

THE VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP IN THE WORK PLACE: THE SECRETARY IN FOCUS

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Abstract

Relationship is fundamental to the growth and development of an organization and the economy. Using the eclectic approach, the paper finds the value of relationship in the work place to be dependent on the behaviour of stakeholders in the relationship. Building lasting relationship is based on trust, mindfulness, mutual respect and understanding, which add value to economic development. The Secretary is pivotal to positive relationship building in the work place taking active part in management as Executive Assistant, a Public Relation Officer, a manager who manages the Executive/Manager or other workers etc. The paper recommends, among others, the proper remuneration of the Secretary, separation of official relationship from love or romantic relationship, Secretary to be disciplined, self-confidence and reporting sexual harassment or injustice suffered in the hands of the boss to a higher authority of that boss.

Key Words: Value, Relationship, Work Place and the Secretary.

Introduction

Man is a gregarious animal working to meet up with the biological and social needs for survival. From time to time he focuses on how to provide these needs which brings him in close contact with others in the society he lives. The particular desires of the individual and the situation he/she finds his/her self-influenced the type of relationship to be involved, maintained and pursue with others. Thus the pursuance of economic ends makes people to come in contact with each other's to build business and social relationship. Essentially relationship has to do with connection and association of people or things for a common purpose and interest (Dallas, 2011). The work place is a theatre of relationship building to actualize the common objective of the organization. The Secretary plays a fundamental role in the work place supporting the executive or management and dealing with other people, as well as, creating impression that enhances organizational reputation. In today's world of information and communication technology (ICT), the Secretary's professional skills have been enhanced and there is need to examine the value of relationship displayed in the work place environment. How has this affected productivity and organizational goals? These and many other issues have been critical examined and discussed in this paper.

Conceptual Definition

For clarity, there is need to define some of the key words as used in this presentation.

Value: Value connotes the relative worth, usefulness, importance or merit of something or somebody. People, institutions etc. can have increasing or decreasing value at one time or the other. The worth, usefulness and efficiency of the Secretary in the work place helps in promoting the growth and efficiency of the organization.

Relationship: Relationship is the cord of connection, association that binds people or things together for a common purpose, interest or benefit. Relationship is characterized by deep or close association, intimacy, acquaintances, cohesion, affinity, commitment, connection, involvement, attraction etc. Relationship can be direct or indirect, formal or informal. Direct relationship involves interaction or dealings between people, things and institutions face to face while dealings involving a third party is indirect relationship. Official acquaintances, intimacy between boss and subordinate workers or workers to workers in the work place is formal relationship. Inter personal self-dealing and association with each other on non-compulsion platform is informal relationship. Relationship can be classified as social, interpersonal, intimate and ethical. It can also be targeted, tentative, transitional or trusted relationship.

Work place: Work place is the environment in which productive activities and actions take place. It can be an industrial site, a business house, an institution like a school, an office for rendering services etc.

Secretary: A Secretary is a person who works to support the executive or management of a work place through effective project management, communication and organizational skills (Wikipedia, 2014).

Relationship Building in the work place: The work environment is characterized by a plethora of activities and people who constantly interacts with one another towards the attainment of the objective of the organization in which they work. Interaction of people in the work environment is what builds relationship of varying degree and commitment.

The individual in the work place often engaged in several different relationships with different people simultaneously. Such people include co-workers, parents, boss, supervisor, elders, customers, union member's, religions group, ethnic group, family relation etc (Richey, 2011). Formal or official relationship is often the norm or advocated behavior in the work place, but the informal relationship can not be eliminated and it has its own inherent booster of work efficiency. People commonly love to build trusted lasting relationship than tentative ones. For instance a Secretary working with a boss at a time in the work place may not end abruptly the cordial relationship that had existed between the two if the Secretary is transferred to another

office or boss.

To build trusted relationship, one needs to be talking to his/her partner or colleague in the relationship more and more to scoop up greater and brighter opportunities (Giang, 2013). The Secretary needs great communication skills to be confident and comfortable talking to new people, clients and colleagues face to face. For relationship to last, Secretaries should give proactive thought to the feelings and behaviors of the persons they are in relationship with.

Fincham and Beach (2010) identified the following component characteristics of minding a relationship:

- (1) Seek to understand the partner to know more of him/her and for him/her to know you more as well.
- (2) Show relationship enhancing behavior and giving benefit of doubt.
- (3) Accept and respect empathy and social/technical skills of the partner(s)
- (4) Maintain reciprocity and active participation in the relationship.
- (5) Persist in minding and continuing the relationship.

In building relationship in the work place one needs to be proactive in duties, self-motivated, minding, discipline, mentoring a good behavior, knowledgeable and skillful in your line of trade and production etc. Work or business relationship can be faster when the Secretary:

- (1) Offer something before asking for something. Give before you receive
- (2) Be a companion and a professional friend
- (3) Be prepared to make the relationship work
- (4) Understand the difference between position and influence
- (5) Be emotionally intelligent and stable
- (6) Have your ears to the ground for information and eyes on the partners to encourage them to talk

Formal relationship in the work place is built by the individuals taking into consideration the work ethics and rules of the organization in which they work. Each worker must mind the relationship he/she is involved in line with the work ethics and to be useful in adding value to the organizations e.g. in religion organizations, sexual or other relationship cannot be accepted between the boss or members and the other workers like the Secretary. Minding work ethics in building your relationship in the work place will add value to that relationship.

The Secretary And Relationship Building In The Work Place

The foundation of the Secretary's relationship in the work place is the roles or functions that he/she plays or performs. This means that the Secretary's relationship is built on his/her schedule of duties with a personal touch. The Secretary plays a unique and significant role in the work place as he/she manages the administrative details of

running the organization. He/she handles correspondences, arrange meetings/events, receive visitors/new members to the boss and manages confidential information, being a personal organizer of the executive, and be an executive assistance. The Secretary screen those that would want to see the executive as well as the matters/issues they want to discuss and allocate time to them. He/she also directs some issues to other officers away from the executive (Daniel, L. 2006).

Since 1990, there has been a rise in the responsibilities, prestige and influence of the Secretary in the work place. Powers and responsibilities are delegated to the Secretary to use as “executive assistant”. When the executive is away, the Secretary manages the affairs of the organization until he/she is back. This is what is becoming of Career Secretaries today (Andrew, 2005). Secretaries do the job of public relation and image-making of the organization in addition to being a “temporal manager” when the boss is away. Thus the Secretary is a valuable and an integral part of the management team. The cooperation between the executive and the Secretary in the work place can not be over emphasized for the attainment of organizational goal(s). While the Secretary outlines the agenda for meetings and activities to be involved for the organization to progress, the boss handles and manages the logistics aspect. For the Secretary to be of value and perform the duties effectively, he/she need to build better work place relationship. The value of the Secretary's relationship in the work place is highly influenced by his/her personal and business attributes/characters.

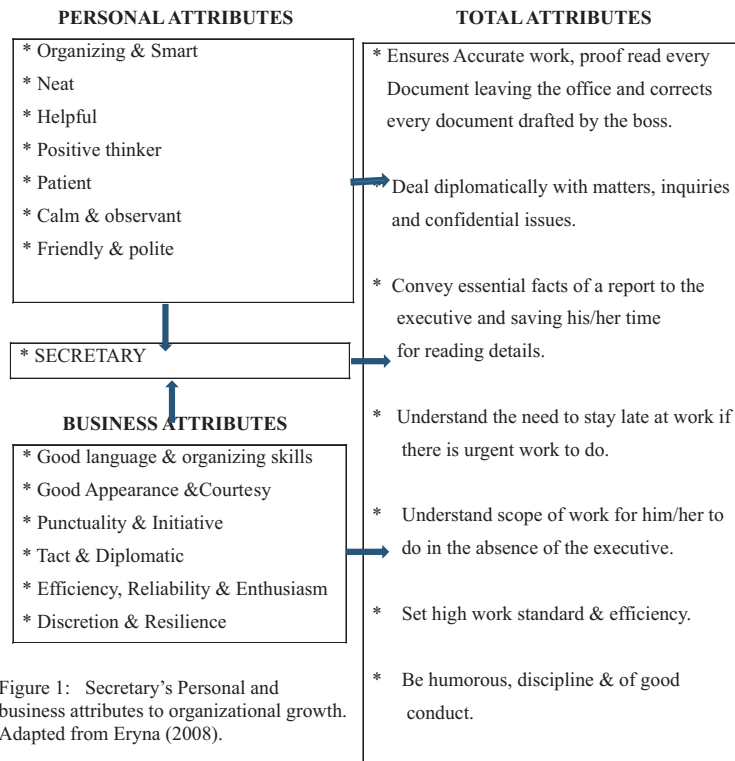


Figure 1: Secretary's Personal and business attributes to organizational growth. Adapted from Eryna (2008).

Value of Relationship in Productivity

For a worker to be effective he/she need to be physically, biologically and emotionally fit to work. Productivity is highly influenced by emotional disposition of the worker in which depression will lead to decrease productivity while elation, joy and happiness elicit high productivity. Good relationship building in the work place, elicits elation, joy and happiness. Good and harmonious relationship add value to the organization manifesting in increased productivity and efficiency, The reverse is the case for poor or sour relationship building in the work place. Building a valued relationship in the work place by the Secretary is a sine qua non for the growth and development of the organization. This is why valued relationship especially formal relationship must be guided and maintained by the Secretary going by the enormous and challenging role played as an executive assistant in today's work place. There is need to display courtesy to draw customers, clients and other people close, to achieve the objective of the organization. Behavior that repels is to be put off. Valuable relationship in the work place produces and motivates the workers hence the Secretary needs to key in to establishing cordiality to motivating them. It should be noted that many employees are interested in the acknowledgement of their contribution and the visible enhancement of their prestige in the corporate structure (Andrew, 2005).

Challenges Of Relationship Building In The Work Place

Building the bridges of relationship in the work place is by no means an easy task as it involves much of human psychological behavior. Besides, it is not easy or possible to have relationship with every one you meet. It is only best to choose a few people that one can enter into a trusted relationship with in the work place. A Secretary would open up to a boss who can be trusted and trust not the one who will use trusted and confidential information given to him/her to work against the Secretary who gave the information. It is a fact that some executives use privileged information against their Secretaries without defending them whereas their Secretary so trusted them and believed that they can not stab them at the back. For instance, a Secretary who took permission to be absent form duty from a boss but did not document it and the boss later reporting him/her to a higher authority of absconding from duties. Even when such issues are resolved to the Secretary's favors the tone of work in the office and the productivity of the Secretary will be affected. These are challenges that need to be avoided.

The Secretary should be trusted by the boss, he/she should not divulge official or confidential information to any person who to be used against the boss. Rumor mongering, grapevine, defective distribution of official resources, state of heath etc are factors that can mar the value of relationship in the work place. When a Secretary is not healthy enough to do a job or stay extra hours for urgent jobs to be done, he/she is likely to get the bad side of the boss and other interested persons..

There is also the problem of clashing official formal relationship with personal love relationship in the work place. The Secretary has no choice about maintaining official/formal relationship with the boss but has a choice of whether to have any love or romantic relationship with him/her. Sometime the Secretary might be in a situation where the boss desire to have love relationship with him/her but he/she objected to such overtures. The boss feeling disappointed, can use official rules negatively against the uncompromising Secretary in the form of sexual harassment. This scenario is capable of crippling an organization to a state of anarchy as official relationship is now abused and can lead to falling productivity and value of relationship in the work place. According to Daniel (2006) if a boss expressed interest in the Secretary but the Secretary is not interested and the boss is becoming nasty to him/her then a case of sexual harassment can be established or pin against such boss and he/her can be fired by the authority. Other challenges that can break down relationship in an organization are:

- (1) Inefficiency of the Secretary in handling duties or job which often lead to reprimand.
- (2) Self-preservation and fear of failure leading to withdrawal from others/wearing of long or gloomy face.
- (3) Inability to build social relationship with others which reduces self-confidence.

Conclusion

Human relationship building in the work place is very important to the survival of an organization. It determines the success or failure of such organization. The role of the Secretary in building lasting relationship formally and informally with the boss, co-workers, customers, etc can go a long way to enhancing the success and development of the organization. In today's organizations, the Secretary performs numerous functions than anyone else. He/she does the secretarial jobs, be an executive assistant, manages/organize the executive for better performance, actively involved in management decision projections, do public relation jobs, a guidance-counselor to old and new workers etc. The cooperation between the Secretary and the boss is a sine qua non to organizational growth and development. The two owes much to the success or failure of the organization. The personal and business attributes of the Secretary are capable of increasing her value in work relationship and reduced whatever challenges that come his/her way.

Recommendations

From the discourse above, it is pertinent at this juncture to recommend the following for effective relationship building for secretarial development and organizational growth.

- (1) The Secretary needs to build lasting work relationship in the work environment which elicits trust.

- (2) The Secretary should mind his/her relationship. He/she should be tolerant and slow to anger because he/she has dealings and influence on many people in the organization.
- (3) The Secretary should separate or demarcate official work relationship from unofficial love, romantic or intimate relationship. A mixture of the two can be difficult to handle effectively without negatively affecting the organization.
- (4) The Secretary should improve on his/her knowledge of management to increase his/her value as executive assistant in managing the organization especially when the boss is away.
- (5) A boss who coerces a Secretary to love or romantic relationship through sexual harassment should be reported to a higher authority of that boss for disciplinary action.
- (6) A Secretary should stand to be trusted, confident and keep secret official matters to preserve his/her integrity.
- (7) A Secretary should avoid perpetuating injustice. He/she should maintain fair play, self-respect to strengthening the relationship in the work place.
- (8) The Secretary should be adequately remunerated for the many jobs he/she is involved by the authority of the organization to motivate him/her.

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