

## **PROMOTING EMPLOYER'S SUCCESS THROUGH SECRETARIAL PROFESSION, SERVICES AND PROPER STRESS MANAGEMENT IN THE PRESENT JET AGE**

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### **Abstract**

The role of the secretary has changed as management philosophies in the business world have changed. The effective performance of the professional secretary depends upon the office equipment, knowledge and skills of professional secretary. Secretaries play an essential role in any work organization, but their contributions and support in the daily management activities are not always recognized. This paper looks into how to promote employer's success through secretarial profession, services and proper stress management in our present jet age. The paper discusses the duties of professional secretaries, how to manage stress and **competencies required by a professional secretary for employer's success**. The paper concludes with the fact that Secretary often acts as an information and reference point for the organization and other committee members. It is discovered that for the employer to be successful, professional secretary is in the position to manage and minimize potential stressors that could negatively affect the health of the organization. It thus recommends, among others, that for secretarial profession to continue promoting employer's success, professional secretaries need to be more concerned with updating their skills on **shorthand, typewriting/key boarding at appropriate speed, good command of English language**, knowledge of the organization, stress management skills, modern equipment, modern office technology, personnel psychology and acquiring more useful experiences through trainings, conferences, intimating themselves with the global office world through the internet.

**Keywords:** Professional Secretary, Employer, Stress Management.

### **Introduction**

The role of the secretary has recently become the focus for considerable research. Today a professional secretary plays an important role in assisting employers to enable them to carry out their job successfully. His or her support is seen as being crucial. It does require effective administrative and communication skills. The

secretary is responsible for the efficient administration of a company, particularly with regard to ensuring compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements and for ensuring that decisions of the organization are implemented. Therefore, office and the role secretaries need to play in ensuring accuracy and efficiency in their jobs, the secretaries need to meet the challenges by acquiring new skills and competencies for efficient operations in the electronic office. The roles of secretarial professionals have been turned around by technology. It has provided the tools that shift the role of secretaries from that of information recorders to business strategists (Adedoyin, 2010; Appah & Emeh, 2011). As a result, secretaries are supposed to be abreast with modern technologies to meet the demand of employers. As the office becomes increasingly dependent on technology, computers have become standard equipment. Considering the lack of research on promoting employer's success through secretarial profession, it is the objective of this paper to investigate stress management in the secretarial profession and its effect on employer's success

### **Who is Secretary?**

A secretary as a person who handles correspondence, keeps records, and does general clerical work for an individual, organization etc. Mayer (1997) defined a secretary as an executive assistant, who possesses a mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility with or without supervision, exercises initiatives and judgment and makes decision within the scope of assigned authority.

**A professional secretary known as a confidential secretary is one who by reason of appropriate training has acquired certificates from recognized institutions of higher learning after offering accredited courses which must include compulsorily the following: shorthand, typewriting/ keyboarding at different stages and levels with corresponding speed and good command of English language.**

A professional secretary performs tasks similar to an executive or administrative assistant. Generally, a professional secretary coordinates the daily routines of an office and organizes the office schedules and paper work. Professional secretary's duties require analysis of the situation, judgment, technical knowledge and creativity (Adebayo & Akinyele, 2012). As an office professional, the professional secretary has the responsibility to organize the work flow so that the employer will feel that everything is under control, with all projects completed when needed.

Professional secretaries, also known as administrative assistants or executive assistants, assist executives, administrators and other office workers. They have both information management and clerical duties. Specific job tasks include maintaining databases, composing correspondence and organizing meetings and conference calls. Professional secretaries are now referred to as office managers by some people

because of their activities, education, skill acquisition, knowledge and even expectations from their bosses, customers, clients and even the general public.

### **Who are Employers?**

An **employer** is a person or institution that hires employees or workers. **Employers** offer wages or a salary to the workers in exchange for the worker's work or labour. An employer is an organization, government entity, agency, company, professional services firm, nonprofit association, small business, store, or individual who employs or puts to work, a person who is called an employee. In exchange for the employee's work or services, the employer pays compensation that may include a salary or wage. Most employers offer employees a comprehensive employee benefits package, as they can afford to offer benefits, including health insurance and paid time off, holidays, and vacation (Susan, 2015). Therefore, it 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 (Business Dictionary, 2015).

On the other hand, an employer can be any person, company, association, or body of persons, employing an employee. An employer is liable to pay contributions after hiring an employee for one or more days in a month. Every employer is required by law to register his company. Furthermore an employer may be defined as any person, company, association or body of persons: With whom the employee has entered into a contract or agreement of employment regardless of whether the contract or agreement is written, oral, expressed or implied.

### **Functions of Employers**

- Provide information, instruction and supervision to workers
- Appointing a competent supervisors or workers;
- Protecting workers health and safety;
- Advise workers on their performance;
- Building and structure the workplace, whether temporary or permanent, to be capable of supporting any workloads.

### **What is Stress Management?**

**Stress management** refers to the wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person's levels of **stress**, especially chronic **stress**, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning. Stress is what you feel when you have to handle more than you are used to. When you are stressed, your body responds as though you are in danger. It makes hormones that speed up your heart, make you breathe faster, and give you a burst of energy. This is called the fight-or-flight stress

response.

Some stress is normal and even useful. Stress can help if you need to work hard or react quickly. But if stress happens too often or lasts too long, it can have bad effects. It can be linked to headaches, an upset stomach, back pain, and trouble sleeping. It can weaken one immune system, making it harder to fight off disease. If worker already have a health problem, stress may make it worse. It can make him or her moody, tense, or depressed.

Job stress is an unpleasant emotional situation that an individual experiences when the requirements of job are not counter balanced with his ability to cope with the situation. It is a well-known phenomenon that expresses itself different in different work situations and affects the workers differently (Malek, 2010).

Work-related stress was once thought of as occurring only in those who work in senior positions; it is now acknowledged that occupational stress can be experienced by employees at every level (Williams, 2003). In fact, stress is much more common in employees at lower levels of workplace hierarchies, where they have less control over their work situation.

### **Stress Management and Secretarial Profession**

Secretaries play an essential role in any organization, but their contributions and support in the daily management activities are not always recognized (Flam, 2002). Often, secretaries perform highly demanding tasks but have minimal control over job conditions, which makes them prone to occupational stress (Snow, Swan, Raghavan, Connell & Klein, 2003). It has been documented that the degree of control that employees have determines whether they experience stress and how they cope with it.

It was identified that lack of control, increasing demands, lack of recognition and interpersonal frustration caused by colleagues and supervisors as typical stressors for secretaries (Herrting, Nilsson, Theorell & Larsson, 2003). Generally, work-related stress affects employees negatively in their fulfilment and functioning at work, which often results in feelings of dissatisfaction with their achievements and unhappiness.

To a very great extent, stress can be controlled by creating supportive organizational climate. Supportive organizational climate depends upon managerial leadership rather than the use of power and money to control organizational behaviour. In using managerial leadership, the secretary will primarily focus on participation and involvement of all staff in decision making process. This will reduce stress and enhance employer's success. Such a climate develops belongingness among people which helps them to reduce their stress. Secretary can also reduce stress in the work place by breaking down the job to various components that clarifies the role of the job incumbent for the entire system. This helps to eliminate imposing unrealistic

expectations on the individual workers. As a result, role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload can be minimized.

### **Role and Duties of a Secretary**

- To ensure compliance of the provisions of organization Law and rules made there-under and other statutes and bye-laws of the organization.
- To ensure that business of the organization is conducted in accordance with its objects as contained in its memorandum of association.
- To ensure that affairs of the organization are managed in accordance with its objects contained in the articles of association and the provisions of the Companies Law.
- To prepare the agenda in consultation with the Chairman and the other documents for all the meetings of the board of directors, Heads of Departments and each boss.
- To arrange with and to call and hold meetings of the board and to prepare a correct record of proceedings.
- To have custody of the seal of the organization and other vital documents of the office.
- Filling of various documents/returns as required under the provisions of the organization or an office.
- Proper maintenance of books and registers files of the organization as required.
- To issue notice and agenda of meetings to every director, heads of departments or persons involved in such meeting of the organization.
- To record the minutes and keep the record of all general meetings

### **Competencies Required by a Profession Secretary for Employer's Success**

**Adebayo and Akinyele (2012)** listed out the following as competencies and skills needed by secretaries **for employer's success:**

- **Personal Competencies**
- **Positive Attitude**
- **Self Motivation**
- **Flexibility and Adaptability**
- **Integrity:** Honesty, especially as it applies to interpersonal dealings.
- **Active Learner:** Willingness to continue to learning process on the job.
- **Problem Solving skill**
- **Decision Making Ability**
- **Analytic/Cognitive Ability**
- **GPA/Academic Achievement**

- **Loyalty:** Commitment to the job and organization.
- **Communication Competencies**
- **Communication, Written and Oral**
- **Public Speaking**
- **Listening Skills**
- **Social Skills:** participation in the creation of positive working relationships.
- **Team/Group Skills:** Skills to work well in a team or group on projects and jobs.
- **Networking:** Skills to make connections between people, in offices or departments.
- **Organizational Competencies**
- **Organization Skills:** Managing tasks and projects, and files well.
- **Leadership/Management Skills:** Skills to manage other people to get results.
- **Meeting Skills:** The skill to successfully run meetings and participate in meetings.
- **Systems Perspective**
- **Computer Skills**
- **Economics/Statistics:** Business courses in economics and/or statistics.
- **Quality Approach Knowledge:** The understanding of work as a process.
- **Work Experience**
- **Customer Orientation**
- **International/Intercultural Competencies**
- **Cross-Cultural Competency**
- **International Knowledge:** A basic understanding of international business workings.
- **Second Language:** Some employers are seeking candidates with skills in other languages.
- **(International) Management:** Business course in management or international management.
- **(International) Marketing:** Business course in marketing or international marketing.
- **(International) Trade Theory:** Business course in trade theory or international trade theory.
- **(International) Human Resources:** Business course in human resources or international human resources.

### **Ethical Demands on the Professional Secretary**

Some of the ethical demands on the professional secretary for employer's success include:

- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** A good secretary must be able to work in any organization by adapting to the situation he finds himself.
- **Poise:** The Professional Secretary should be calm and poised always.



- **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.
- **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.
- **Punctuality:** A good Secretary should be regular and punctual at work.
- **Courtesy:** The Secretary should observe the basic codes of human relations such as 'Good morning', 'good day', 'Please', 'Thank you'.
- **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.
- **Being proactive:** The secretary should be able to take necessary prior action to forestall its happening. The secretary should use her initiative and discretion in doing the job without waiting for the boss. She should always think of improving herself and her job.
- **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.
- **Good Telephone Personality:** Telephone communication requires good voice, pleasant manner and friendly attitude.
- **Appearance:** The secretary should be neat and decently dressed always.
- **Organizational skills:** These skills are required in order to achieve organizational objectives.
- **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.
- **Leadership:** The leadership competence of the secretary is usually required for the effective management of co-workers and observance of decorum in the office.
- **Capacity-building:** Through peer-review mechanisms, attendance at professional workshops and conferences, and membership of professional associations, like: Association of Professional Secretarial Staff of Nigeria (APSSON), International Association of Administrative Professional (IAAP),
- **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.

### **How Secretarial Profession Promotes Employer's Success**

Secretaries have always been indispensable individuals in all types of organizations; they have relieved countless executives of detail and cut red tape for

customers and employees. The traditional role of a secretary was to support **employers** by helping to manage his schedules, handle visitors and callers, and produce document and communications (Mugisha, 2009). In recent times however, the nature of secretarial work has changed drastically, with more professional secretaries keying in their own correspondences and more files being stored electronically. As the reliance on technology continues to expand in offices, the role of the office professional has greatly evolved.

With office automation and organizational restructuring, secretaries are increasingly assuming responsibilities once reserved for managerial and professional staff. In spite of these changes, however, the core responsibilities for secretaries have remained much the same: performing and coordinating an office's administrative activities and storing, retrieving, and integrating information for dissemination to staff and clients. Secretaries, in our present jet age are doing more professional work. They are involved in training, supervision, desktop publishing, information management and research. They also help in equipment purchase and maintenance, customer service, project management, public relations and supervision of outside vendors, there by **promoting employer's success**.

Furthermore, effective performance of the Professional Secretary depends upon the office equipment, knowledge and skills of Professional Secretary (Akpomi & Ordu, 2009). Today's secretaries are exposed to office technology including the internet that makes work much easier and knowledge more accessible. It is now easier to send messages by telex, electronic mails (e-mails), fax and telephones. Other office gadgets available to the secretary are photocopy machines, duplicating machines, dictating machines, printers, among others; these enhance the secretary's work and **promoting employer's success**.

### **Conclusion**

It was evident that professional secretary often acts as an information and reference point for the organization and other committee members: clarifying past practice and decisions; confirming legal requirements; and retrieving relevant documentation. These make secretaries indispensable individuals in all types of organizations. It was discovered that for employers to be successful secretaries are in the position to manage stress or minimize potential stressors that could negatively affect the health of the employees and the organization. *The secretarial profession has positively improved performance level in offices and this has contributed to employer's success* in our present jet age.

### **Recommendations**

In our present jet age, where technology is changing rapidly, professional secretaries need to be more concerned with updating their skills on **shorthand, typewriting/**



**keyboarding at appropriate speed, good command of English language,** knowledge of the organization, modern equipment, modern office technology, personnel psychology and acquiring more useful experiences through trainings, conferences, intimating themselves with the global office world through the internet etc.

Because of many different responsibilities, Professional Secretaries should both be able to multitask and prioritize tasks well. Strong communication, interpersonal, organization and management skills are also critical for a Professional Secretary to enhance employer's success in the organization.

It is also recommended that professional secretaries should go for training provided by their employers. This will help to get more awareness about advanced software and innovative technologies because secretaries are required to be proficient in a range of software program such as word processing, spreadsheets and database applications which will promote employer's success.

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