

## **HARNESSING THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY THROUGH SECRETARIAL PROFESSION**

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### **Abstract**

The advent of the electronic mail, PCs on every desk, the internet and application to education have produced amazing results. Knowledge and information have become the most important currency for productivity, competitiveness, and increased wealth and prosperity. Nations have placed greater emphasis on developing their human capital. Governments around the world are focusing on strategies to increase access to and improve the quality of education. Methods of achieving organizational goals are changing. This paper took a study of harnessing the power of technology through secretarial profession in the transformation agenda and increasing the role of secretarial profession in nation building. It proffers solution to the challenges secretarial professionals are experiencing in the performance of their duties and made some recommendations.

**Keywords:** Technology, Secretarial Profession, Transformation Agenda, human capital

### **Introduction**

With the constant introduction of several new technologies into the workplace, the traditional office is fast giving way to modern technological operations in both the nature of the work and the role of the Secretary. Mechanical technology inherent in the traditional office has now been replaced by digital technology. The clamor for revision was necessitated by the fact that the skills, attitudes and knowledge previously acquired in the course of study were inadequate to arm the graduates with the competencies needed to adjust to rapidly changing needs of the society. What should be the fate of the skills of traditional shorthand and typewriting in consideration of the need to reform the content of the secretarial studies?

There is a revolution going on in the office, it's about development in technology. This involves new ways of handling and using information by the secretary. We live in an "Information Society" as the effective use of information is regarded as the defining element of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, as important as the industrial revolution. Modern offices are different from the old; the crude and

manual ways of handling information are giving way to electronic data processing and computers. For an effective management to keep pace with the demands of the modern office, there has emerged the need to train and re-train secretaries to meet the desire of the modern offices. Other facilities like: E-mail, Internet, ATM, Research, Referencing, e-library, Reports, Interactive instruction, Problem-solving platform, Networking etc. Technology in office has served as information and communication strategy for the success and survival of every small and medium entrepreneur (SME) using multimedia gadgets. The idea of harnessing technology in office has created network environment in the office setting, workplace and schools. Information is made possible, faster, authentic and available with the advent of technology in office. Harnessing technology in office has almost overtaken the traditional method of storing and retrieving of information and documentation. New skills and self reliance is developed through the use of computer; the introduction of technology in office, has to some extent, solve the societal problems of unemployment by meeting the needs of learners, graduates and employers.

### **What is Office Technology?**

This is a broad term that has to do with the harnessing of the process, the methods and the product of electronic and communication related technologies. It is also the process of harnessing of other related resources in today's effective information-driven society for enhancing the production, the spread and efficiency of a set of programmed activities, geared towards the achievement of clearly determined goals, Obanya 2002; Onuma (2007) as cited by Omaghomi and Obrike (2010)

Okagbare-Okiti (2005) in Omaghomi and Obrike (2010), sees an office to be a place (room or building) where the administrative work of an organization is done and where all sorts of paper work such as letters, records, files, correspondence are carried out to develop and control the various activities of business. Technology is the application of the scientific knowledge in practical ways. Therefore office technology is the application of scientific knowledge in carrying out the office functions. The term office technology includes anything from a date stamp that costs less than a naira to an integrated computer system costing millions of naira. **Office Technology is the basic required skills in the usage of office equipment and operational techniques for maximum output by the secretary.** This clearly determined goal, which is effective management, cannot be achieved without sound knowledge of technology, which was identified as a factor that cannot promote quality in management profession, Gbadamosi (2006), as cited by Omaghomi and Obrike (2010).

### **The Role of the Modern Secretary**

Secretarial practice has existed since ancient times. It has been playing a leading role in the growth and development of human knowledge. Even before the

birth of Jesus Christ, there were secretaries (scribes) whose duties were to record the speeches of great Roman Orators, such as Cicero, as well as the word spoken by Kings to their subjects. During that time, the transcripts were handwritten and the work of the secretary was slow, laborious and limited Blackburn, (2001).

However, secretarial practice as a distinct sphere of human endeavour has come to be formally recognized, after the invention of the first functional manual typewriter by the trio of Christopher Nathan Sholes; Charles Gleaden and Samuel Soel in (1874) in Olise (2010). This invention, coupled with the development of the two popular systems of shorthand (invented by Sir Isaac Pitman in 1837 in England) and Gregg Shorthand (developed by Dr. John Gregg in 1880 in the United States of America) created a unique group of office workers who produce, transmit, store, retrieve and manage the vast array of information needed to keep organizations going. The role of the secretary transformed from that of a scribe to that of a more complex work of office management, information generation and information management.

Given the advantage of speedy information generation that the use of shorthand brought about, a major part of the secretary's day to day work involved recording information and transcribing comprehensible information from dictated material as well as from manuscripts. The secretary, therefore, became an indispensable companion of top management in facilitating administration and business transaction. Working closely with top management, the secretary became highly involved in promoting the efficiency and effectiveness of top management, relieving her boss of all routine work, ensuring the smooth running of the office and providing top management staff with structured and filtered information for easy decision making. Clake and Klein (2004).

The secretary today according to Ntukidem (2000) cited in Peter (2010) is regarded as a 'confidant', one who is entrusted with the secret matters of the chief executives or a keeper of secrets, whose work is of a confidential nature. A secretary as defined by Oladunjoye cited in Peter (2010) is an assistant to an executive who possesses the mastery of office skills and ability to assume responsibilities without direct supervision, one who displays initiative, exercises judgment and makes decisions within the scope of her authority. Today's secretary must be intelligent, alert, interesting and socially amiable. She must possess a good memory of places, names and events. She must maximize her use of the opportunities which modern technology provides for quick, effective discharge of her secretarial functions. Hence she must possess ability to operate or access modern technological tools and skills such as computer, which is considered today as integral and indispensable machine to secretarial functions Ntukidem (2000) cited in Peter (2010).

### **The Influence of Technology on Secretarial Practice Today**

At present, profound changes are being introduced into office work, particularly into secretarial practice, because of the impact of information and

communication technology. This development has brought tremendous changes to the work of the secretary in the modern office and now new elicits new interests and concerns about the future of secretarial practice and its career prospects in the face of rapid development in information and communication technology tools and procedures. However, despite all the orchestration about ICT, it has only merely appropriated the benefits of office automation which has been with us for some time now. According to Hines (2004), tediousness and fatigue did not allow workers to perform a greater amount of work than human effort would allow. Accuracy of output is also enhanced and, since machines are not humans, they do not often experience fatigue, except when the necessary conditions are not in place.

However, no matter how ingeniously fashioned these automated tools may be, they cannot take away the need for secretaries in organizations. When we say the secretaries, the innovations in office procedures and practices have started to reduce the emphasis on some traditional secretarial jobs e.g. shorthand note-taking, copy typing and manual filing. On the other hand, it is creating new occupations, which support modern office culture. These new occupations are those that are aimed at helping managers and executives of corporations to use information technology to free their time and energy so that they can concentrate on other jobs of strategic management. Secretaries are therefore, expected to harness the power technology to help them to generate, store and disseminate information they need for decision making at every stage. If company executives have to spend all their valuable time in using the computer to generate or search for information, there is no doubt that their main jobs will suffer. The modern secretary is expected to harness the power of technology to assist his/her principal and others to obtain accurate, adequate and timely information and this will constitute a higher part of his/her work in the modern office than note-taking, letter-writing, typing and filing.

The effect of information technology on office work is readily seen from the widespread use of computers/word processing equipment and knowledge in modern offices. Microcomputers are now common place equipment in government and business offices of all sizes. This is why Pigers and Myers (2000) saw the secretarial occupation today as a very demanding occupation that requires competence in a wider range of skills. As a consequence, she added that the reward for this expertise is a career with plenty of individual responsibilities. This expands the (secretary's) skills and talents and offers satisfaction, good financial reward and opportunities for promotion and advancement. In view of this, secretaries in training need a strong fortune in the present business environment. In the words of Calhoun (2001) today's secretaries must be versatile and must possess the readiness and capacity for lifetime learning and re-learning of job skills.

### **Factors Militating against Effective Application of Computer Skills by Confidential Secretaries**

Today, computerized systems are used in almost every aspect of business transactions in offices. This modern trend has revolutionized the business office landscape and is aimed at remaining competitively efficient and productive. This invariably has brought great relief to confidential secretaries in the performance of their tedious daily routines especially in the areas of word/data processing, communication, storage and retrieval, archiving, reprographics and general information management. This trend has also necessitated greater speed and accuracy in the performance of secretarial functions. The functions of modern confidential secretaries which has been summarized by Nwanewezi and Abaniwo (2003) in Ohakwe (2004) to involve keeping abreast of organizational directives, ensuring effective and efficient processing of project documents, using computer/word processing/desktop applications skills to produce complex text, reports, figures and graphs, collecting and imputing data and information into central databases and processing up-to-date project status reports, no doubt, require excellent application of computer skills by confidential secretaries.

The computer competent employee is also aware of the computer's impact on society and is conversant with computerization. It seems, however, that the most commonly used computer skill by the Nigerian employee is the word-processing application by the confidential secretaries; Ohakwe (2004).

This could be regarded as a gross under-utilization of the computer for business operations since word-processing is only computer application out of so many that could facilitate and actually enhance the efficient performance of office employees like the confidential secretary. Many secretaries might not yet be competent in the practical application of numerous computer skills expected of them in order to improve their general performance and productivity in the highly automated business offices in which they might be working, Ohakwe (2004). He listed some of the problems militating against office automation in Nigeria to include:

- i) Inadequate computers for use by confidential secretaries in the discharge of their daily functions.
- ii) Non-availability of appropriate software to meet special secretarial needs.
- iii) Incompetence of confidential secretaries to fully utilize the potentials of computers.
- iv) Lack of adequate up-to-date training and retraining of confidential secretaries.
- v) Resistance to change over to computerized business systems due to fear of

loss of job.

- vi) Frequent electricity outages leading to delays and disruptions in the completion of tasks.
- vii) Inability of companies to connect to local and global networks especially the Internet.

### **The Relevance of Secretarial in Modern Times**

There is a growing notion that the secretarial profession is seriously being threatened by the giant strides being made in the field of information technology, particularly in the use of computers for text processing, information dissemination and storage. These concerns arise from the vast capabilities and potentials that computers have in recording and transmitting information. This notion is being heightened by the development of Voice Recognition Technology, which is now allowing people who can hardly type on the keyboard to orally dictate their information or data to the computer and get their desired output. Although there are some difficulties at present, it is generally believed that these will soon be overcome. The current notion, therefore, is that when this happens, the demand for secretaries will drastically reduce. However, there are those who still feel despite the commendable improvement in office technology, the position of the secretary will remain relevant for a considerable time to come because the following functions of a secretary cannot be undertaken by the computer without serious distortions or even frustrations:

- Receiving visitors and answering enquiries in relation to the department or organization.
- Answering telephone calls and providing information on behalf of the executive, the department or company.
- Preparing replies to routine correspondence in a manner that promotes the image of the organization.
- Making inquiries for information that may be needed by the executive, department or company for planning and decision making.
- Supervision of other staff in the office.
- Planning budgeting and organizing the work of the department or office.
- Making appointments, arranging for meetings and taking down and producing minutes that make sense.
- Conveying and implementing decisions taken at meetings.
- Collecting, collating and analyzing information from various sources for planning and decision making.
- Records Management.
- Follow up actions.

As can be seen from the above list, while the dictation, transcription and



typing aspects of the secretary's work may reduce as a result of the effect of the use of office technology, the office functions in the above list that are carried out or directed by secretaries cannot be replaced by the computer or any other piece of equipment for that matter. Secretaries, therefore, will continue to serve as the pivot around which all the activities of the office revolve, and since the office is the nerve center of any organization, secretaries will continue to be a force to be reckoned with in the sustenance and growth of any organization. This is why Nwosu (2000) has to say that secretarial functions are universally acknowledge as indispensable contributions to the conduct of business, government, profession and industrial work. Blackburn (2001) even put it more succinctly when he states that secretaries are a wonderful group of experts without whom the bosses of the earth would perish. Eni (2006) reinforced this position by stating that no organization can operate satisfactorily without the services of a secretary, for he/she occupies an important position in the life of any organization. While Whitehead (1980) in Olise (2010), sees the secretary as one who acts as the executive's alter ego and is the power behind the throne in many executive situations. In a nutshell, it is not an exaggeration to say that the quality of administrative work in any organization is a reflection of the quality of secretarial service in that organization. Therefore, harnessing the power of technology will enable the secretaries more relevance and contributes toward nation building of our great nation.

In the new era of business, information plays a key role hence the urgent need for the use of computers. Computer helps to create, store, and transfer vital information and the use of computer has made the world to be a global village. For one to survive and make giant strides in the business world there is need for computers. Therefore, the use of computer is important in all aspects of human activities in both developed and developing nations, Obayi (2005). Not only are our business and government activities dependent on computer technology, but computers now have tremendous impacts on the way we live, play and learn, Stair & Slair (2001) The above view stresses the role of computers in business, government organization as well as for leisure and learning process. The use of computer is relevant in all professions. We need to integrate it in Secretarial Education so as to properly fit into the present challenges in our work environment. If the goals and objective of Secretarial Education are to be achieved in practical terms, there is need to improve on computer related courses. There are many reasons why Secretarial Education Programmes should be intensively computer based. Some of these are:

To enable Secretarial Education graduate to be relevant to the present day challenges of office automation.

To make the Secretarial Education graduates to possess skills, that will make them easily employable.

The study of computer will also make them to have good and open career growth in their various fields of specialization/professions open to them.

The study of computer will help graduates of Secretarial Education to have easy access to learning and Research in various aspects of knowledge.

The inclusion of computer studies in Business Education at various levels will enhance the teaching and learning process in all our education institutions/trade centres.

The integration of computer in Secretarial Education courses will enhance the professional status of Secretarial Educators and this will make them to be more relevant to the present economic realities.

Professional teachers in Secretarial Education need to store, retrieve, and transfer information regularly. The use of computer will be essential to facilitate the present challenge of business complexities.

### **Harnessing the Power of Technology in Effective Management**

Managers cannot plan, organize, lead, and control effectively unless they have access to information Omaghomi, (2009). Information is the source of the knowledge and intelligence that they need to make the right decisions. Information, however, is not the same as data. Data is raw unprocessed and unanalyzed facts such as volume of sales, level of costs, or number of customers. Information is data that is organized in a meaningful fashion, such as in a graph showing the change in sales volume or costs over time. By itself, data does not tell managers anything, information in contrast, can communicate a great deal of useful knowledge to the person who receives it such as a manager who sees sales as falling or costs rising. The distinction between data and information is important because one of the uses of information technology is to help managers transform data into information in order to make better managerial decisions and these could be performed by the use of office technology, more quickly and accurately by the secretary than they could be performed manually.

Office technology is the means by which information is acquired, organized, stored and manipulated mainly by the Secretary. Rapid advances in the power of information technology specifically, through the use of computers are having a fundamental impact on information systems and on managers and their organizations. So important are these advances in information technology that many experts argue that organizations that do not adopt new office technology will become uncompetitive and obsolete. Managers need information for three reasons namely:

- a) To make effective decisions



- b) To control the activities of the organization
- c) To coordinate the activities of the organization.

Management is about making decisions. The marketing manager for example must decide what price to charge for a product. Manufacturing manager must decide how much of a product to produce. The purchasing manager must decide from whom to purchase. The human resources manager must decide how much employees should be paid, how many to be trained and what benefits they should be given. Regardless of their functional orientation, all managers have to make decisions about matters such as what performance evaluation to give to a subordinate. Controlling is the process whereby managers regulate how efficiently and effectively an organization and its members are performing the activities necessary to achieve organizational goals. To achieve control over any organizational activity, managers must have information which can only be achieved through the implementation of a computer based information system being harnessed by secretarial profession.

The rate of adoption of information and communication technology in the Nigerian business environment is stunning. This is most likely due to the fact that Nigeria runs a vital service oriented economy, where information technology solutions are readily adaptable to her business environment at very reasonable costs, one of the easily seen effects of modern technological innovations in the office is that the traditional idea of assigning the secretary to a principal for rigorous dictation taking, transcription as well as typing from the boss is changing to the use of new skills and abilities in information technology. Particularly computer skills enable one to source information, or to generate appropriate and relevant results that facilitates, planning and decision making. With the vast array of information resources and decision support tools now available on various networks, via the Internet, the world has become one large goldmine of information. The modern secretary is no longer judged by his/her ability to take and transcribe dictated material, type, file, and manage incoming and outgoing mail for a particular office but by his/her ability to access, download, sift and collate relevant information for her organization.

Some organizations are still under the false notion that information technology culture is also a thing for the developed countries of Europe, Japan and America. According to Compulife (2009), in the Guardian of Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2009; The United Nations (UN) has initiated steps to assist Nigeria and other third-world countries to overcome obstacles that have kept them out of information Technology (IT) environment. Since the year 2000, a lot of steps have been taken in both the public and private sectors to imbibe the information and communication technology culture in business and governmental affairs.

Nowadays, the coordination problems that managers face are complicated by organizations expansion of operations abroad to take advantage of national differences in the cost of production. To deal with global coordination problems, managers have been adopting sophisticated computer based information systems that help them coordinate the flow of materials; semi finished goods, and finished products around the globe. Office technology has allowed secretaries to develop computer based management information system that proves timely, complete, relevant and high quality information. Some of the areas the secretaries must harness the power of technology are as follows:

**Online Record Transmission Technology:** The offices have witnessed a sporadic change in the mode of transmission of records and file from one remote location to another. The use of File Transfer Protocol (FTP) and document originality maintenance and compression packages like Acrobat reader has made handling of message/file transfer easier. According to Adobe Systems Incorporated, A Portable Document Format (PDF) is a file format created by Adobe Systems in 1993 for document exchange. PDF is used for representing two-dimensional documents in a manner independent of the application software, hardware, and operating system.

**Archiving Technology (E-Storage):** Archiving can be referred to as electronic storage (e-storage). Archiving according to Wikipedia (2009) is a collection of historical records, and the location in which the collection is kept. Archives contain records (primary source documents) which have accumulated over the course of an individual or organization's lifetime. Most time office records are lost due to improper preservation and activities creatures like rodents and cockroaches or fire outbreak and likes. Archiving technology which tends to preserve documents virtually help offices in recovery of records in cases of unexpected events.

**Electronic Mail (e-mail) Communication:** Electronic mail is a shift from the conventional mail delivery system deployed in offices to entrench a more stable and reliable system of delivery of mail aided by speed of electricity. Email messages are delivered within few minutes or even seconds. It is cheaper than faxing and phone calls. Yet surprisingly, the modern offices are far from having and using e-mail facilities for delivery of messages. What may be considered as modern office in this era, houses computer units and underutilizes it for most speedy process that would result to timely delivery of information, which the office is meant for. Rather a critical look at computer utilization in modern offices would just be for watching movies. This is against the ethics of business, usually business slogan always says; "Business before pleasure". Office Technology Equipment (OTE) should be fully deployed for business profitability.

**Online Meeting Scheduling and Conferences:** Modern office managers should not only rely on the conventional ways of scheduling conference and meetings, but

should try new technological innovations as part of transformation of the electronic world. With latest office technology such as Apple iCal, Lotus Notes, Mobile Doodle (Beta), iGoogle Widget, Face Book Doodle, Blueberry etc, office secretaries should be able to schedule board meeting.

**Comparative Assessment of Paperless Officer Performance:** A comparative x-ray on the timeless and effectiveness of deploying modern office technology in realization of expected business goals, objectives or targets can be seen in organizations like Banks, Airways Reservation System, and Online Transfer of fund, Booking Passport Interview etc. For instance, banks have shown that customers who desire to access their fund or account can use available Automated Teller Machine (ATM) or Online Access using Mobile Banking devices like smart phone etc. Airway Reservation System (ARS) or Computer Reservation System (CRS) is computerized system used to store and retrieve information and conduct transactions related to air travel. A system that requires timely responses or feedback to the booker or traveler; is a must for such transaction would not have been possible. Another case in point is a student of Harvard College, who access her result online from any system of terminal from any part of the globe. This could not have been realized without internet facilities and deployment of Modern Officer Technology Equipment (MOTE).

**Shifting to Paperless Office:** It is not an overstatement to say that virtually few organization are shifting to the paperless office, with Banks operating branchless banking due to paperless transactions and few multinationals engaging in electronic filing and collections of forms relevant to their transactions. It is now imperative for organizations to shift to a paperless office to actually entrench timeliness in the delivery of services to their client and customers at their point of need. The paperless office was a publicist's slogan; it means to describe the office of the future. The basic idea was what office automation would make paper redundant for routine tasks such as record keeping and bookkeeping. The idea came to prominence with the introduction of the personal computer. While the predication of a PC on every desk was remarkably prescient, 'the paperless office' was less prophetic.

**Network Connectivity:** A network is simply the interconnectivity of several office gadgets for the purpose of improving business performance, increasing profitability and enshrining efficiency. Computer network of different computers within different offices is aimed at communicating and sharing information meant for office use. Modern office should be far from having stand-alone computer system and multiple printers, one per system, this increase cost. Needless creating cost when effectiveness, which surpassingly reduce cost is being pursued. Henceforth, Modern Office Managers (MOM) should aspire to effectively deploy all necessary

Office Technology, if we must reach where the Asian giants are today.

### **Harnessing the Power of technology in solving challenges facing Secretarial Profession**

The use of office technology by the secretary can bring about the following when brought into management as cited by Omaghomi (2009).

- **Quick Access to Information**

The emergence of Technology in management has brought managers closer to all especially those involved in planning, organizing, coordinating, controlling and other activities in the establishment. Before now, information was difficult to get and as a result, one may need to travel far and wide to source and get relevant information. Today, the story has changed as technology has brought about our acquaintance with the computer and the use of the internet facilities. This information that is needed to plan and enhance our management system can now be tapped online with the internet in place. The level and quality of information, as well as the ease of accessing materials relevant to management is amazing when technology is employed in sourcing information.

- **Easy Processing of Collated Materials**

Another relevance of technology to management is the ease of processing collated materials. This has to do with how the global information gotten from the advanced economies are managed. Sub-Saharan African countries used to have very poor information handling and processing culture but the emergence of computers, flash drives, diskettes, etcetera have helped to reduce the cumbersome nature of information processing. Today's world of technology has brought about ease of typing, storage and retrieval of information through the use of the computer. Information gathered are now fed into the computer and at certain commands, results are churned out from the computer due to its advanced and complex nature of mathematical and algebraic built-in memories. The computers and other technological materials and products can help separate, relate as well as process materials fed into it to make the effort of the managers minimal and with great results. The era of use of the four figure table in mathematics is gradually becoming over. Thanks to the calculators that have emerged, quantitative technique in management science are now solved and handled with greater ease and speed.

The office is all about information handling. We are said to be in the information age which is driven by technology. Ibeh (2009) citing Patterson (1995) explains the concept of Information Technology (IT) as that which conveys the notion of the application of modern technologies which allow the various forms of information to be processed, transmitted, manipulated, stored and retrieved with speed, accuracy and efficiency. O'neil (1995) cited in Iweajunwa and Lekwa (2010)

identifies the following as six major technologies that affected office automation:

**Data processing:** The automation equipment for data processing increases the efficiency of business (office operations)

- a) **Word processing:** Word processing equipment and software are important features in today's office environment.
- b) **Graphics:** Using graphic is often an effective way to convey information
- c) **Image:** A scanner can reproduce images for use in word processing desktop publishing applications.
- d) **Voice:** Using the human voice to process information can be as simple as speaking on the telephone or as sophisticated as operating speech recognition equipment.
- e) **Networking:** Linking computers and other office machines used for processing information expands the possibilities for managing information efficiently.

Also Patterson in Ibeh (2009) observed the following as the technologies in the office technology and management:

Data communications or the transmission of digital data.

Telecommunications or communication using wired or wireless telephones.

Semi conductor electronics which deploy the logic function in integrated circuit chips as hardware components.

Computers which are programmed electronic machines, and  
Softwares which allow computers to function according to predetermined instructions.

The presence and use of these technologies have now made the modern office to be technology based in solving challenges facing secretarial profession

- a) Management assistants and professional secretaries are struggling with an ever-increasing workload, in jobs considered among the most difficult, both in the private and public sectors. This unique workshop has been specifically

designed for those competent workers to obtain current knowledge and competencies in the practice of this demanding profession. The focus is on practical skills, tools and techniques to improve productivity, build a winning team with management and peers, and maximize value to your organization. The specific objectives of this unique experience are to help you:

- Organize your day and manage your time including deadlines, e-mail, meetings, drop-in visitors and time-wasters
- Validate where your time actually goes (based on facts not perceptions)
- - Prevent crises, manage conflicts, difficult people and awkward situations assertively using Roger Fisher's method
- - Make your manager(s), peers, teammates and staff (if any) more effective, improve your working relationships, and assume more leadership and managerial responsibility.

### **Harness the untapped opportunities brought about by the power of new technologies**

Practice in a friendly atmosphere and seek guidance from the seminar leader

- Make your job more meaningful, build trust, and take charge of your growth and career plans.

**Secretaries should Develop a Strategic Plan for Self Actualization:** Just like many successful organizations have benefited from strategic planning, secretaries like other individuals should use strategic plans to better their future. They should, therefore, formulate career goals, objectives as well as have game plans for their career growth, considering the social and economic environment of office work today. Careful planning and conscientious efforts can bring rewards of satisfaction, excellent pay, career advancement, and a sense of self fulfillment.

**Secretaries should Upgrade Present Skills and Learn something New:** As automation continues to invade various aspects of office work, secretaries must pay attention to their career and upgrade their skills on an ongoing basis. They should not be satisfied with just having basic secretarial skills but should make efforts to acquire sound knowledge and skills in the area of Computer Utilization and Information Processing. This is consistent with the view earlier expressed in Olise (2010) in which she pointed out that, the ability to use computer hardware and software in resolving different management and office-related problems, will make the difference between the functionally literate and the functionally illiterate secretary in the modern business environment. Therefore, apart from Word Processing, secretaries should be vast in the use of Electronic Spreadsheet, Database Management Systems, Design and Presentation, Desktop Publishing, and Computer



Programming as well as in Computer Network Administration.

**They should expand their scope:** Secretaries should also develop extensive knowledge of business subjects as well as computer information management in order to enhance job mobility. Apart from traditional secretarial jobs, secretaries by the nature of their training and experience on the job can easily fit into higher/managerial/administrative positions as well as into the new jobs being created by the introduction of new technological tools and innovations in the modern office. Some of the new jobs that are emerging from developments in office technology are computer System Managers, Data Entry Operators/Supervisors, Desktop Publishing Specialist and Consultant Software Librarians, Record Managers, Micrographic Services Supervisors and Managers, Database Administrators, Network Administrators, Computer Marketing support Specialists (Software Trainers), Sale Representatives, Proprietors and Managers of Computer Service Bureau.

**Employers should Deliberately Improve the Career Prospects of Secretaries:**

There is need for a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of secretarial skills as well as in the development of appropriate career structures for the field in this information age. Employers should carry out in-depth job studies and come up with a job description and career structure that will allow secretaries to progress in their own field of endeavour without inhibitions and without the need for them to transfer to other occupations which may only be peripherally related to their initial education and training. A systematic approach to job enrichment within the secretarial career structure should be adopted.

**Conclusion**

At present, technology rules the world. The strength of any nation today based on all areas of human endeavour is much dependent upon the use and application of technology. It is evident that technological innovations have completely changed the way business organizations operate and the nature of office work. In order to train secretaries that will be relevant in the modern office, it is necessary to identify the new competencies (skills and sub skills) enthroned as a result of technological innovations in the office and integrate them into the secretarial studies curriculum. Technology is an essential ingredient or tool for the realization of management plans. Management decisions and execution will be fruitless if not properly communicated to parties who may be involved or use such information for desired results. Technology is the “Life blood” of any system; it is the cementing force of ideas between management and other stakeholders within an outside an organization. The secretarial profession should and must harness the power of technology so far attained by the Nigerian service system.

**Recommendations**

Arising from the above, the paper recommends that:-

Stakeholders should invest in Technology so as to reap the benefits accruable.

Constant power supply is needed in order to reduce other costs that might be incurred from any alternative sources.

Management should embark on consistent training and retraining of secretarial staff in Technology usage for the effective and efficient performance of their official responsibilities.

Irrespective of geographical location, establishment should be equipped with alternative source of power to enable them use this resource which can translate into effective management system.

Adequate provision should be made for the procurement of modern technology equipment to keep pace with time.

For the creation of interest in Technology involvement and development, management should motivate existing expert (secretaries) for the full utilization of their effort and experience.

Employers should carry out in-depth job studies and come up with a job description and career structure that will allow secretaries to progress in their own field of endeavour without inhibitions and without the need for them to transfer to other occupations which may only be peripherally related to their initial education and training.

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