaining to equipment, furniture, form design, nomenclature, environment, technology, attitude, dressing, responsibilities, training, skill, ability, knowledge, educational, institutions and their curricula.

The Professional Secretary in the Labour Market

Secretaries occupy a very important place in the economy of any country. The job market for secretaries is the most reliable of all office positions, and secretaries are in demand everywhere, (Oladunjoye & Nwaokolo 1992)

Onyemenam, 2013 asserts that Secretaries are occupationally mobile and the training of secretaries is tailored to meet the demand of any establishment or organization. In other words, a well-trained and competent secretary can adequately cope with the working situation in any organisation. For example, secretaries are engaged in public and private offices, accounting, engineering, medicine etc even in societies.

The Employer

An employer is a legal entity that controls and directs a servant or worker under an express or implied contract of employment and pays (or is obligated to pay) him or her salary or wages in compensation.

According to Fiji National Provident Fund (2013), an employer can be any person, company, association, or body of persons, employing an employee. An employer is liable to pay NFPF contribution after hiring an employee for one or more days in a month. Every employer is required by law to register his company with the NFPF. Employers are also required to register their employees (if they are not already members) within one month of the commencement of employment. Furthermore, an employer may be defined as any person, company, association or

body of persons: with whom the employee has entered into contract or agreement of employment regardless whether contract or agreement is written, oral, express or implied.

Heathfield (2014) noted that employer is an organization, institution, government entity, agency, company, professional services firm, non-profit association, small business, store or individual who employs or puts to work an employee. In exchange for the employees work or services, the employer pays compensation that may include salary, an hourly or daily wage, and benefit that is above the Federal mandated minimum wage in the Nigerian Labour Market.

Boyle's Wisconsin Safe-Place Law opines employer to mean and include every person, firm, corporation, state, country, town, city, village, household, school district, sewer district, drainage district, and other public quasi-public corporations as well as any agent, manager, representative or other persons having control or custody of any employment, place of employment or of any employee.

The Professional Secretary

According to the new Webster's Dictionary of the English Language, International Edition, a Secretary as a person responsible for dealing with correspondence and records of an organization or individual employers. Also, the Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English defines the Secretary as a person employed by another to help him in various ways; a Secretary writes letters, makes appointments for his employer, keeps records, etc and is often called a Private Secretary.

The word Secretary has been defined variously by different authors and employers. Onifade (2004) defined a Secretary as “An assistant to an executive, possessing mastery of office skills and ability, assumes responsibility without direct supervision, who displays initiative, exercises judgment, and makes decisions within the scope of his authority.”

The term Secretary is derived from the [Latin] word *secernere* “to distinguish “or “to set apart,” the passive participle (*secretum*) meaning “have been set apart,” with the eventual connotation of something private or confidential. A *secretary* is a person who oversees business confidentially, usually for a powerful individual (a king, pope, etc.). (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/secretary>). “A secretary is either an administrative assistant in business office administration, or a certain type of mid or high level governmental position, such as a Secretary of State.”

A Secretary should be able to keep secrets of the organization and that of his boss. His role is principally that of support, assistance or help. He carries out activities assigned to him by his executive or takes initiative which is within his authority and responsibility. A secretary is a professional who has some code of ethics which he

should guard jealously. He should be dynamic and versatile because he works in an environment that is not static. He should be ready to accept changes and challenges of the office and the world of work. His title changes in conformity with his responsibilities. For example a legal secretary has some professional responsibilities different from those of a medical secretary. One can now talk or use pen to write on the computer and what is said or written is typed devoid the use of the keyboard. What an amazing innovation in the world of modern office technology. Because the secretary interacts with people as the first contact of people visiting the organization and because of the operation of the telephone for the organization and his boss, his communication skill, human and public relations skill must be high. His appearance must be the best.

Some Duties of a Secretary

The duties of a secretary or administrative assistant vary by industry or employer, but some tasks are common to many work settings. Basically secretaries perform the following tasks in a typical office setting.

- i. Phone Calls and Visitors:** A Professional Secretary acts as a gateway between visitors, callers and other workers in the office. The Secretary knows more about the office he works in to answer inquiries about the specifics of the office. He screens visitors and phone calls and arranges callbacks or appointments. A Secretary may also need to find back-up materials related to the caller or visitor to prepare his boss to talk about different issues with different people. He may also prepare a meeting area for visitors and take care of any requests. On the phone, a Secretary may be responsible for conducting phone surveys or inquiring after information.
- ii. Reception:** In general office position, secretaries commonly assist new employees and visitors in finding their way around. This includes directing visitors to the people they came to meet and showing new employees where to go on their first day. The Secretary also directs other employees on best way to handle certain issues and the right person to meet for certain matters. In general, the secretary projects the image of the organization by offering a friendly and professional reception to people who come into the office.
- iii. Correspondence:** In addition to answering the phone and helping visitors, a Secretary must handle the mail, as well as inter-office communications. A Secretary generally sorts the mail for the boss or the office, prioritizing it and throwing out junk mail. Sometimes he will be responsible for replying to the banal correspondence by preparing responses for the boss's signature. A Secretary also prioritizes work based on deadlines and communication with others in the office. Proofreading documents before they are sent out of the office is another duty.

- iv. **Appointments and Meetings:** A Professional Secretary not only maintains a boss's schedule, but also prepares the boss for meetings and appointments. The Professional Secretary keeps a calendar of the boss's appointments as well as all meetings within the office and determines what events the boss needs to attend. He arranges his employer's commitments to avoid overlaps and to make sure that the boss has enough time to prepare for such commitments. Often times, the Professional Secretary prepares an agenda for meetings, arranges for the facilities and amenities and records the proceedings of the meetings.

- v. **Office Task:** Especially in small offices, a secretary may be asked to carry out a routine clerical tasks and errands to assist others. This may include canceling or rescheduling appointments, ordering office supplies, taking notes during meetings, and getting drinks for the supervisor and guests.

The Qualities of a Secretary

- i. **Diligence:** A secretary who is punctual, timely, accurate and honest is the cornerstone of a successful any organization.
- ii. **Initiative:** The most successful secretaries have drives and initiative. They do not sit waiting for their bosses instructions or assignments; they are proactive; they pick up a file, determine what needs to be done and do it. They anticipate the employer's needs and are willing to step beyond their comfort zone to learn new skills.
- iii. **Efficiency:** In an organization, efficiency translates into Naira and is cost-saving. Secretaries who perform their jobs quickly and efficiently contribute to the growth of the organization and make themselves indispensable.
- iv. **Reliability:** Reliability is also the name of the game when you are a secretary. Whether you are a secretary to a single boss or to a team, you will be indispensable to them as you help ease their workload by providing administrative support and helping them organize their time. When we make promises or other commitments that create a legitimate basis for another person to rely upon us. We undertake special moral duties. We accept the responsibility of making all reasonable efforts to fulfill our commitment.
- v. **Discrete:** Confidentiality is the main quality expected of a good secretary. During the course of a secretary's work, he will undoubtedly manage a wide range of information that is private and privileged to the employer and the employer's clientele. The boss needs to be able to trust that the work he assigned is treated with utmost confidence, for without this trust he loses confidence in the secretary, no matter the typing skills, It takes years of working experience as a secretary with employer to be able to distinguished what is confidential and what is not. What may appears to you to be inconsequential and common knowledge may not in fact be so, the divulging of which could create a catastrophe. Therefore, treat all materials in the

- strictest confidence. Disclosing confidential information, inadvertently or deliberately, is one of the quickest ways to damage secretarial profession.
- vi. Loyalty:** some relationships – husband-wife, employer-employee, citizen-country – create an expectation of allegiance, fidelity and devotion. Loyalty is responsible to promote the interests of certain people, organizations or affiliations. This duty goes beyond the normal obligation we all share to care for others.
 - vii. Flexibility:** Secretaries who are flexible and adaptive are well appreciated by the organization. Those willing to work late or come in early to get the job done, and who readily adapt to new, different or changing work requirements are most valued by their employers.
 - viii. Civility, Courtesy and Decency:** a respectful person is an attentive listener; although his patience with the boorish need not be endless (respect works both ways). Nevertheless, the respectful person treats others with consideration, and doesn't resort to intimidation, coercion or violence except in extraordinary and limited situations to defend others, teach discipline, maintain order or achieve social justice.
 - ix. Responsibility and Autonomy:** always keep your work up to date and have to be proactive. Meet deadlines, priorities. Everyday write up a list of the tasks you need to undertake to ensure none are overlooked and have them priority order. Have control over your work (opportunity to innovate and improve office environment, managing your own time, making decision).
 - x. Co-operative:** always assist and share your expertise with your colleagues wherever it is possible. Always be happy to carry out duties asked of you, but also know when to say “No” (gently) and explain why you cannot do the task asked of you. Do not overload yourself.
 - xi. Tactful:** Secretary who can handle issues with diplomacy and tactfulness, smoothing over differences or proffering solutions to workplace disputes, are invaluable to organizations.
 - xii. Pleasant:** No one likes to work with a grumpy, demanding or negative employee. Secretaries with a pleasant demeanor and positive attitude, who are able to put aside personal challenges to accomplish job objectives, and who are friendly to co-workers and courteous to visitors, will excel in the workplace.
 - xiii. Patient:** A distinguished professional secretary is known for ability to handle grumpy issues and challenges with patient and grace.
 - xiv. Honesty and Integrity:** Honesty and integrity go hand in hand. You cannot be honest if you have no personal integrity, and a person that is not honest has no integrity. Everyone thinks they are honest in the broad sense of the word, however taking even a paperclip or a postage stamp from the office without official permission is really stealing. Even if you think your employer can afford it and will not miss it, it is the employer that has paid for it and not you, so it is their property and not yours. Likewise, making personal phone calls

- and having personal phone or mobile phone conversations or text messaging on your employer's premises during the hours that you are paid to work, is theft of the employer's time
- xv. **Professionalism:** A good secretary presents himself and behaves in a professional manner with a good attitude. There are many books that tell you how to "dress for success" and control your body language, but keeping on top of your personal traits is only part of the story in managing your professional image. There is no way around the fact that people judge you by your personal appearance, so a well groomed look will show that you care about yourself as a person and therefore have the capacity to care about others. A little attention to how you look goes a long way to display your professionalism. People are constantly observing your behaviour and forming theories about your competence, character, and commitment, so present and conduct yourself in a respectable manner appropriate to the organization that you serve and show a willingness to help other professionals.
- xvi. **Organized:** the ability to organize daily tasks is another important personal characteristic. They routinely have to keep track of many tasks and projects, such as scheduling meetings and appointments, taking and transcribing minutes, handling phone calls, making travel arrangements for one or more supervisors, filing and many other responsibilities. A disorganized secretary can create chaos in an office. When the boss arrives late at the airport and misses a plane because the secretary gave the wrong information about the flight time; the secretary is likely to face disciplinary action or even termination.
- xvii. **Leadership:** The leadership competence of the secretary is usually required for the effective management of co-workers and observance of decorum in the office.
- xviii. **Bribery:** Do not be tempted to accept gifts or favours from internal or external clients just in case there is an underlying reason. Always follow your company's procedures and policies. Very rarely you will ever get something for nothing – there is usually always a trade-off. You may end up paying the ultimate price – your job!

Professional Ethical Demands and Unethical Practices

In addition to the above mentioned attributes of a professional Secretary, there are ethical demands on the professional Secretary as enumerated by Adedayo, and Akinyele, (2012) as including the following:

- i. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** A good secretary must be able to work in any organization by adapting to the situation he finds himself.
- ii. **Poise:** The Professional Secretary should be calm and poised always.
- iii. **Intuitiveness:** The ability to develop one's mind to visualize and sense things. It requires immediate recognition of and sharp insight into things. The Secretary should develop a keen eye for error detection in his work and

- draw the attention of his boss to it.
- iv. **Tact:** You need tact in what you do or say so that you do not offend your boss, co-workers and customers. The Secretary should be able to communicate with all people and should be able to keep the organization's secrets secret.
 - v. **Punctuality:** A good Secretary should be regular and punctual at work.
 - vi. **Courtesy:** The Secretary should observe the basic codes of human relations such as 'Good morning', 'Good-day', 'Please', 'Thank you'.
 - vii. **Due Diligence:** Means avoidance of mistakes or typographical errors and paying attention to details. This is an important asset of a secretary in order to produce mailable document.
 - viii. **Being proactive:** The secretary should be able to take necessary prior action to forestall its happening. The secretary should use his initiative and discretion in doing the job without waiting for the boss. He should always think of improving himself and his job.
 - ix. **Self-confidence:** Fear causes tensions and affects our emotional stability negatively as well as our self-confidence. You should learn to control your emotions and develop your self-confidence.
 - x. **Good Telephone Personality:** Telephone communication requires good voice, pleasant manner and friendly attitude.
 - xi. **Appearance:** The secretary should be neat and decently dressed always.
 - xii. **Organizational skills:** These skills are required in order to achieve organizational objectives.
 - xiii. **Confidentiality:** The security of the office and equipment falls within the 'corporate schedule' of the secretary. Consequently, one of the ethical core values which facilitate the success of the professional secretary is confidentiality.
 - xiv. **Leadership:** The leadership competence of the secretary is usually required for the effective management of co-workers and observance of decorum in the office.
 - xv. **Computer Competencies:** Your knowledge of the computer will not be an asset to your organization, until it adds value, hence the secretary needs to move from the level of computer appreciation to being computer-proficient.

They went further to outline some unethical practices of the modern professional secretaries in Nigeria as follows:

- i. Some entrants into the secretarial profession only did so as a means of last resort for waged employment and not out of interest; hence the passion for excellence is lacking.
- ii. Communication deficiencies, usually as a result of the porous basic foundation in English usage.
- iii. Low confidence level.
- iv. Poor organizational ability.
- v. Unlawful trading in offices during corporate hours.

- vi. Improper delineation of hierarchy and command structure that often create conflicts between the professional secretary and other support staff like: clerical officers etc.
- vii. Information diarrhoea/Leakage/Mismanagement.
- viii. Gossip/Rumour mongering.
- ix. Lateness/Absenteeism
- x. Erroneous notion of the professional secretary's career as being meant solely for females.
- xi. Poor human relations.
- xii. Quarrelling.
- xiii. Un-ending discussion.
- xiv. Improper dressing.
- xv. Poor listening technique.
- xvi. Poor leadership and followership styles.

Organizational Goals

An Organization is a group of people identified by a shared interest or purpose, e.g. a business. Goal is something that somebody wants to achieve, or the purpose for undertaking a task. It is a purpose or objective toward which an endeavour or effort is directed (Microsoft® Encarta® 2009). Goal can also be said to be a desired future state that an organization attempts to realize.

In a rapidly evolving environment, where skills and capabilities continuously play a vital role in achieving set goals, organizations must be able to adapt fast so as to attract, retain and integrate their workers with respect to new challenges of globalisation and technological advancement. Ensuring that their workers can construct and share strategically valuable knowledge. Organisations must be able to arouse, directs and sustained human behaviour to achieve organisational goals and meet the needs of their clients or customers. Many organisations have failed to link employee's interest to those of the organisations and as such, employees and employers job contract has become unstable, with higher labour turn over, (Ajang, 2015). Job performance has to be goal relevant. Performance must be directed toward organizational goals that are relevant to the job or role.

What is Job Performance?

Job performance is the work related activities expected of an employee and how well those activities were executed. Many organizations personnel directors assess the job performance of each employee on an annual or quarterly basis in order to help them identify suggested areas for improvement.

Also, job performance is the way employees perform their work. An employee's performance is determined during job performance review, with an employer taking into account factors such as leadership skills, time management, organizational skill,

and productivity to analyze each employee on an individual basis. Job performance reviews are often done yearly and on determining raise eligibility, whether an employee is right for promotion or even if an employee should be fired.

Job performance is also defined as the overall expected value from employees' behaviour carried out over the course of a set period of time (Motowildo, Borman & Schrudt, 1997). This definition although fairly technical, includes specific ideas that are worth breaking down:

Performance is a property of behaviour plainly stated, what people should do at work. An employee's behaviour adds expected value to the organization – that is, an employee's behaviour may be distinguished as helping or hindering an organization in achieving its goals.

Contextual performance; these are the behaviours that contribute to overall effectiveness through supporting the social and psychological climate of the workplace, for example diffusion of conflicts, cooperating with teammates, and cleaning up conference room.

Psychologists say that what they call “contextual performance” also leads to good job performance. Contextual performance means doing things beyond the simple job performance, such as volunteering, putting in extra effort, cooperating, following rules and procedures, and endorsing the goals of the organization.

If you are looking to see if you will do well at a job, you need to see if you have the personality that fits the job, not just the smarts to do the job. (American Psychology Association).

Factors Affecting Job Performance of Professional Secretaries

Causes of Low Job Performance

Low productivity is the way by which productivity falls short of the high standards that are less than perfect.

- i. Job Stress:** Stress is a universal element and persons from nearly every walk of life have to face stress. Stress has become major problem for employer particularly in developing nations where the employer doesn't realize the impact of stress on employee performance which contribute to lower job performance originating from dissatisfaction & high turnover ultimately affecting organizational goals and objectives, (Imtiaz, & Ahmad, 2015).

- ii. Role conflict:** Role conflict can have many different effects on the work-life of an individual. Having multiple roles will often lead to job dissatisfaction. There are many de-motivational effects of role conflict on work. Experiencing role conflict within the work place may also lead to workplace bullying. When

organizational change is done, workers often experience either a loss or a gain in areas of their job, thus changing the expectations of the worker. Change is often very stressful for workers. Workers who might have lost a degree of power may feel like they lost their authority and begin to lash out at other employees by being verbally abusive, purposefully withholding work related items, or sometimes even physically to withhold their status, (Cote, & Miners, 2006; Tang, & Chang, 2010)

- iii. **Lack of Communication:** The biggest problem with any relationship is lack of communication. And that extends beyond the personal life and into the work life. The issue starts when employees avoid speaking forthright to their employers for fear of retribution – valid feeling in many cases. But there are plenty of things employers can do to open the lines of communication, like making time for employees, giving feedback, listening closely, asking questions and above all else, not hiding in the office and directing traffic solely through emails. When communication breaks down, rumors run rampant and will directly impact productivity, focus and ultimately the finances of the company.”
- iv. **Unfair Pay:** Is hard to find an employee who thinks they make too much money. So the best employers can do is live up to fair-wage standards. The bottom line is that complaining about salary, in most cases, won't increase a worker's wage. What employees can do to boost their paychecks is emphasize their experience, improve their education, point out positive performance reviews, work less desirable but higher paying shifts, and exemplify successes.
- v. **Job Insecurity:** With outsourcing, downsizing, globalization and pressure to meet the bottom line, job security has become a scarce commodity. A substantial amount of employees have been made to feel as valuable to the company as a paper clip. Therefore, the backlash has been that workers are changing jobs frequently.
- vi. **Under Appreciation:** When employees don't feel appreciated, the stress it creates can have a fatal blow to a company's productivity and bottom line. There are several ways to display appreciation, but the simplest ones are sometimes all that is necessary.
- vii. **Favouritism:** Anytime someone receives special treatment at work, it's bound to ruffle the feathers of fellow employees. Whether it's more money, an undeserved promotion, or a better schedule, favoritism by an employer can be a destructive force to morale. When “who you know” becomes a blatant reason for advancement or preferential treatment, employees often find it tough to swallow this bitter pill.

- viii. Overworked:** If you've never felt overworked at one time in your career, you probably don't have a pulse. Aside from not getting paid enough, this is probably the most common complaint employees have – whether it's true or not. And it certainly can have more impact than getting a hundred cash less in your paycheck every week. The toll on overworked employees can include fatigue, irritability, weight gain / loss, insomnia, and a whole host of other physical and mental ailments.
- ix. Micromanagement:** Everyone has had the micromanaging boss breathing down their neck. The boss that is involved is great. The one who is over-involved can be a nightmare. The micromanager shows little trust in employees and robs them of the ability to do their job. Micromanagers usually have an obsessive-compulsive behavior and fear if they don't stay on top of an employee, then their job is on the line. The only real way to stop an employer from micromanaging is to tell them that you can produce better results if given the freedom to do so. Of course, that conversation has to be polite and tactful.
- x. Incompetent Managers:** There's at least one in every company. The man or woman who people shake their head at and ask, “How in the world did they get that job?” Thousands of unqualified bosses slip up the ranks and into positions they have no right to hold. It's just part of the work life, and it aggravates the heck out of employees. There's not a lot workers can do if they're under the thumb of a blundering boss, so turn the situation around. If the boss is no good, it gives the employee a better chance to stand out and score major bonus points with senior management.
- xi. No Opportunity for Advancement:** Finding yourself with a ceiling over your career is not a good place for an employee to be in. The first step is taking an honest look at the situation and listing the reasons you're not getting promoted. If an employee feels they're qualified and constantly getting passed up for a promotion, take the initiative, get yourself noticed and learn what's needed to be considered for the job. It may be the simple fact that there are no positions to move up into. And if that drags on for years, it may be time to move on to another company or line of work.
- xii. Overbearing Boss:** The offensive, overbearing boss is probably the biggest cliché of any workplace. Employees should take on bad boss behavior by:
- a. making sure they're doing things right;
 - b. documenting bad behavior;
 - c. finding a mentor within the company to confide in; and
 - d. if all else fails, report the monster to a supervisor or the human resources department.

- xiii. Lack of Training and Retraining:** Employees who are not sent for training to increase their knowledge on the job, sponsored for workshops and seminars cannot keep up with the rapid change and challenges in the business world; would not be able to perform according to expectations of their employers.
- xiv. Underequipped/Furnished Workstation:** Not having adequate equipment to carry out day-to-day responsibility can be so discouraging to any employee. Imagine a secretary with a broken chair he has to sit gently in order not to fall down, no photocopier, and no available stationeries among others cannot deliver to the expectation.
- xv. Unconducive Work Environment:** Broken or malfunctioning light fixtures are not only annoying, but poor lighting can also damage employee's eye health. Poor climate control can also cause employees to be chilled or deal with heat-related illnesses. In essence, a poor lighted and / or ventilated office can as well hinder employees' performance.

Ways of Enhancing Job Performance Resulting to High Job Performance The Employee (Professional Secretary)

For a secretary to achieve success at work and achieve organization goals is a challenge which must be overcome in order to remain on the job and at the same time be relevant to the job and office. Brent, Ruben and Jogelyn in **Adedayo, and Akinyele, (2012)** listed out the following as competencies and skills needed by secretaries in workplace.

Personal Competencies

- i. Positive Attitude:** A positive attitude in relation to managing work relationships and coping with change. This can be referred to as “can do” attitude and approaching work with enthusiasm.
- ii. Self-Motivation:** Self-motivation refers to an internal drive to get things done. This quality is associated with a positive attitude.
- iii. Flexibility and Adaptability:** Being flexible to and adapting well to change, whether it be in regard to position changes, changes in responsibility, or general organizational reorganization.
- iv. Integrity:** Honesty, especially as it applies to interpersonal dealings.
- v. Active Learner:** Willingness to continue to learning process on the job. Employers are looking for candidates who want to grow their knowledge-base for themselves, and to help the company.
- vi. Problem Solving:** The skill to resolve issues, and identify solutions to problems. The ability to understand a company's problem areas and to actively seek solutions to address the problems.
- vii. Decision Making Ability:** Fact-based decision making, which includes the skill to assess potential decisions based on facts, not assumptions.

viii. Loyalty: Commitment to the job and organization.

Communication Competencies

- i. Communication, Written and Oral:** Competency in effectively articulating ideas in both written and oral formats.
- ii. Public Speaking:** Oral communication skills, public speaking skills, and presentation skills. Presenting information clearly to groups.
- iii. Listening Skills:** This skill refers to the individual as an “active listener”. Some articles indicated that a good listener is one who repeats back to the speaker the essence of what they are saying to make sure that the meaning is understood.
- iv. Social Skills:** Getting along with others, participation in the creation of positive working relationships. This term is linked to team/group skills.
- v. Team/Group Skills:** Skills to work well in a team or group on projects and jobs. Drawing on combined strengths, including leadership ability and social skills, and the ability to be one of many who collaborate to get the job done.
- vi. Networking:** Skills to make connections between people, in offices or departments. This skill may be more important as it relates to company size.

Organizational Competencies

- i. Organization Skills:** Managing tasks and projects, and files well.
- ii. Leadership/Management Skills:** Skills to manage other people to get results and taking the initiative.
- iii. Systems Perspective:** This quality defines the individual as working within a broader system, and employers are seeking candidates who acknowledge that they are not working alone, but are part of a bigger system, part of the company as a whole (team spirit).
- iv. Computer Skills:** The skill to use a computer competently is a quality sought by employers. This includes knowledge of software packages. Other technical skills included knowledge of photocopiers, fax machines and other office equipment.
- v. Customer Orientation:** The skill related to both social skills and problem solving ability. The skill to relate to people/clients/customers, and address concerns or issues in a positive way. This skill has been more closely identified with smaller organizations (those of 200 employees or less).
- vi. Business Understanding:** Relating to a business environment and its processes. This kind of understanding would be gained through some sort of prior work experience.

Working Competence

- i. Get Organized:** With the onslaught of email, texting, tweeting and everything else, it can be challenging to stay on top of your workload if you are the one in charge of the social media accounts. Consider imposing some discipline on email interruptions; check the accounts within the interval of two hours and respond to those ones that need reply and log out. Do not linger around.

- ii. **Pay Attention:** Stop trying to multitask, jumping from one work to another before getting any completed. Concentrate on one task before undertaking another, unless if they are similar jobs that can be done at the same time to save you time.
- iii. **Put yourself in the mindset of your boss:** Especially when dealing with difficult supervisors. Empathize and discover your boss' style, so that you can imagine what he/she is looking for in an employee. You probably did a certain amount of research on your new employer during the application and interview stages. Now is the time to finish your research and round out your understanding of your employer's goals.
- iv. **Take a vacation/leave:** Give yourself genuine down time – time away from the office when you don't check the email and social networks or let yourself think about the next project. It can give you the sense of control, of purpose, it can shakeup your perception of time, offers the space to expand cultural horizons and allow the kind of relaxed break everyone needs to refuel.
- v. **Take time off between jobs:** Taking time off between jobs helps you to shake off the old routine and prepare for the new task. Humans are creators of habit. Any job, but especially one at which you have spent a considerable length of time, establishes a sense of routine in your life that you may unknowingly be reluctant to change. Even a few minutes off between jobs can help you to prepare for a new routine and a work environment.
- vi. **Do your homework:** Do plenty of research and preparation before you undertake any task. Don't take up your boss's time before you have performed plenty of legwork-prior to meeting, rehearse your strategy and objective.
- vii. **Arrive early, leave late:** Always being the last one in the door and the first one out will make it seem like you don't actually want to be there - a dangerous impression to make. Instead, always plan to be a little early, and don't be in a rush to leave at the end of the day besides giving the impression that you are enthusiastic and ambitious about your work, you will also gain a reputation of never being late unless there is a real emergency – a valuable reputation to hold.
- viii. **Get to know and understand your coworkers:** Your day-to-day happiness with your job depends on how you integrate yourself into the workplace's social network. Like it or not, you spend more waking hours with your coworkers than with almost other people in your life. Moreover, these people's opinions of you can directly impact your job performance. Try some humility. Most career advice seems to encourage relentless self-promotion.
- ix. **Ask for help:** Asking for or accepting help from your colleagues will help you not to waste time and energy on avoidable mistakes and will help avoid risking ostracizing yourself from them.

- x. **Teamwork, collaboration, joint problem solving:** Interact with others to some extent, work cooperatively to complete a task.
- xi. **Autonomy:** Have control over your work (opportunity to innovate and improve office environment, managing your own time, making decisions proactively).
- xii. **Proximity to Workplace:** Living close to work (a recent report on Radio Nigeria Network News affirms this as one of the reasons for non-productivity). People who live far from their workplace often come in late, exhausted and already disorganized.
- xiii. **Not engaging on Personal Ventures:** What is trending in the workplace these days is employees seeking other ways of sourcing funds, not relying solely on salaries. Economist and financial advisers might be right. But the employee who abandons his/her responsibility in pursuance of personal business would certainly not perform to the expectation of his/her boss.
- xiv. **Time management:** Not engaging on unnecessary visits to/from other colleagues that will lead to gossips and time wastage. Learn to manage your time well. Make a to-do list. Set priority of tasks to be completed and follow suit. Do not talk with friends on the phone for long hours. Do not waste time chatting and tweeting on your personal social media accounts during office hours.
- xv. **Get challenges that stretch you:** It is said that we stop learning when we die, that is true. That is why you need some new challenges that stretch you (but not to the point where you get highly stressed). Challenges that get you excited and get you on your feet. Asked for and accept special projects and assignments from your boss, projects that help you shake off the usual routine.

Ways Employers Can Enhance Employees' Job Performance

- i. **Equipment and Supplies:** The quality and quantity of your workplace equipment and supplies can have a direct influence on employees' performance. Not all companies can afford to-of-the-line computers, copiers, printers and expensive internet-ready phones, but keeping equipment and software up-to-date goes a long way in positive employee influence. And making sure employees have all the office supplies they need to do their job efficiently is a necessity.
- ii. **Work Environment:** Your office space must have quality lighting, good temperature controls and proper ventilation not only for employees' morale but also for their health.
- iii. **Important Prospects:** Every employee wants to know their work matters. Always putting up off the boring or unskilled jobs on the same person day in day out will certainly not help the person's performance morale. Allow everyone in your

office to work on a project involving teamwork with interesting research and hand-on display or materials assembly. Assigning special projects gives your employees a nice change of pace, a great sense of accomplishment, a sense of belonging as well as a renew sense of purpose in the knowledge that you trust them with critical work.

- iv. **Supportive Boss:** While few bosses could live up to the image of the perfect boss, a boss who is supportive and gives positive feedback on jobs well done helps influence employee's morale in positive ways.

A supportive boss is the one who looks for solutions rather than scapegoats when the team encounters a problem and when things go well, he/she is quick to recognize a job well done. An understanding boss recognizes when his staff is overworked and makes himself available occasionally even socializing with staff outside work hours (end-of-year diner).

- v. **Bonuses/Raises/Incentives:** The economy has made it tough for employers to give

bonuses and raises to top employees, but employers are starting to re-institute pay raises and bonuses plans in order to retain the best employees. Until employers are able to reward employees with salary increases and bonuses, however, incentives like meal tickets, comp time; inexpensive rewards are good alternatives for boosting employees' morale.

- vi. **Compensation and Advancement:** Perhaps the clearest internal motivator on an

employee's behaviour is whether he feels the company pays him what his work is worth and provides him with the opportunities for career advancement. That is because income and career prospect are vital to a person's livelihood and so can profoundly motivate behaviour. If a company falls short on either pay or promotion, an employee may begin to suspect the company is taking advantage of him - especially if he sees his colleagues getting better treatment.

- vii. **Workplace Culture:** It is prone to cliques and office politics that divert people's attention and energy away from the mission of the organization. Discourage selfish opportunism and destructive rivalry by making them reliable through discipline and disincentive. In their places, promote cooperation, constructive rivalry and respect for people's individuality.

- viii. **Harassment and Discrimination:** Harassment and discrimination are a constant risk. This can be external, resulting from broader social prejudices or the psychological problems of specific employees. It can also be internal, resulting from company policies that favour certain groups at the expense of others. If an employee has to worry about being mistreated, he is not going to live up to his potentials... nor will your company. Make it a priority to watch for these dynamics and uproot them immediately, most of all, take your employees seriously when they report harassment.

- ix. **Personal Factor:** A person's life does not stop and start at the office front door.

Sometimes, there are things at home that an employee is dealing with that weigh heavily on his mind. Big events such as upcoming nuptials, a death in the family or even something small like a fight with her spouse can affect an employee's work behaviour. Everyone has a bad day or two, but if the employee cannot seem to snap out of his new attitude, talk to him about the change in behaviour.

8. Conclusions

It is not an overstatement to say that the secretary is one single employee of any organization

that is most important and needed. He is the only person trained in the efficient and the effective management of information, office correspondence and human resource for the benefit of the organization and in attaining the organization's goals.

Productivity is the quality that indicates how well labour, capital, material and energy are utilized. It is the output resulting from a given resources' input at a given time. It is the ratio between input and output.

The issue of inefficient performance of secretaries has in recent times been a matter of great concern to organizations. Employees must know what they need to do to perform their jobs successfully. One thing the secretary needs in order to keep his job is retraining. However, a well motivated, trained and remunerated secretary is capable of achieving his productivity with experience acquired on the knowledge of technological advancement. To be more productive, the secretary needs to be equipped with equipment, good working environment and materials required for the job.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, we recommend as follows:

- a. For Secretarial Staff to perform to the expectation of employers towards achieving organizational goals the staff has to possess and follow certain professional ethics and attributes such as and not limited to the following:
 - i. Flexibility and Adaptability
 - ii. Tactful
 - iii. Punctuality
 - iv. Courtesy
 - v. Confidentiality
 - vi. Loyalty
 - vii. Honesty and integrity.
- b. The employer in turn must be committed to achieving organizational goals by providing certain needs for a conducive working atmosphere to enhance productivity of the secretary. among such are:
 - i. Equipment and supplies:
 - ii. Good work environment:

- iii. Bonuses/raises/incentives:
- iv. Compensation and advancement:

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