ADVANCING IN COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY: THE NEED FOR THE USAGE OF EMAIL FACILITY

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Abstract
Communication of information or data is an indispensable responsibility of a secretary in an organisation. Owing to the trends in communication technology, secretaries all over the globe have a greater responsibility and challenge to meet up with the demands of their job. Communication which was traditionally done through systems that exhibited some time and distance delay has become history with the use of internet services. Virtually, most organisations, offices and individuals are connected to the web. The issue of number of users or access to a great extent has been enhanced through mobile networking facilitated by modem/air-time credit and the use of blackberry phones. Therefore, it has become imperative for secretaries to be actively involved in the use of electronic mail (email) in making contacts with their bosses, other employees, client organisations, government agencies, etc. on issues such as passing information, notification, schedules, adjustment in documentations, reminders, etc. This will obviously help to save time lost, cover long distance in short time, enhance frequency of access to people, feedback and ultimately achieve organisational goals. Thus, this paper would enlighten secretaries on the need for the usage of email facilities, how to manage the challenges, and implications in modern global office.

Introduction
Communication involves the interchange of facts, values judgments and opinion and the communication process may take many forms: face-to-face conversation, telephone calls, informal and formal meeting, conferences, memoranda, letters, reports, tabulations, charts, VDU transmission and so on. The various channels of communication used by organizations include face to face communication, written communication, visual communication, oral communication and electronic communication. With improvement in information and communication technology, modern communication emphasizes on electronic communication with major focus on internet and intranet communication. Owing to the challenges faced by organisations globally, there is the job demand for quick and easy access to the 'receiver' in communication process of sender, message, medium, receiver and feedback. According to Olatoye (2011), Information and Communication Technology (ICT) refers to the totality of methods and tools that are used in gathering, storing,
processing and communicating information.

This need became more critical with the state of increased intensity of connectivity and interaction of service and business organisations competing for customers' patronage, brand loyalty and building more prospective customers in attractive and promising locations. Meeting up with this transaction trend, the internet technology provides a good and creditable means of reaching out to clients or customers and prospective customers through electronic mail popularly called e-mail.

Over the past ten years, email services was fairly used by secretaries in their individual organisations owing to the unavailability of internet facilities in organisation which then required wiring or land line. Overcoming this challenge and enhancing wide usage, wireless networking in internet protocol was introduced alongside with mobile phones (black berry, android, etc.) and laptop or desktop via modem protocol. As result, the use of email services by people became rampant. The question then is how applicable is this service in normal business transactions of organizations? Do secretaries actually require the use of email? How could their usage be boosted?

**Concept of Electronic Mail(e-Mail)**

The modern email version is generally credited to an American, Ray Tomlinson. Before Tomlinson, users could send messages to each other, but only when they were connected to the same computer. Even once computers were networked, messages could not be targeted to a particular individual. Tomlinson devised a way to address mail to certain users, and thus was credited for one of the most important communication inventions in the 20th century. Tomlinson's idea was to identify the name of the user and the computer at which he or she was located. As a result, the basic formula for addressing an email was `username@usercomputer`. This standard has not changed much over the years, other than the user computer is now commonly replaced by the name of a service provider.

Email simply means messages distributed by electronic means from one computer user to one or more recipients via a network. Bea (2014), defined **electronic mail** as the transmission of messages over communications networks. The messages can be notes, letter, memo, report, minutes of meeting entered from the keyboard or electronic files stored on disk. Most e-mail systems include a rudimentary text editor for composing messages, but many allow you to edit your messages using any editor you want. You then send the message to the recipient by specifying the recipient's address. You can also send the same message to several users at once. This is called **broadcasting**. Usually, it takes only a few seconds or minutes for mail to arrive at its destination. That is, messages sent by electronic mail normally reach a recipient's account within seconds. This is an effective way to communicate with a group because you can broadcast a message or document to everyone in the group at once. They mostly include more than just text; images and numerous types of formatted documents are now easily included as attached files.
Sent messages are stored in electronic mailboxes until the recipient fetches them. To see if you have any mail, you may have to check your electronic mailbox periodically, although many systems alert you when mail is received. After reading your mail, you can store it in a text file, forward it to other users, or delete it. Copies of correspondence can be printed out on a printer if you want a paper copy.

Users receive and send messages using standardized protocols that make it possible for emails to travel seamlessly between computers running different types of software, and across different kinds of servers on various networks. Simple message transfer protocol (SMTP) enables the actual sending and receiving of messages. Other protocols, including Post Office Protocol (POP) and Internet Message Access Protocol (IMAP), allow users to retrieve and store messages over time. There are a number of Web sites on the internet that provides e-mail services. They are Yahoo, Gmail, Hotmail, etc.

From a legal standpoint, email is generally treated as a private form of communication, much the same as a phone call, or even a hand written letter; the specifics will vary from one country to another, but it is typically illegal to access, read, or publish another person's messages without permission. It is important to understand, however, that it is relatively easy for hackers to intercept electronic mail. Moreover, many companies require that their employees sign an agreement granting the employer permission to monitor all messages sent from, or received at corporate email addresses.

Another privacy concern is that every electronic message becomes a more or less permanent record of the communication. Selecting a message for deletion will remove it from the visible queue on the user's account, but a person should never assume that the message is truly gone; deleted emails are notoriously easy to resurrect. Even if the sender uses specialized software to thoroughly obliterate all traces of the message from his or her computer, copies of the email will likely still exist on the receiver's end, as well as on many of the servers across which it travelled. Consequently, it is unwise to send sensitive information by this method without carefully considering the possibility that an outside party could get hold of it. Since emails are automatically time and date stamped, these records are often subpoenaed by courts in order to establish a time line for a particular chain of events (Wise Geek, 2013).

The need for the usage of Email facilities,
The influence of email cannot be overstated. Postal Service, for example, that use to handles 500 million pieces of mail per day. By comparison, over 28.4 billion emails are sent every day in Nigeria. In other words, electronic mail providers handle more than 75 times the volume of mail. It is perhaps just as revealing to consider the degree to which electronic mail has affected the use of traditional mail. The Nigeria Postal
service, along with many other world postal services have experienced dramatic declines in volume and revenue, that began in the later half of the 1990s, and which have continued steadily ever since; this is partly because so much personal and business correspondence is now being delivered by email.

In contemporary business environment, email has become the popular communication tools. This is made more possible with the advent of Lap-tops, Note-pad, mobile networking, etc. With the introduction of the e-mail tools, the distribution and management of paperwork has drastically reduced giving room to computer-based documentation, distribution and storage. It reduces costs of provision of stationery, storage equipment, etc. It facilitates the fast, convenient flow of information among users at various locations and time zones. It reduces paper waste. Messages can be easily read and immediately kept without the need for a printed copy that would require filing in a cabinet. It increases efficiency of a secretary as it reduces telephone interruption caused when delivering verbal message that require verbal response and time consumption in postal mails.

Managing the Challenges - Effective Use of E-mail
Moreover, it is no longer necessary to be sitting in front of a PC to send or receive an email. A variety of mobile devices, such as tablet computers and smart phones, make it possible to manage correspondence at any time and place.

Using email requires taking into consideration issues such as the nature of the information the sender (Secretary) intends to communicate. Reasoning capabilities of the receiver is a determinant of how mails are composed. It is very essential as this would determine the wording and sentence structure that would be used in mail. A receiver of a mail if he is a school certificate holder, the wording of the mail should be simple, direct and concise. The next consideration would be how quick or soon the user require it? If immediately needed, brief write up should be made and also ensure to remind the receiver that a detailed one would be sent if so demand. Consideration is also given to the format the user (receiver) mail. It could be that the receiver might want the comprehensive details send as an attached mail, or it could be that he wants copies of the mail or attachment sent to other persons which implies sending copies through the distribution dialogue box to the respective email address.

In addition to the above, Lehman and DuFrene (2005), advised that one need to:
1. Be conscientious in checking and responding to electronic messages to avoid missing important information that needs to be completed within a short time. Response to email is expected to be within 24 hours. Ignoring electronic messages can hinder efforts to create open and honest work environment.
2. Avoid sending formatted documents with different fonts, special print features (italics, bold) and clip arts. Reasons owing to the fact that they take time to download, require more disk space and sometimes, it is unreadable on some computers.
3. Edit the original message when you are replying to an email message. This is so because, returning the message with the reply is time consuming for the receiver to download and to sort the reply from the original message.

4. Never address an e-mail containing action items to more than one person so as to ensure a response.

5. Be certain that an individual need a copy of the e-mail before forwarding it.

6. Only forward an email from another person only with the permission of the originator of the message.

7. Follow company policy.

8. Send short and direct messages that would ordinarily be sent though memos. The messages are mostly routine in nature which may entail scheduling meetings, giving supervisor quick updates, etc.

9. Do not send message when you are angry. As email message are sensitive and highly emotional which could be misinterpreted because of the absence of nonverbal communication (facial expression).

Keeping information simple and understandable is to highlight the significant factors, screening out any facts which are not important enough to effect the decision making process. Information is both new and important for the decision making process. A variety of techniques to present data more effectively may be used including:

- Eliminating unnecessary information.
- Carefully formatting critical information.
- Using colours.
- Using graphics.

**How to Prepare E-mail Composition**

According to Ewarawon (2014), to prepare e-mail, click email composition box, the email box automatically shows a heading format (e-mail box) as shown in diagram below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To fill the format the following guidelines are followed:
1. **To:** Indicate the email address of the addressee (receiver). For example ewarawonulisan@yahoo.com
2. **From:** Indicate the email address of the sender (composer). Example Tope@yahoo.com
3. **Date:** Indicate the date the message is composed or sent.
4. **Subject:** Indicate brief caption or title of the message. The essence of the subject is to reveal an understanding of the message by informing the receiver what the intended message is all about. In other words, it sets the stage for understanding the message. In terms of reference purpose, it provides meaning where the document is referred to at a later date. Email message can contain graphics, text or combination of both. The email system is also designed in such way that, with the subject heading, mails are easily sorted out where there is case of mail overload. Instead of opening individual mail to know the content, the subject heading help in determining the content. Thus the wording of the subject is very important in sending of an email. As a guide to wording subject lines, Lehman and DuFrene (2005), suggested that one should provide a useful subject line that has meaning for you and the receiver. Identifying key words will help one to develop good subject lines. Take into consideration the five W's – Who, What, When, Where, and Why so as to give a proper clue. The title should be brief and precise.
5. **Message:** In this section, the message is indicated. The purpose of writing is indicated that is what the writer or sender intends to accomplish through the message. In writing, one needs to be clear in the purpose of the message. This will enable him/her to properly organize and develop the content of the message. In addition, while seeking to achieve the purpose of the writing, the composition of the content relative to receiver is considered as a crucial factor. The message should be tailored to the level of understanding of the receiver. The message should be limited to few ideas or issues that are related. Reasons are owing to the fact that it allows one to write a descriptive subject line that will accurately describe the purpose and allow the message to compete for the receiver's attention.

- For lengthy messages, it should be divided into logical sections using subheadings to represent the divisions. The divisions help to alert the receiver of the information that are under each heading and makes it easier to comprehend. Note, where the message involves several pages, it is advisable to use attachment to send such message. In composing message that is of good news or neutral information, the ideas should be organized deductively. Where the message contains bad news or is intended to persuade, the ideas should be organized inductively.

- In the message, technical words, abbreviations, acronyms and mild jargons
are used unlike formal letter. For example infor., rep, demo, stat etc. In using them, consideration should be given to the ability of the receiver to interprete and understand the terms.

**Implication of E-mail Usage**

It is true that internet technology has come to stay but a great challenge to many - individuals and organisation is ownership of the computer-internet device that would engender connectivity and interaction. It becomes so obvious that wide usage of email that would have cyclical effect would demand 87% ownership of mobile phones with internet protocol, laptop with universal modem, and organisation's provision and support towards internet installation. Change which is one element that is constant in life is not easily embraced when it occurs. There is need to orient workers towards the actual use of internet in correspondence. Organisations need to introduce this system of interaction and distribution as part of their organisational culture.

**Conclusion**

The essence of e-mail facilities is a welcomed development in mail management. All things being equal, the task of secretaries in terms of correspondence is made easier as distribution is immediate. Time delay in mail in mail delivery has been curtailed to a great extent. Denial of reception of mail by recipient has been overcome tremendously. Email technology is one of the hallmark of internet services.

**Recommendations**

Based on the necessity of email in aiding efficiency in communication and information delivery the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Secretaries should be actively involved in the use of email where the occasion presents itself.
2. Secretaries who are yet to use email services should make frantic effort to learn the methodologies so as to be effective in the usage.
3. Organisations that do not have internet services should do so as one some of the benefit of email is connectivity, social network, cost reduction, quick and easy dispatch, as a last resort for backup, etc.
4. To boost usage the internet service providers should their network frequency such that problems low or no network in times when crucial issues are to be sent or received would be a thing of the past.
5. Managers or management should also try to put in place intranet, an in house internet protocol within the organisation so that internal correspondence between individuals, departments could be effectively handled.
Reference


http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-email.htm

http://www.thefreedictionary.com/mail
