Abstract
The paper discusses the distinction between the professional and non-professional secretary and identifies the professional secretary as an invaluable asset to any organization. It describes the professional secretary as an indispensable assistant to the executive without whom the executive cannot function optimally. It highlights the qualities of the professional secretary and some of the executive functions. The paper stresses the need for proper secretarial training in institutions and recommends that it be made to meet both modern and global work standard. It concludes that qualitative training would remove impostors from the profession and project the right image for the practitioners.
Keywords: Professionalism, Professional Secretary, Secretarial Practice

Introduction
There is apprehension in offices by secretaries about their fate under the current inventions and innovations in modern technologies. The computer has been invented to do many things that are hitherto done by the secretary. A chief executive can stay in his office or room to make flight and hotel reservations. He can manage information. He does not need any knowledge of key board to input his information. He can now use a pen to input his letter or document on the computer and with internet facility and with efficient server he can send his mail and receive reply. He can store, edit, retrieve and print his information. However, the secretary's roles and personal attributes still make him somebody to reckon within the office and in the organization. This paper focuses on who a secretary is, types of secretary, and why a secretary is indispensable.

Secretary
The word Secretary has been defined variously by different authors and employers. Onifade (2004) defined a Secretary as “An assistant to an executive, possessing mastery of office skills and ability, assumes responsibility without direct supervision, who displays initiative, exercises judgment, and makes decisions within the scope of his authority.” A Secretary is the person who performs the myriad of daily chores that nibble away the executive's time. “A Secretary as the principal administrative support in an office increases the effectiveness of programme staff by coordinating the paper flow of the office and carrying out the day-to-day administrative support activities
required to accomplish the work of the organization.” The term is derived from the [Latin] word secernere “to distinguish “ or “to set apart,” the passive participle (secretum) meaning “have been set apart,” with the eventual connotation of something private or confidential. A secretaries was a person, therefore, overseeing business confidentially, usually for a powerful individual (a king, pope, etc.). (http://en. Wikipedia.org/wiki/secretary). “A Secretary is either an administrative assistant in business office administration, or a certain type of mid or high level governmental position, such as a Secretary of State.”

A Secretary should be able to keep secrets of the organization and that of his boss. His role is principally that of support, assistance or help. He carries out activities assigned to him by his executive or takes initiative which is within his authority and responsibility. A secretary is a professional who has some code of ethics which he should guard jealously. He should be dynamic and versatile because he works in an environment that is not static. He should be ready to accept change and challenges of the office and the world of work. His title changes in conformity with his responsibilities. For example a legal secretary has some professional responsibilities different from those of a medical secretary. One can now talk or use pen to write on the computer and what is said or written is typed devoid the use of the keyboard. What an amazing innovation in the world of modern office technology! Because the secretary interacts with people as the first contact of people visiting the organization and because of the operation of the telephone for the organization and his boss, his communication skill, human and public relations skill must be high. His appearance must be the best.

The Professional Secretary
A Professional Secretary performs tasks similar to an executive or administrative assistant. As an office professional, the 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. Modern 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. Despite the technological inclined operators and activities of modern secretaries, many old duties and activities still fall under his purview. While submitting that the term 'Professional Secretary' is somewhat outdated and has been replaced with other job titles, such as administrative assistant or executive assistant, the International Association of Administrative Professionals (www.iaap-hg.org) highlighted the essential duties of Professional Secretaries as follows:

1. **Phone Calls and Visitors**
A Professional Secretary acts as a gateway between visitors, callers and other workers in the office. The Professional Secretary knows more about the office he works in to answer inquiries about the specifics of the office. He
screens visitors and phone calls and arranges callbacks or appointments. A Professional Secretary may also need to find back-up material related to the caller or visitor to prepare his boss to talk about different issues with different people. He may also prepare a meeting area for visitors and take care of any requests. On the phone, a Professional Secretary may be responsible for conducting phone surveys or inquiring after information.

2. **Other Communication**

In addition to answering the phone and helping visitors, a Professional Secretary must handle the mails, as well as inter-office communications. A Professional Secretary generally sorts the mail for the boss or the office, prioritizing it and throwing out junk mail. Sometimes he will be responsible for replying to the banal correspondence by preparing responses for the boss's signature. A Professional Secretary also prioritizes work based on deadlines and communication with others in the office.

3. **Appointments and Meetings**

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

4. **Other Responsibilities**

A Professional Secretary has many duties, ranging from priority duties to routine duties. Other responsibilities of a Professional Secretary include:

* Supervising other clerical staff
* Keeping an updated mail and phone directory
* Ordering office supplies when needed. Etc

**Types Of Secretary**

There are two major categories of secretaries. We have the generalist and the specialist secretaries. The generalist secretaries are those who can work in any organization with some limitations when we talk of special or technical terminologies and skills. The specialist secretaries are the legal, medical, educational, bi-lingual, technological, and government secretaries.

**Legal Secretary**

Wilson (2008) identified the following peculiar characteristics of a legal secretary:

* Must be an expert at time management, juggling many activities and roles at the same time.
* Must possess psychological skills, with which to deal with many
personalities.
· Must possess excellent judgment to make dozens of critical decisions, and
· Must have talents as a travel agent, living calendar, telephone directory, and mentor.

Government Secretary
In the United States of America, they have Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Defense. In the United Kingdom there is Parliamentary Private Secretary who is the chief assistant of a Secretary of State or minister of the Crown. In Nigeria, we have Permanent Secretary who is the highest civil servant and Secretary to the Federal or State Government.

Medical Secretary
A medical secretary works with doctors or pharmacists in hospitals and helps to provide necessary support services and manage medical records.

Bi-Lingual Secretary
A bi-lingual secretary works in foreign embassies and helps to translate correspondence accordingly. Many typewriters have German, French and English characters and only the trained secretary in foreign languages can use them.

The Successful Professional Secretary
1. **Diligence:** A secretary who is punctual, timely, accurate and honest is the cornerstone of a successful any organization.
2. **Initiative:** The most successful secretaries have drives and initiative. They do not sit waiting for their bosses instructions or assignments; they pick up a file, determine what needs to be done and do it. They anticipate the employer's needs and are willing to step beyond their comfort zone to learn new skills.
3. **Efficiency:** In an organization, efficiency translates into dollars and is cost-saving. Secretaries who perform their jobs quickly and efficiently contribute to the growth of the organization and makes themselves indispensable.
4. **Discrete:** Confidentiality is the main quality expected of a good secretary. During the course of a secretary's work, he will undoubtedly manage a wide range of information that is private and privileged to the employer and the employer's clientele. The boss needs to be able to trust that the work he assigned is treated with utmost confidence, for without this trust he loses confidence in the secretary, no matter the typing skills, It takes years of working experience as a secretary with employer to be able to distinguished what is confidential and what is not. What may appears to you to be inconsequential and common knowledge may not in fact be so, the divulging of which could create a catastrophe. Therefore, treat all materials in the strictest confidence. Disclosing confidential information, inadvertently or deliberately, is one of the quickest ways to damage secretarial profession.
5. **Flexibility:** Secretaries who are flexible and adaptive are well appreciated by the organization. Those willing to work late or come in early to get the job done, and who readily adapt to new, different or changing work requirements are most valued by their employers.

6. **Tactful:** Secretary who can handle issues with diplomacy and tactfulness, smoothing over differences or proffering solutions to workplace disputes, are invaluable to organizations.

7. **Pleasant:** No one likes to work with a grumpy, demanding or negative employee. Secretaries with a pleasant demeanor and positive attitude, who are able to put aside personal challenges to accomplish job objectives, and who are friendly to co-workers and courteous to visitors, will excel in the workplace.

8. **Patient:** A distinguished professional secretary is known for ability to handle grumpy issues and challenges with patient and grace.

9. **Honesty and Integrity:** Honesty and Integrity go hand in hand. You cannot be honest if you have no personal integrity, and a person that is not honest has no integrity. Everyone thinks they are honest in the broad sense of the word, however taking even a paperclip or a postage stamp from the office without official permission is really stealing. Even if you think your employer can afford it and will not miss it, it is the employer that has paid for it and not you, so it is their property and not yours. Likewise, making personal phone calls and having personal phone or mobile phone conversations or text messaging on your employer's premises during the hours that you are paid to work, is theft of the employer's time.

10. **Professionalism:** A good secretary presents herself and behaves in a professional manner with a good attitude. There are many books that tell you how to "dress for success" and control your body language, but keeping on top of your personal traits is only part of the story in managing your professional image. There is no way around the fact that people judge you by your personal appearance, so a well groomed look will show that you care about yourself as a person and therefore have the capacity to care about others. A little attention to how you look goes a long way to display your professionalism. People are constantly observing your behaviour and forming theories about your competence, character, and commitment, so present and conduct yourself in a respectable manner appropriate to the organization that you serve and show a willingness to help other professionals.

11. **Knowledge and Skills:** In the Desiderata it says, "Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. And this is never more important now than ever before, as the times they are a-changing – and ferociously rapidly too in this day and age. So, continue to accumulate knowledge and obtain new skills, especially in technology, as this can improve the quality of your work, and believe you me, exercising your brain will also help you stay young, and prepare you for any 'greener pastures' in your future such as a promotion, advancing your career or even a change in career path."
The Do’s And Don’ts Of A Professional Secretary

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<th>DO’S</th>
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<td>Be organized</td>
<td>Ignore correspondence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keep copies of all correspondence</td>
<td>Keep information to her/himself</td>
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<td>Check quorum is met for meetings</td>
<td>Be late for meetings</td>
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<td>Respect confidentiality</td>
<td>Throw away important papers</td>
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<td>Work closely with the Chairperson</td>
<td>Write down trivial details of all discussions at every meeting</td>
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<td>Make it easy for others to take over by keeping clear records</td>
<td>Rely on his/her memory</td>
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<td>Prepare for meetings well in advance</td>
<td>Repeat private conversations</td>
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<td>Summarize discussions effectively</td>
<td>Organize meetings at the last minute</td>
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<td>Keep people informed</td>
<td>Ensure accurate minutes of meetings are kept</td>
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The Professional Secretary And Ethics

This relates to how the Secretary develops, processes and distributes information, to relations, interactions with clients both internal and external and the wider society. Because of their many different responsibilities, He should be able to multitask and prioritize tasks well. Since many tasks required of a Professional Secretary are performed on computer, Professional Secretaries should be comfortable with computers and word processing software.

Some of the ethical demands on the Professional Secretary include:

1. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** A good secretary must be able to work in any organization by adapting to the situation he finds himself.
2. **Poise:** The Professional Secretary should be calm and poised always.
3. **Intuitiveness:** The secretary should be able to visualize and sense things in advance. 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.
4. **Tact:** The secretary needs to be tactful in what he says or do so that he does 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 organizations secret.
5. **Punctuality:** A good Secretary should be regular and punctual at work.
6. **Courtesy:** The Secretary should observe the basic codes of human relations such as 'Good morning', 'good day', 'Please', 'Thank you'. etc
7. **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 mail able document.
8. **Being proactive:** The secretary should be able to take necessary prior action
to forestall any mishap. The secretary should use her initiative and discretion in doing the job without waiting for the boss. She should always think of improving himself and his job.

9. **Self-confidence:** Fear causes tensions and affects emotional stability negatively as well as self-confidence. The secretary should learn to control your emotions and develop self-confidence.

10. **Good Telephone Personality:** Telephone communication requires good voice, pleasant manner and friendly attitude.

11. **Appearance:** The secretary should be neat and decently dressed always.

12. **Organizational skills:** These skills are required in order to achieve organizational objectives.

13. **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.

14. **Leadership:** The leadership competence of the secretary is usually required for the effective management of co-workers and observance of decorum in the office.

15. **Capacity-building:** The secretary should improve his knowledge through peer-review mechanisms, attendance at professional workshops and conferences, and membership of professional associations.

16. **Computer Competencies:** The knowledge of the computer will be an asset to the organization only if the secretary adds value, hence he needs to move from the level of computer appreciation to computer-proficiency.

**Why is the secretary indispensable in an organization?**

The secretary is indispensable in an organization because he is a very versatile. He is unlike the other office staff that do not have initiative that can be manipulated by the secretary. He is the organization's image maker. He is the most important officer to be seen first and last by visitors to the organization. Although the computer does many jobs hitherto done by the secretary, the computer cannot replace the secretary because of the following peculiarities of the secretary.

1. It is the secretary that is trained to manipulate the computer and thus making it to function. The computer has no initiative. It relies on human commands and manipulation.

2. The secretary is trained to receive visitors in a manner that neither the computer nor any other person can do.

3. He knows how to keep secrets and confidential documents.

4. He is the custodian of office information and correspondence.

5. He is in charge of stationery supplies of the organization.

6. He possesses good communication skills and thus making him good in human and public relations.

7. He keeps a good impress account.
8. He ensures an efficient and effective office by being current in records management and organizational ability.

9. He organizes meetings making sure that preparation before the meeting is faultless and activities during the meeting are carried out properly and after the meeting, things are put in order. He ensures accurate recording of minutes and prompt dissemination of the minutes.

10. He is the acceptable assistant of the chief executive since the chief executive cannot perform all the office functions despite his knowledge of the computer. He prepares light refreshment for the boss. He keeps his diary and constantly reminds him of his schedules. He prepares his itinerary and makes flight and hotel reservations for the chief executive.

11. It is the secretary that other office workers look up to for the solution of office problems and who can help them with required information.

The Secretary's Fear Allayed

Organizations and secretaries are now working to ensure that secretaries are retained in their jobs. What are these efforts that are being employed to ensure that secretaries keep their jobs? Some of these efforts are highlighted below:

1. Secretaries are continually retrained in order to keep abreast of innovations in the office machines, organization, attitude and responsibilities.

2. It is said that “As office automation continues to evolve, retraining and continuing education will remain integral parts of secretarial jobs. Changes in the office environment have increased the demand for secretaries and administrative assistants who are adaptable and versatile.”

3. Secretaries are encouraged to tackle challenges through assignment of new responsibilities.

4. Secretaries are motivated in order to accept changes in the office. They are introduced to change in the office. They can see reasons for flexibility.

5. Secretaries act as members of a team work and thus making them to participate in decision-making process.

6. Secretaries are encouraged to use their initiatives in taking some decisions that are beneficial to the organization.

7. Secretaries attend workshops, seminars and conferences which may be self-sponsored or organization-sponsored to update their knowledge.

8. In order to ensure continued use of the computers, most organizations have standby generator.

9. Employers look for good customer service and interpersonal skills which are found in secretary. There is no doubt that any secretary who works hard to benefit from the opportunities provided through the programmes stated above, cannot be afraid of losing his job. If an organization sacks him or refuses to promote him, he can easily get another organization. Secretaries have high mobility. If an organization says “No” another one will say “Yes”. The “sky is the limit.”
Conclusion
There is no gainsaying the fact that the secretary is an employee of any organization that is most important and needed. No matter the innovation or invention brought about by the computer, the presence of the secretary (a human being) is needed for the computer to function. The secretary is a subordinate and an assistant that is needed by the chief executive for making telephone calls and receiving telephone calls. He is the only person trained in the efficient and the effective management of information, office correspondence and human resource for the benefit of the organization and in attaining the organization's objectives. The computer is only an instrument or tool in the hand of the secretary and it cannot replace the secretary. The secretary will always be required in the offices. Although they may not be many as it used to be, they are still needed and useful. One thing the secretary needs in order to keep his job is retraining, which can be done by attending classes or participating in an online education for more knowledge on how to operate new office technology such as internet and teleconferencing computer facilities. As long as the secretary keeps abreast of challenges in modern technologies he will not be redundant or found wanting and he will always be relevant into day's modern office. The importance and indispensability of the secretary in any organization cannot be overstressed. We now have automated offices or what some people call “paperless” offices. These offices use modern machines and methods in order to save such resources as time, effort and money. Human labour is also reduced greatly. The automation, notwithstanding, secretaries are still indispensable for the attainment of organizational objectives.

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