



Application of SWOT Analysis for Increased Secretarial Productivity

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Abstract. This work on Application of SWOT Analysis for increased Secretarial Productivity was approached from professional, rather than academic angle. The purpose was to highlight how honestly conducted SWOT analysis can increase productivity of secretarial staff in any organization. Relevant literature, personal experience and observation methods were adopted and various concepts in the topic reviewed. The article X-rayed the contents of each letter in SWOT and their effects on productivity of secretarial professionals. It was revealed that the strengths of secretarial profession lie on its indispensability in any organization, among others. Many weaknesses, like poor mindset, low esteem and inferior complex mostly generated by the practitioners and opportunities to improve the general outlook and efficiency of the practitioners abound in the external environment of secretarial practitioners were identified. Threats to the profession include: economic, technology and environment, among many others. It was concluded that to advance secretarial profession to a new pinnacle in Nigeria secretaries are to individually conduct honest and regular personal SWOT analysis. Secretaries must continually up-scale their strength, identify areas of their weakness and take proactive measures. They should leverage on technology in addition to other numerous readily opportunities in the profession as well undertake appropriate actions to mitigate the effects of threats as they unfold.

Keywords: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats.

1. Introduction

Secretarial profession plays vital roles in the administrative operation and continuity of any organization. The profession has undergone colossal transformation that have given greater expectations and new discourse to the profession. Currently, secretarial professionals have a multifunctional profile. In modern organizations, secretarial professionals are trained to guide the interdisciplinary work and activities such as managerial functions, articulation and logical reasoning leadership, management and administrative advice. Productivity is a measure of how efficiently a person completes a task. In secretarial profession, (Akasi, 2023) opines that productivity is the rate at which secretaries perform assigned and non-assigned tasks. Productivity is usually based on the amount of energy exerted, time and resources used to deliver secretarial services. In essence, secretaries' increased productivity entails greater output from the same or a smaller number of resources used.

1.1 Secretary and Greater Productivity

For any secretary to be adjudged productive within an organization, to be appealing to employers, the profession and likable to those who are exposed to

secretarial service delivery, the secretary must be full of vision. The secretary must constantly take steps to actualize the vision. Vision is a picture of the future. It describes the desired future position the secretary wishes to be in the organization and within the realm of the profession. One tested way to develop and achieve laudable vision, is the application of SWOT analysis. This means that personal assessment through SWOT analysis, is an essential step for increased productivity.

2. Definition of SWOT

The acronym SWOT, stands for Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats. SWOT analysis is a simple but powerful tool for sizing up personal resources, capabilities, and deficiencies, opportunities and the threat to one's career success and the future, (Gurel & Tat 2017). In the context of the work, Strength and weakness are internal and personal attributes of secretaries, Opportunities and threat are external and attributes of the environment where the secretarial practice is being exhibited. Therefore, SWOT analysis is the strategic way to evaluate internal and external environment of where the secretary work and how things may affect productivity and subsequently the profession.

The essence of conducting personal SWOT by secretaries

SWOT analysis helps the secretary to identify strengths, reduce weaknesses and exploit the opportunities. It also helps to develop contingency plans to minimize threats. SWOT analyses are the major route to increased productivity. Aside increased productivity, the knowledge and application of SWOT analysis play very significant roles in personal

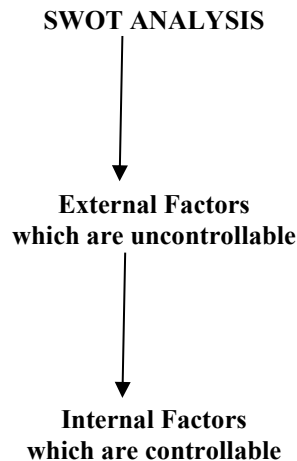
progress, career success, career growth, goodwill and job satisfaction of secretaries.

Honest conduct of personal SWOT analyses helps secretaries to learn more about themselves in the context of secretarial profession. This enables secretaries to focus on strengths and to take the greatest possible advantage of any opportunities available.

Through SWOT analysis, secretaries can identify personal weaknesses and threats that can hinder success in the profession. Further, the individual secretarial personnel is equipped with knowledge and the insights needed to make strategic decisions for improvements towards greater productivity and career success. As a result, conducting SWOT analysis enables the secretary evaluates his/her job performance and observed the profession from new directions.

At the end of sincere SWOT analysis, improved secretaries' engagements at work are envisaged. Secretaries would be motivated, resolved to commitment devoting to duties, loyalty, develop positive attitudes with strong emotional connection towards their work and ultimately contribute positively toward achieving the organizational goals. X-ray of components of SWOT analysis for increased productivity of secretarial professionals

The acronym SWOT, stands for Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats. Strength and weakness are personal attributes of secretaries, Opportunities and Threat are external. They occur in the outside environment where the secretarial practice is being exhibited.



2.1 Opportunities

- Diverse avenues for professional development
- Networking: With CIPSSON
- Technology Skill for entrepreneurship

2.2 Strengths

- Indispensable professionals
- Knowledge of something about everything and everything about something.
- Creativity
- Resilience
- Multi-skilling: Better education than before

2.3 Threats

- Computer operators.
- Bosses with minimal typing skills
- Under-rating of secretary's initiatives:
- Automation and artificial intelligence
- Technology & health challenges
- Outsourcing of secretarial functions
- Secretary & Toxic relationships:

2.4 Weaknesses

- Secretaries' poor mindset, low esteem and inferior complex to other professions.
- Inadequate cooperation with CIPSSON: Competency and Technical Skills gaps

3. Strengths

Strengths are those inner qualities we have that will guarantee success at workplace. The strengths are Unique Selling Points (USP), those qualities that keep the professional relevant in their places of work. The strengths include:

Indispensability: indispensability made it hard if not impossible, for any organization, small or big, private or public, to succeed without professional secretarial services. Secretaries are the much sought after professionals. In this wise, secretaries take high percentage of the population of staff in any organizations.

Knowledge of something about everything and everything about something: The professional secretary is versatility in secretarial administrative and office duties; possesses a wide variety of skills, and can perform efficiently in all directions and all manner of organizations. He/she knows something about everything and everything about something in the

office. He is able to turn with ease, from one assignment to another and able to work, with little or no supervision. Good and effective business, groups, interpersonal and public communication skills are the hallmarks of professional secretaries. Secretaries, by training and exposure can perform the role of managers and administrators whereas the other officers cannot perform the role of the secretaries, though they sometimes meddle, and secretaries see them as interlopers.

Creativity: Professional secretaries are possessors of creativity. Creativity is the mental process undertaken by secretaries to anticipate needs and solve specific problems resulting in providing workable solutions to organizational and societal problems, (Folorunso, 2019). In the management of executives, colleagues, superiors, and the external individuals, secretaries do display high level of creativity. With creativity, the secretary helps to decrease bottlenecks, bureaucracy, poor mindset about their organizations.

Resilience: Resilience is the ability to be strong again after disappointment, or endangerment. Pessimists had asserted that due to economic and technological climates, there is no future for secretarial profession. They sent signals that with time, secretaries would be replaced and that the profession would no longer be required in employment. Despite the standpoint, secretarial profession has come to stay, waxing stronger, standing tall for the future and contributing effectively to the progress of organizations and national economy.

Multi-skilling: Secretaries are proficient in the performance of multiple roles or tasks. Secretaries do cover various administrative and management functions as needed within an organization. Multi skilling promotes increased efficiency, reduced waste, better resource utilization, enhances secretaries' job enlargement, engagement and job satisfaction as well as career success.

Better education than before: Gone are the days when secretarial positions were occupied by those without adequate and relevant education and training. That era was characterized by secretaries' unsatisfactory/poor job outputs and high level of poor public perceptions, The '*Secretaries*' then were merely tolerated by those who needed their services. The modern-day secretaries are better educated and well trained, most possessed National Diploma, Higher National Diploma, first and higher degree qualifications. They are equally experts in ICT office applications and office information system capable to meet the emerging needs contemporary world of work.

Secretaries perform their duties 24/7. On the whole, with the improvement in education, training and gaining certifications relevant to the field there have been remarkable improvements in the delivery of secretarial services in Nigeria.

3.1 What do you do with our strength?

Up-skilling and re-skilling: Akewusola (2021), opines that: *“The illiterate of the 21st century is not the man who cannot read nor write but the man who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn”*. It is naturally logical and pertinent for secretarial professionals to regularly update knowledge, competences and skills, through classroom, professional workshops and training programmes. Up-skilling and re-skilling is important for secretaries to perform differently, smartly and confidently; to keep abreast of what is happening in the profession; to maximally improve strength, dominance and standards of performance in office administration. Secretaries should never rest on our oars.

4. Weaknesses

Weakness is defined as a flaw, weak point. (Oxford dictionary, 2024) Weaknesses are those exhibited behaviours that are negatively affecting secretarial productivity and the profession. They are areas where individual secretary may be weaker than others, were others. They are individual secretary’s human inabilities. At this point, each secretary has to be honest with him/herself Such weak areas include:

Secretaries’ poor mindset, low esteem and inferior complex to other professions: It is very unfortunate to note that some secretaries have poor, negative mindset and low esteem about themselves and the profession. They develop and display poor outlook and mental behaviors; always look down the profession. They sometimes regret or blame God for locating them in the profession. They feel so inferior that they dare not speak outside the office, let alone participate in any public activity, just because they do not want to be identified as secretaries. The weaknesses could be because of low qualifications, poor skills, unfavourable home background, failed aspirations and the likes.

Inadequate cooperation with Professional Association: With the known and glaringly clear benefits accruable from membership of a professional body, many secretaries refused to be members. Many members are unfaithful and insincere to the vision and mission of the Association. This category of secretaries demoralizes others in and outside their

immediate offices and chapters from joining and participating the Association’s activities. They go further de-market the aims and objectives of the institute in their environment. They blatantly refuse to cooperate with the association.

Competency and Technical Skills gaps: Despite avalanche of opportunities to acquire the needed skills, some secretaries continue to display their weakness in technology and professional competency and skills. This is a resultant effect of some secretaries’ refusal to upgrade their academic and professional qualifications as well as competencies. Because of the deficiency and lack of confidence, many secretaries usually refuse posting to certain offices and avoid certain types of works.

4.1 What do you do with the weaknesses?

Human beings are not equally endowed. As a result, secretaries do not experience the same type and level of weakness. Therefore, addressing weakness in one’s professional life requires appropriate steps such as:

Identification of the area(s) of weakness: Every secretary should personally take time to reflect on what exactly are their fears and weakness. in the profession. Understanding the areas is the first step towards overcoming the fears and weaknesses:

Set clear and achievable goals: The secretary needs to define clear professional goals and height wishing to achieve. Having a target in mind helps focus and work towards overcoming your fears and weaknesses. Take proactive measures: Invest in improving your skills, through training, workshops, courses and certifications. This can help building confidence and competency

Surround yourself with supportive colleagues, friends or family members who encourage and uplift you in your professional journey. Accept corrections and constructive criticism that can help growth and overcome the identified weakness.

Squarely face your weaknesses, confront your weakness gradually by stepping out of your comfort zone. Take on challenges that push you to growth professionally. Work on them personally, be disciplined, and seek help from more knowledgeable individuals. If needs be to consult CIPSSON at chapter, state, zonal or national level for more enlightenment, please do.

5. Opportunities

Opportunities are generally external. They are favourable circumstances in the environment and those people around. Opportunities are possibilities that secretaries can tap in to bring increased productivity. Opportunities around secretaries include:

Opportunities for professional development through additional training and qualifications available all around the secretary.

Networking: Networking is building connections with other professionals, (Folorunso, 2020). With professional body in place, greater opportunities than before exist for secretaries to meet and network with colleagues and other highly places individual across the world.

Networking

Gets you noticed

Opens doors to new opportunities

Provides a channel where you can gain more knowledge

You can receive instant career advice and support

Allows you to meet interesting people

Allows you find new mentors

Provides opportunities to help others

Results in long lasting professional relationships

Ultimately, career development and career success

Opportunities to Leveraging technology in enhancing entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship is like a free ticket available to everyone. One can ignore and do nothing entrepreneurial. One can accept to use it for a while and stop at any time. One can use it and continue to do so for the rest of your life, (Cooper, 2015). Currently, skills and competencies in technologies are veritable sources of career success, job satisfaction and above all, entrepreneurship, (Aderounmu 2017). In this era of economic downward one viable way is to key in and be engaged in ICT related businesses. . No doubt, if secretaries who leverage in technology would by moving ICT products and services fast and efficiently from Point A to Point B, chances of success are high.

Secretarial profession is knowledge based, ICT skills based and entrepreneurial based. These combined presents the greatest opportunity for career progression, career success and success in secretarial-based entrepreneurial activities.

5.1 What do you do with opportunities?

Appreciate them, invest into them, Create good relationships with them. Make good use of opportunities.

5.2 Threats

Threat is an environmental factor that is determined to inflict harm on secretarial profession. Threats include anything that can negatively affect the profession from the outside, The threat can be direct, indirect, veiled or conditional; some threats are:

Computer operators: The ubiquitous computer operators are everywhere. Most of them claim they can perform the duties of secretaries. Unfortunately, some secretaries patronize them for their secretarial jobs. Regrettably, some organizations employ such as secretaries.

Bosses with minimal keyboarding skills: Similarly, some executives/bosses erroneously believe that their own below the belt knowledge of keyboarding is tantamount to acquisition of secretarial skills; as if the only duty we carry out is to manipulate the keyboards. This kind of boss accords neither secretaries respect nor recognition. They are threats to secretarial profession.

Under-rating of secretary's initiatives: Despite secretaries' crucial roles, there are still some executives who believe that the profession is purely supportive rather than strategic Such bosses continually dish out instructions on workplace activities they know little or nothing about. They hardly listen to professional advice offer by the secretary towards smooth running of the office in order to promote rancor free office environment. Others delegate some of the responsibilities primarily meant for secretaries to staff without secretarial background. In such a situation when things go wrong in the office, all fingers mostly point to the secretary. This consequently attracts low prestige and threats to secretaries.

Technology advancement and its health challenges: Modern office technologies and secretaries are inseparable. However, prolonged use of ICTs comes with numerous health challenges to the secretary. Computers, mobile phones, internet, copiers and similar gadgets contain *lead, cadmium, mercury* etc., which are toxicants. Nwabuzor's (2020) research findings on mental health issues in secretarial practice corroborate World Health Organization's (WHO) cited in Mahburbu (2011) submission that many diseases as possible are risks associated with the continuous exposure of secretaries to ICTs

Secretary and Toxic relationships: Secretaries, because of their training in human relations, accommodate people who, ordinarily, should be jettisoned or avoided. As a result, secretaries are susceptible to toxic relationships among friends, families and colleagues. A relationship is toxic when the other person(s) speaks ill, utter negative, abusive, disrespect comments about secretary and the honorable profession. A relationship is toxic where our wellbeing/welfare is threatened emotionally psychologically and even physically through offensive and scandalous comments, just because we are secretaries. Toxic relationship devalues, depletes the profession and constantly makes secretary inferior, demeaned and looks worse.

5.3 What do you do with threats?

Assess and understand the threat, and undertake appropriate actions as the threats unfold. For example, learn to walk away from toxic relationships threatening your profession and your source of livelihood. Generally speaking, the bottom line to overcoming any threat in secretarial profession is education, competency and skill acquisition. Education is a liberator and passport to the future and tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. Education and training will eliminate low esteem, skill gaps etc. Always strive to update your qualifications in order to be ready for the next level that you desire to be. This not only casts positive light on you but your coworkers and your boss as well. This will earn you recognition and highlight your participation.

6. Conclusion

The more secretaries realize their potentials and relevance in modern office situations, the prouder they should be and the more public recognition they will be creating for their profession.

The prestige accountancy, law, engineering, medicine, etc professionals enjoy today is a result of guided education, regulations, pride, positive mindset which have been ingrained into them over the decades. Secretarial profession is what it is today because most of secretaries in the profession looks down on themselves because they have not carried out and apply honest SWOT Analysis to the profession. The earlier they do, the better for the individual secretary and the secretarial profession.

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