

CONTRIBUTIONS OF SECRETARIAL PRACTITIONERS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ORGANIZATION

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Abstract

Contributions of Secretarial Practitioners to the development of an organization cannot be underestimated. The services of Secretarial Practitioners are core to the survival and growth of any organization. This paper identifies the administrative functions of Secretaries in today's office, examines their contributions to the development of an organization which requires a large amount of initiative, tact, resourcefulness etc. It highlights the attributes of a good Secretary, enumerates and explains the various modern technologies needed to succeed. Challenges confronting Secretarial Practitioners and responsibilities of employers in recruiting the right caliber of Secretaries, that will contribute to the success of an organization were enumerated. It concludes that those who lack the required abilities, drive and skill would become liabilities to the organization.

Keywords: Secretarial Practitioners, Organization, Development

Introduction

The word "Contribution" according to Macmillian Dictionary means something that you do that helps to achieve something or to make it successful. Therefore, Contributions of Secretarial Practitioners to the development of any organization either small or big is very vital, it cannot be overruled, undervalued, underrated and/or underestimated. They are the office managers whose services are always required.

Whitehead (1977), states that the work of the Secretary is of enormous natural importance. They are found in every type of enterprise, from family to multi-civil service and specialized prostate as group Secretaries do more in promoting the efficiency of the nation than any other single occupation. They can also be referred to as the official manager of the day-to-day business of an organization.

Jennings (1981) and others as quoted by Igbeinedion (2010), mentioned that Secretarial Practitioners can be an Assistant to an executive, possessing mastery of office skills and ability to assume responsibilities without direct supervision, who displays initiative,

exercises judgment, and makes decisions within the scope of his/her authority. He went further to state that Secretarial Practitioners are endless helpful and understanding individuals whose sole aim is to alleviate, solve, prevent or soften problem of workload and upsets for his/her executive. He/she is the means by which the executive initiate, handles and complete a project.

They must ensure that they play important roles towards actualization of success, advancement and development of their organization. In the light of the above, what Secretarial practitioners contribute to the development of an office go a long way which requires more than average education and the basic secretarial skills to contribute meaningfully. Meaningful contributions to the development of an organization requires properly trained secretary to avoid organizational suicide like errors in typing important documents, poor image making e.g. bad oral/written communication, inability to interpret issues correctly, lack of prompt initiative, misplacement of important documents due to poor filing approach, poor organization of work leading to unnecessary delays and inability to deal with technical complex matters because of weak educational background. It is important to put in place a well groomed secretary for an organization to succeed and develop.

To develop, however means to convert, to transform, to grow by degrees into a more advanced or mature state, to improve, to increase, to expand, to influence, to set forth, to improve the quality of, to refine, to aid the growth of, to strengthen, to enlarge, to generate etc. (Web Dictionary). Positive efforts in influencing any organization by Secretarial Practitioners are very imperative; as an organization is a social entity that has a collective goal and is linked up to an external environment.

The word "Organization" is derived from the Greek word **organon**, which means "**organ**" – a compartment for a particular task. (Web Dictionary). There are various types of organizations whereby the services of Secretarial Practitioners are needed, they are; corporations, government organizations, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, armed forces, charity organizations, partnerships, cooperatives, institutions etc. An Organization can both be in the public sector and the private sector fulfilling public duties and developing commercial market activities. Voluntary association is an organization as well. No matter the nature of the organization Secretarial Practitioners find themselves, they must endeavor to contribute positively to the growth, success, achievement, advancement and development of such an organization. They must be good ambassadors, good assets, good instruments, good materials and good contributors to the organization at all times. Otherwise, Secretarial Practitioners that cannot contribute meaningfully to the success and growth of his or her organization is already below the required expectations and can constitute difficulties for his or her organization.

Administrative Functions Of Secretarial Practitioners In Today's Office

Presently, secretarial responsibilities have undergone a vast change, it is not limited to notes taking and typing alone. These duties have been extended to managerial functions. Employers prefer secretaries who can perform their duties effectively and equally carry out administrative and managerial functions. As a matter of necessity, it is imperative to know the major responsibilities a Secretary should handle.

The services rendered by Secretarial Practitioners must be excellent for any organization to prosper and succeed. It is necessary to highlight these functions and establish the fact that not just anyone who sits behind the computer has the ability to perform administrative functions of secretary. The functions cannot be performed by anyone without the required background which underscores the successes and achievements of an organization. These include –

Communication

Whitehead (1977) identifies the secretary's responsibilities to include; taking dictation and transcribing it into correspondence which is at once dispatched to its business destination. He highlights some forms of these correspondences to include: letters, memos, circulars, orders, quotations, acceptances, contractual terms and conditions, invitations, booking of hotels or engage in some other expensive activity which forms part of the intricate network of business life. The Secretary is also involved in phone communication/conversation, text messages, writing and email correspondence. He/she also sorts all the correspondences, give necessary priority labels to the correspondence and ensures prompt dissemination of items to be couriered. Whether the communication or correspondence takes place on phone, through memorandum, letters, and text messages or in an email, the Secretary must always communicate in a professional manner that will keep the good reputation of the organization.

Managerial Functions

The responsibilities of secretarial practitioners may include management functions. At times, they can act as the manager while assisting the boss. Your boss may give you the task of overseeing certain projects like managing a database or creating and updating reports. If there are other clerical staff in the office, you may be responsible for managing them and assigning duties to them. They may report directly to you instead of your boss, and you may serve as their immediate supervisor. You could also be called upon to train other employees and even instruct your subordinates on such matters as teaching them how to operate office machines or utilize software packages. You may be requested to do the ratings of their performances when it comes to Annual Evaluation and this must be done objectively. Jennings (1981) stressed that *“as executives deal with problems that cannot be solved in a routine way, they are involved in developing policies, making decisions, projecting for future operations, planning and organizing new project. The secretaries must be of great assistance*

and support by using their expertise to assist their executives. Thus, making the efficient secretaries the backbone of the executive as they make their work lighter and free them to engage in other productive ventures thereby contributing to the prospects and success of the organization.”

Maintaining Diaries and Appointments

An efficient secretary must be able to maintain diary to follow the time-bound schedule of her boss and enlist his appointments accordingly. Ability to supervise appointment and itinerary of the boss is very imperative. It is equally essential to liaise with the executive to know his policy regarding keeping his diaries and appointments, as a result of individual differences.

Meetings

According to Whitehead (1977) in modern business, meeting is one of the most important parts of office procedure. It is in some of these meetings that important decisions are taken. Before a meeting is held the secretary has many duties to perform. In particular, he/she must arrange the date, time and venue in consultation with the chairman, prepare notices to be sent out to all those connected and draw up the agenda and minutes of previous meeting for approval by the chairman before circulation. The secretary will usually take down minutes of the meetings, prepare decision extracts and ensure its implementation.

Technical Skills

Secretarial practitioners are to be involved in procurement, installation and manipulation of the required office equipment such as photocopiers, printers, computers and accessories, fax machines, scanner, projector etc. The Secretary must ensure that he/she understands current issues in respects of office equipment and advice the organization on the type of equipment to procure for the progress of the organization.

Attend To Visitors and Callers

Office of the Secretary is the first impression people have about a company or organization. The use of proper etiquette and friendly attitude are important part of the administrative functions of a secretary. It is important to ensure that visitors are properly attended to. Visitors' forms could be put in place for proper coordination of this aspect.

Record Keeping

Record keeping provides the organization with the history of what has happened that may be vital to the progress of the organization. Secretary ensures that she keeps records of meetings (minutes of meetings, decision extracts, agenda, notices etc.) These files should be arranged and recorded in any method of filing suitable for the nature of the organization e.g. numerical, chronological, alphabetical, geographical etc. She also maintains and codes the files which may be confidential, secret, top secret etc. Apart from this, proper file

referencing and page numbering must be ensured.

Contributions Of Secretaries To The Development Of An Organisation

Apart from the administrative functions of secretaries in today's office as enumerated above, there are so many things secretaries have to do to contribute to the success of the organization, these may include the following:

Maintenance of Office Equipment

Secretarial practitioners must be able to maintain office equipment and materials like machines, papers, files, furniture etc. that are kept in their care. They should ensure proper monitoring of these equipment so that they are not mishandled and damaged, ensure the security of office items by putting necessary measure in place to avoid theft, ensure that necessary repairs and servicing are carried out as at when due.

Requisition

When making requisition for the procurement of office equipment and materials, they must ensure that good office equipment/materials are procured, put in place and ensure that proper record of those items are maintained.

Prudency

A good secretary must guide against (be conscious of) wastage of materials. They must be effective in their performances by ensuring that their output is error free so as to avoid wastage of money and materials like ink, paper, petrol in case where generator is put to us etc. He or she must be prudent in spending and be readily available to give proper account of items, materials and money in his or her care.

Technical Function

A good Office Manager must be able to use his or her intellect to enhance the growth of the organization by being the manager of computer installation whether the organization is small or big. Mastery of new office technology is very essential as there is no organization today that will want to require the services of a secretary that is not computer literate or whose duty only centers on ordinary copy typing. The office environment has metamorphosed into a very modern one from the traditional office. The move now is towards a paperless office. However, secretaries must be enriched with the use of internet resources and other new innovations that will assist the secretary to facilitate his/her work and contribute immensely to the success of his/her organisation.

Competency

He or she must be very vast in the discharge of his/her responsibilities, tries to get a great deal done within a very short time as no organization will want to engage a sluggish secretary. Secretaries must be able to make necessary recommendations or observation on

office situations towards the progress of an office, this has to be done constructively.

Office Arrangement

There is the need to ensure the neat arrangement of the office environment at all times. The office of the Executive, the secretary's office, the reception, the corridor, the window-blinds, the toilets, etc. must be decent and neat at all times. The cleaner in charge of the office must be properly supervised to be alive to his/her responsibilities and ensure the provision of necessary materials to facilitate neat office environment.

Good Image Maker

It is necessary to portray good image of the organization to the general public and exhibits a deep sense of good qualities and attributes that promote peaceful co-existence. Above all, office managers must be responsible and dedicated to duties.

Attributes Of A Good Secretary

Disposition of good attributes is one of the hallmark of a secretary. Attributes means qualities, characteristics and/or traits that must be exhibited. Secretarial practitioners are expected to display good personal/business attributes while discharging their duties which include the following:

Confidentiality

In the course of the discharge of secretarial duties, a wide range of information will be handled by the secretary and confidentiality (security) of this information is very important. A good secretary however is expected to maintain a deep sense of confidentiality; information leakage should be totally avoided. He or she must not suffer from information/mouth diarrhea. The Executive should be able to have confidence in his/her secretary by having trust in his/her work. Secretaries should be able to keep drafts of documents securely and present their job in a confidential manner.

Honesty and Integrity

A deep sense of honesty and integrity is expected of a good secretary. No one can be honest without personal integrity, and a person that is not honest has no integrity. Office materials are not supposed to be converted to personal use or stolen. Faithfulness, honesty and integrity should be maintained by a good secretary because a lot of things will be kept in his/her care and they must be properly accounted for.

Appearance

Appearance is the first letter of recognition. One can be easily judged and accessed by the way one looks. Proper attention should be placed on the way and manner a secretary appears and carries himself/herself. A well groomed look is expected of a secretary. The hair do should be good, the dress put on must be neat and smart, the face should be bright, the

shoes put on should be easy to carry, the make-up and perfume used should not be offensive, indecent dresses should be avoided, party dresses should not form part of office dress. It is not good for a secretary to allow the people around him/her form bad impression about the way he/she appears.

Professionalism

Secretaries are expected to possess thorough training and have the required education, knowledge and administrative skills on what the profession entails in using highly sophisticated machines. Serious steps and attention should be paid to training and retraining of the practitioners. Presently, technology is the order of the day, and to be able to operate modern office technologies and fit in to highly automated offices, secretaries should put in for further training and flow along with the age of computers. Practitioners should be able to communicate effectively, interact with others appropriately, develop good relationship, take initiative, drive, maintain deep sense of discipline etc.

Good Sense of Humour

“Work without play makes Jack a dull boy.” Fun and humour in the workplace must be appropriate in nature, should not be offensive but must be reasonable, this can at times reduce the intensity of conflicts and gives room for peaceful co-existence.

Pleasantness

No one likes to work with a negative person. Secretaries with a pleasant demeanor, disposition 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 clients, are needed for the success of any establishment.

Modern Technologies Needed In Today's Office

Today's offices need modern office technologies for the performance of day-to-day business activities. These office essentials have a lot of usefulness as follows;

Advantages Of Modern Office Technologies

1. Increased Efficiency

A great deal of work is achieved within a short period of time. What used to require hours or even days of painstaking human effort can often be completed in minutes. In addition, accuracy and uniformity are often achieved with the use of computers and technological-enhanced measurements and calculations.

2. Expanded Capacity

Technological advances have allowed devices such as computers to become smaller (the note book, note pad, ipad, mobile phones etc.) and more effective, and eventually to become a necessity to nearly every business/organization. Instant messaging, the internet, internal telephone systems and intranets (internal networks) and especially email are integral to the workings of office life. These technological advances have made it possible to transmit more data more quickly to more people than workers during the early 20th century.

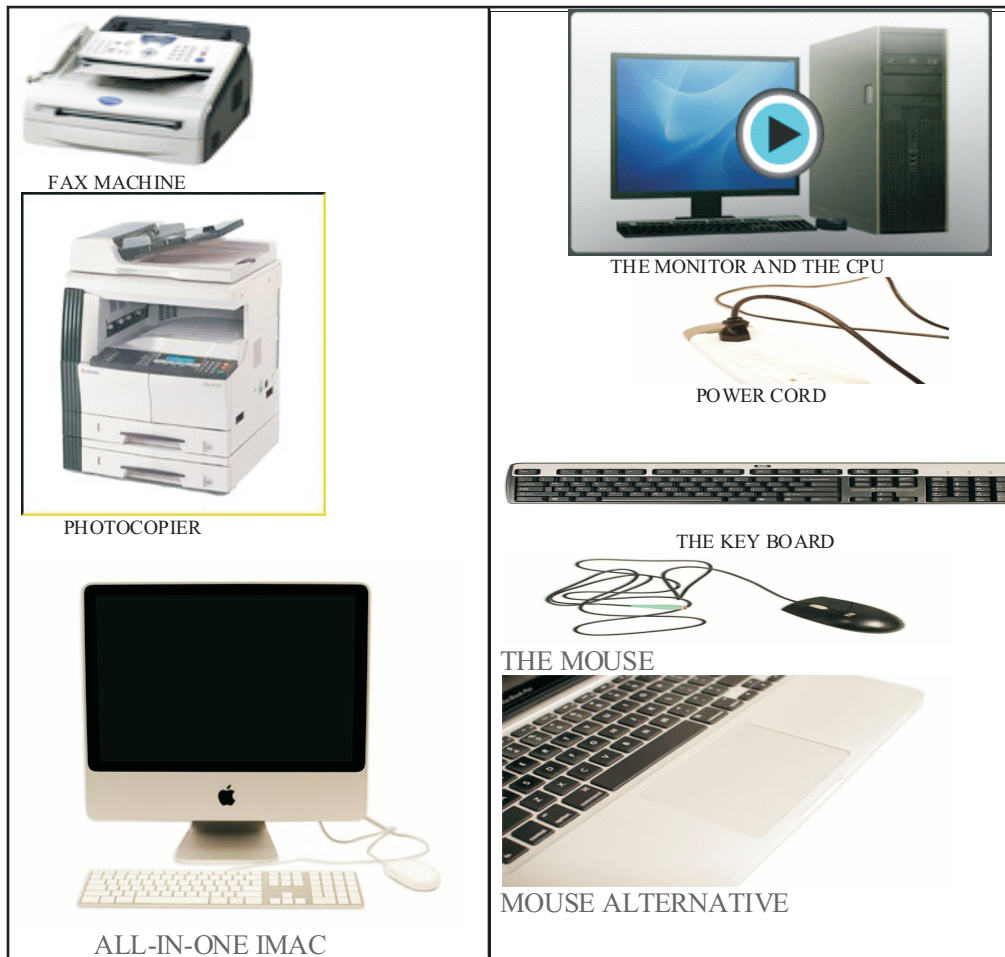
3. Enhanced Flexibility and Capability

With the use of SMS through the wonders of modern telephone system and electronic communications, a lot of people could be located within a very short time and necessary information is passed across. Web conferencing and Web seminar could also be made possible for colleagues within a company or from different companies to interact with one another in real time. Electronic document production and calculations make it possible to implement changes and corrections in real time.

Pictures Of Some Modern Office Technologies

Below are some of the pictures of modern office technologies.

 <p>COMPUTER LAPTOP AND MONITOR</p>	<p>PRINTER OF MULTI-FUNCTIONS</p> 	<p>SHREDDING MACHINE</p> 
<p>OVERHEAD PROJECTOR</p> 	<p>LAMINATING & BINDING MACHING</p> 	<p>CALCULATING MACHINDE</p> 



Challenges Facing Secretarial Practitioners Towards The Development Of An Organisation

Motivation

The office environment has metamorphosed into a very modern one from the traditional office into automated office with new technologies and the move now is towards a paperless office. With the rapid change being experienced in the profession, all hands must be on deck to dance to the tune that the change is bringing about. The practitioners should equally move along with the trend as the changes occur. To achieve this, training and retraining is required. It has been said of an institution that was not interested in encouraging Secretarial Practitioners by supporting them in sponsorship training and in other incentives. Motivation is a challenge for secretaries but nevertheless, the practitioners should endeavour to aspire to appeal to their various employer for necessary assistance.

Training Programmes

A man that is not informed can be deformed and if one is not updated, one can be outdated. Another challenge facing this profession is the issue of training and the educators that have not fully responded to the training needs of offices. In skills, laboratories lack the needed equipment to adequately train secretarial practitioners for the world of work challenges. The trainers too, need retraining as most of them still rely on old methods of training. They are not versed with the use of modern technology and even the use of computers which are crucial to the work of office secretary.

Denial of Rights

Whenever purchases of equipment/materials are to be made which are to be used by the Secretarial Practitioners, the secretaries might not be carried along to have input in what is to be put in place probably for reasons best known to them and they eventually tend to providing inappropriate equipment.

When there are benefits to be enjoyed by staffers of some organization, secretaries may end up getting the least of the share or at times not being catered for e.g. sponsorship to conferences and seminars, sponsorship for further studies, etc.

Lack of Proper Orientation

A lot of Executive officers or bosses do not have proper orientation of who a secretary is. They believe they are jack of all trade who can serve many officers at a giving time or who can be sent on irrelevant assignment like buying food, going for shopping for the boss, serving as a tea girl, etc. It has been discovered that a lot of Executives officers don't have better understanding on utilization of secretaries.

Inadequate Funding

An organization that is not properly funded might find it difficult to procure modern office technologies and therefore find it challenging to flow with the age of computers and modern office automation.

Lack of Proper Recognition

A lot of people have wrong notion about who a Secretary is. Many believe that anyone sitting behind the computers is a nonentity and thereby treated as one. When committees are being set up where decisions on how to move an organization forward could be discussed, secretaries in most cases are not being considered to be part of such committees. On the other hands, some secretaries are placed to be under the supervision of those that are lower in grade when compared to that of the secretary.

Under-utilization

For the mere fact that a lot of Executive officers don't have proper orientation about who a secretary is, they tend to under-utilize then. Many secretaries have been converted to

'glorified typists'. They don't believe in the secretary's efficiencies even when the secretary is good. They prepare drafts of correspondence by themselves and only reduce the Secretary to typing and purchase of food.

Responsibilities Of Employers In Recruiting Secretaries That Will Contribute To The Development Of An Organisation

An organization that is fond of not recruiting its staff through the proper approach/process will end up having accumulated employees that will contribute little or no progress to its organization and eventually have workers that will become liabilities to itself. In the recruitment of good caliber of secretarial practitioners that will enhance progress and development for an establishment, it is necessary to follow the following recruitment procedures:

Sourcing - Sourcing is the use of one or more strategies to attract or identify candidates to fill job vacancies. It may involve internal and/or external advertisement, using appropriate media, such as local or national newspapers, specialist recruitment media, professional publications, window advertisements, job centres, or in a variety of ways via the internet. Alternatively, employers may use recruitment consultancies or agencies to find otherwise scarce/essential candidates.

Screening and selection - Suitability for a job is typically assessed by looking for relevant skills, knowledge, aptitude, qualifications and educational or job related experience. These can be determined via: screening résumés (also known as CVs); job applications; interviews.

Performance Based Assessment - Is a process to find out if job applicants can perform the responsibilities for which they are applying through practical, writing or oral testing.

In many countries, employers are legally mandated to ensure their screening and selection processes meet equal opportunity and ethical standards. Employers are likely to recognize the value of candidates who also have the so-called 'skills', such as interpersonal or team leadership and potentials.

Conclusion

The prospects and success of any organization whether government or non-governmental depend on the leadership of the organization. A dynamic, resourceful, and organized office secretary is required to make an executive succeed and ensure the organizational progress and growth in the right direction. It is therefore necessary for institutions of learning which train secretaries to be alive to their responsibilities and structure their curriculum to meet up with the modern challenges. Secretarial practitioners too should be up and doing in the discharge of their duties and ensure that they contribute

maximally to the success of wherever they find themselves in the course of their profession. A deep sense of high productivity and efficiency is required of them and they should be good ambassadors of their employers. Employers should endeavour to motivate secretaries in the area of training, provision of modern office equipments, proper attention and recognition should also be accorded secretarial practitioners. They must not be seen as second fiddle, nonentity and officer that are not important. Above all, employers of secretaries should endeavour also to recruit the right caliber of secretaries that are expert in the field in order to enhance maximum contributions to the success of an organization. However, if those that are not up to the task without the proper training, efficiency, skills and drive plus unavailability of necessary evidences to showcase competence are recruited as secretaries in to an organization, they may tend to become liabilities and slow down the progress of an organization.

Recommendations

In light of the above, I therefore wish to make the following recommendations:

1. Those that are interested in becoming Secretarial Practitioners should endeavour to enroll in an institution that is recognized and that can offer quality training for Secretaries.
2. Mastery and correct application of what the profession entails is very imperative. The practitioners should endeavour to possess quality skills, drive, disposition of the profession.
3. The institutions that are training Secretarial Practitioners should endeavour to tailor their curriculum to meet up with the modern challenges of new innovation in technologies in respect of the profession.
4. Government should endeavour to equip and improve the standard of secretarial laboratories of institutions offering secretarial studies to fit in with the modern challenges of office technologies.
5. The employers should also recruit the right caliber of secretaries that can move an organization forward by recruiting through the proper process and procedures. Also, a stop should be put to the recruitment of quacks who can be road side Secretaries that are performing below the required standard. Because not everyone that knows how to type is a trained Secretary.
6. Secretaries should be motivated through sponsorship by their employers for further training and retraining, through adequate recognition and proper utilization.

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