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Chapter

Introduction to the Secretarial Profession

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should know:

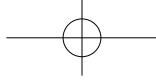
- ▶ the major role and tasks of a secretary
- ▶ the changing role of a secretary
- ▶ the skills and personal qualities required of a competent secretary
- ▶ the importance of forming a good working relationship with your boss
- ▶ the need to acquaint yourself with the business of your company

There is a common saying that reads as follows: “The secretary is the key person behind many a successful business manager.” This remark embodies a great deal of truth. The secretary is quite often a VIP in a company. Therefore, it would be a big mistake to underestimate the role of the secretary. In this chapter, we will discuss what a corporate secretary should do, or, in other words, what role a secretary should play in a company. Through the study of this chapter, you will learn exactly what to expect before you “take the plunge” into this profession. Additionally, you will learn what qualities a secretary should possess to become successful in their work.



The major role and tasks of a secretary

The major role of a secretary is to provide assistance to a manager or managers. A manager is responsible for the success of a business area or a department of a company. As a result, their job duties are multifaceted. Since the manager is only one person with a limited amount of time, they



need assistance in many areas within the scope of their responsibilities. Therefore, the secretary's scope of responsibilities and tasks are also multifaceted and cover a wide range and types of tasks.

The responsibilities and tasks of a secretary can include many varied duties such as:

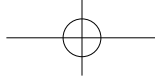
- Research
- Typing
- Producing flyers
- Filing
- Dictaphone transcription
- Screening telephone calls
- Appointments
- Liaising with clients and staff members
- Attending meetings
- Taking minutes
- Translation
- Composing letters
- Making travel bookings
- Supervising
- Training staff (including your boss)
- Ordering flowers and gifts

The secretary's role is changing

The secretary's focus and responsibilities vary a bit from company to company, and change to a certain degree over time with the development of the company as well as the secretary's skill and experience. As the managers of the new generation are doing more and more of their own typing today, a secretary can expect to focus to a greater degree on organizing, supervising and training. In fact, a highly significant change is taking place in the name given to the "secretarial" position. Today, secretaries are becoming increasingly recognized as "office professionals". A secretary is no longer just someone who makes coffee and tea, sends faxes, makes copies and organizes files. The important role of a secretary positions this professional as the face of the company. The secretary is the initial point of contact for telephonic, online, paper, and face to face interactions. They are responsible for how the company is seen through many mediums.

Managers and executives rely on their office professionals for the organization and retrieval of information critical to the daily and long-term success of the company. Secretaries that demonstrate professionalism and reliability may be promoted to the executive secretarial positions. In this capacity, they are responsible for certain managerial duties.

An executive secretary's duties include supervising other office secretaries or administrative staff. They often assist in personnel training and development, company activity scheduling, streamlining efforts, outsourcing choices and administration, and various other functions related to organizational management. In fact, in many companies today, secretaries have the title of "office



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administrator”, so as to better reflect the varied nature and scope of the responsibilities of the position.

The skills and personal qualities required of a competent secretary

There are many skills and personal qualities required of a competent secretary. The following is a list of some of the most essential and foundational skills and qualities.

Skills:

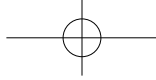
- Ability to maintain an immaculate appearance
- Solid command of languages
- Ability to communicate clearly
- Ability to type quickly and accurately
- Familiarity with office equipment and stationeries
- Ability to take instructions and carry them out under normal conditions
- Efficient organizational skills

Personal qualities:

- Awareness and possession of solid secretarial professional ethics
- Good sense of business etiquette
- Pleasant demeanor and personality
- Positive attitude
- Balanced emotional character
- Commitment to thorough and reliable performance

If a secretary possesses the above-listed skills and personal qualities, they would become a highly valuable person in the company. This secretary would have the ability to represent the company in a positive and professional manner externally to customers, partners, media, and other stakeholders. This secretary would also be an invaluable asset internally, efficiently handling responsibilities, organizing, and helping to maintain competent work functioning, clear communication and a positive climate of teamwork amongst the staff at all levels within the company.





Personal qualities, much like specific skills, can be developed and improved upon through time. As you continue to learn and develop in this exciting and changing professional field, be sure to continually assess your current state of functioning and set goals for continuous personal improvement. Consult with your supervisor for feedback on your performance and make a professional development plan that outlines goals for your improvement, and ultimately your advancement in the company.

Form a good working relationship with your boss

To be a competent secretary, you will need to learn how your boss works. It is important that you understand:

- What their roles and objectives are within the company;
- What correspondence, telephone and personal inquiries they would like you to refer to them;
- Times of the day they prefer to take their calls.

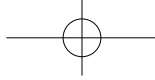
Knowing these sorts of things will make your job easier. The goal is to save your manager time with the daily routine matters and be as helpful as you possibly can.

Acquaint yourself with the business of your company

As you learn more about the way your company operates and the roles of other company personnel, you will find yourself capable of answering more and more routine inquiries and confidently and efficiently referring inquiries that require a managerial reply to the correct manager. This demonstrates that you are advancing in your knowledge, competence, and potential to contribute to the success of the company.

As a secretary, you should familiarize yourself with company policies so that you know how to deal with issues as they arise in your role as a secretary. For instance, should personnel complaints be put in writing, or will your boss deal with them verbally? You need to become familiar with many of these types of questions so that you will not waste the time of your boss by putting unnecessary calls through to them. If you are familiar with company policies, you will be able to handle many inquiries yourself because the company policies provide guidelines necessary for giving responses to such inquiries and for making decisions.

Many companies have procedural books and/or staff handbooks. Ask if there is one. If yes,



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then study it. If there is not one, offer to develop one as you learn the job. Your supervisor will be impressed with your self-motivated initiative. You will also find this document very handy when you need to train other staff that you supervise later.

Conclusion

The secretarial role is interesting, challenging and it is undergoing many changes. These changes have made the secretarial profession even more appealing. Today, secretaries are becoming more important than they have ever been before. They are no longer low-rank employees. Rather, they have become employees that are highly influential and integral to the success of the company.

The major role of a secretary is to assist a manager or managers. A secretary who fails to keep a good working relationship with the boss cannot optimally serve the company. It is also necessary for a secretary to keep trying to familiarize themselves with the policies and business of the company. In this way, they will make daily progress in their career.

Men and women throughout the world are enjoying a career in the secretarial profession. Let today be the day you, too, start training and planning for your future career.

New words & expressions

scope *n.* 范围

acquaint *vt.* 使熟悉

saying *n.* 俗语

embody *vt.* 包含

VIP *abbr.* very important person 重要人物

corporate *adj.* 公司的

multifaceted *adj.* 多方面的

varied *adj.* 各种各样的

flyer *n.* 宣传页

filing *n.* 文件归档

dictaphone *n.* (供速记员用的) 口述录音机

transcription *n.* 转录

liaise *vi.* 建立(保持)联系

compose *v.* [正式]写(讲稿等)

retrieval *n.* 检索(信息)

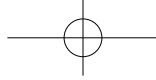
in this capacity 以这个身份

managerial *adj.* 管理的

streamline *vt.* 简化……使其效率更高

outsourcing *n.* 外部采办

immaculate *adj.* 整洁的



stationery *n.* 文具

ethics *n.* 道德规范

etiquette *n.* 礼节

demeanor *n.* 举止

asset *n.* 资源

personnel complaints 关于员工的 (工作或行为的) 投诉

verbally *adv.* 口头地

procedural *adj.* 程序的

self-motivated *adj.* 主动的

appealing *adj.* 吸引人的

influential *adj.* 有影响的

integral *adj.* 不可或缺的

optimally *adv.* 最佳地

Exercises



1. Summarize the changes that are occurring to the secretarial profession today.
2. Summarize the responsibilities and tasks of a modern-day secretary.
3. Why are some secretaries today given the title of “office administrator”?
4. What should a secretary do to maintain a good relationship with their boss or superior?
5. Among all the skills/personal qualities that a competent secretary should have, which do you think are the most important? Why do you think so?
6. Decide which of the following are true and which are false.
 - 1) A secretary should read the procedural book or staff handbook before starting to work, in order to be familiar with the company policies and regulations.
 - 2) The secretary’s responsibilities are the same in every company.
 - 3) To be fully responsible, a secretary should report to their boss about every correspondence and telephone call from customers or potential customers.
 - 4) An executive secretary is not only responsible for paperwork in the office, but also responsible for supervising other office secretaries and administrative staff.
 - 5) Secretaries will be called “office professionals” in the future, although they are not today.
 - 6) The nature and scope of the responsibilities of corporate secretaries have been varied from what they were many years ago.