

APPLICATION OF PUBLIC RELATION SKILLS: TOOLS FOR ENHANCING SECRETARIAL PRACTICE IN OGUN STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined application of Public Relations skills as tools for enhancing secretarial practice in Ogun State. Public relation is a strategic conversation existing between and among individuals within a society or organisation. It is a wide-ranging field, often misperceived because of the lack of message control inherent in public relations. The population used for the study comprised of employees selected from the three senatorial district of Ogun State; Ilaro, Saapade and Itori respectively. One hundred (100) respondents were sampled purposively. Three research questions were raised and some items were generated for the instrument used to collect information from respondents. All respondents filled and returned the administered copies of the questionnaire back to the researcher, where results were gathered for the study. For easy analysis of data, the Mean method was used and data collected was presented in table and percentage respectively. It was gathered that the secretary as a public relations officer is an ambassador who links her organization with the outside world and contributes greatly to the accomplishment of the organizational objectives who projects good reputation, ICT knowledge, excellent communication skills, and attention to details among others. The secretarial work ranges from taking shorthand notes, transcribing verbatim on the typewriter, to handling all administrative duties of a large modern organization. It was recommended among others that Secretaries need to understand the public well and be willing to serve whole heartedly.

Keywords: Public Relations, Secretarial Practice, Secretaries, Organization and Performance.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Secretarial duties depend to a large extent on the type of organization, its objectives and its understanding or evaluation of a secretary. Some organizations do not actually know the particular areas in which the secretary has to function. Under such circumstances, clerical and secretarial duties are all combined and assigned. However, some of the well – known duties of a secretary include the following: taking down dictation in shorthand and transcribing them on the typewriter, typing of documents, reception duties and of course public relations which form the subject matter of the study.

A Secretary, according to Webster (2010) is a person responsible for dealing with the correspondence and records of an organization or individual employer”. The word “Secretary” has different meanings or connotations to different people in some organizations, the Chief Executive is addressed as the “Executive Secretary” while in others as Public Relations Officer (PRO) are known and addressed as company secretaries. The art of secretary-ship is a specialized one which requires a high level of performances. The secretary is an ambassador who links her organization with the outside world and contributes greatly to the accomplishment of the organizational objectives. Their work ranges from taking shorthand notes, transcribing verbatim on the typewriter, to handling all administrative duties of a large modern organization. Secretaries assist executives. They are found in all organization of the world, ranging from small to large commercial centre in major cities.

2.0 Literature Review

Public Relation is concerned with informing the public of its activities, policies, and attempting to create favourable public opinions. Public Relations refer to the planned effort to influence opinion through good character and responsible performance, (Lee, 2009). According to him, it is a management function, which tabulates public attitudes, defines the policies, procedures and interests of an organization.

According to Harlow (2015) “Public relation is the distinctive management function, which helps establish and maintain lines of communication, understanding, and acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics.” Makali (2004) examined the field of public relations as the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organizational leaders and implementing planned programs of action, which will serve both the organization and the public interest.

According to Mbeke (2008), Public relation means to speak out its advocacy in public, and it builds up a talking platform to achieve its goals and protect the interests of people. “Public Relations” is a management function that creates, develops, and carries out policies and programmes to influence public opinion or public reaction about an idea, a product, or an organization. The field of public relations has become an important part of the economic, social, and political pattern of life in many nations. Public relations activities in the modern world help individuals and organizations to build prestige, to promote products and to win elections or legislative battles.

Public Relations is simply stated, the art and science of building relationships between an organization and its key audiences or the public. The concept of public relations is an emerging notion, especially in mass communication discipline. It is basically a management function. PR tries to build an image of an organization and tries to develop a good and sustainable relationship between the organization and its publics. It should be based on truth, knowledge and information. Public Relations activities are a major part of the political process in many nations. Politicians seeking office, government agencies seeking acceptance and cooperation, officials seeking support for their policies, and foreign governments seeking aid and allies abroad all make extensive use of the services provided by public relations specialists, (Rensberg, 2002).

According to Bernays (2017), the public relations counsel is the agent working with both modern media of communications and group formations of society in order to provide ideas to the public’s consciousness. Furthermore, he is also concerned with ideologies and courses of actions as well as material goods and services and public utilities and industrial associations and large trade groups for which it secures popular support. According to him, PR skills include: good reputation/honesty of the PR officer, knowledge and research skills, relationship building, multi-tasking in a high pressure work environment, attention to details, adapts to change, strategic thinking, social media skills, excellent communication skills both orally and writing, excellent interpersonal relations and good Information and Technological skills among others.

In today’s business and non-business operations, PR has assumed a significant role. The public becomes aware and assertive at the end of the seventies of the last century. But they now seek to demand more communications from firms, departments of the state, and NGOs about their objective, operations, and motives. According to Mbeke (2007) PR establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationship between a firm and the public upon whom its success or failure squarely depends. Public relations help an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other. Public relations serve as strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. Public relations can also be defined as the practice of managing communication between an organization and its publics.

Public relations professionals, secretaries inclusive try to make it clear that the success of their job depends on the promises and that nothing should happen by an accident. It is ‘planned’ because a public relation practitioner is always in control of what is being done; he leaves nothing to chance, so he must work to a plan and on a planned basis. The thought is sufficiently vital for it to demand the double emphasis of ‘deliberate’ and ‘planned’ (Ombara, 2001).

Based on the above, Public Relations form mutual understanding between the organization and its publics is necessary, because no man can work in a vacuum. Everybody works for somebody. A public relations practitioner works for an organization- a govt., a public sector undertaking, business, charity or any other. The PR deals with the ‘Public’, because the organization for which he works, wants to be understood and appreciated by the people around it, who affect what it does or are affected by what it does.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of application of Public Relations’ tools on secretarial practice in Gateway ICT Polytechnic, Saapade. Other objectives were to:

- Determine the extent to which a secretary can be regarded as a Public Relations Officer
- Determine the level of educational enhancement that can qualify a secretary as a Public Relations Officer
- How the application of public relations can serve as a tool for promoting secretarial practice

The following research questions were raised on the study

- To what extent can a secretary be regarded as a Public Relations Officer?
- To what extent can the level of educational enhancement qualifies a secretary as a Public Relations Officer?
- How would the application of public relations be used to promote secretarial practice in Gateway ICT Polytechnic?

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study was a survey. The population used for the study comprised of employees selected from the three senatorial district of Ogun State; Ilaro, Saapade and Itori respectively. One hundred (100) respondents were sampled purposively. Three research questions were raised and related items were generated for the instrument used to collect information from respondents. All respondents filled and returned the administered copies of the questionnaire back to the researcher, where results were gathered for the study. For easy analysis of data, the Mean method was used and data collected was presented in table and percentage respectively. It was gathered that the secretary as a public relations officer is an ambassador who links her organization with the outside world and contributes greatly to the accomplishment of the organizational objectives. The secretarial work ranges from taking shorthand notes, transcribing verbatim on the typewriter, to handling all administrative duties of a large modern organisation.

4.0 Results and Discussion

S/N	Items	Strongly Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Public Relation affects positively the performance of secretary	40	40	50	50	10	10
2.	Secretary is necessary for the organisation to achieve their goal	60	60	40	40	1.	-
3.	Secretary plays Public Relation roles when performing work	50	50	40	40	10	10
4.	Secretaries stands as a tool necessary for management	60	60	40	40	2.	-
5.	Secretary enhances the productivity performance of an organization	50	50	40	40	10	10
6.	Public Relations performance is relevant to secretarial practice	60	60	40	40	3.	-
7.	An Active Secretary knows how to relate with Public	60	60	40	40	4.	-
8.	Recruitment of Secretary to perform Public relations are carried out by management	60	60	40	40	5.	-
9.	Secretary relating with Public issue makes them uncomfortable	20	20	30	30	6.	-
10	Management carries out seminar on Public Relation for the Secretary	40	40	60	60	7.	-

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The respondents agree with these opinions having 60% of respondents who strongly agree that “a secretary is necessary for the organization to achieve their goals, secretaries stands as a tool necessary for the management, public relations performance is relevant to secretarial practice, an active secretary knows how to relate with the public, recruitment of secretaries to perform public relations activities are carried out by the management” The study find out that the application of public relation on secretary has effect on efficiency of management in Gateway Polytechnics. Organizations see public relation as comprehensible tools necessary for managerial development. It makes management to work effectively and be active in all aspect, due to the control of the top management through competition among members of staff. In addition, the researcher also found out that the main obstacle militating against the complete acceptance of public relations; is how the secretary can cope with the behaviour of people.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The important role of public relations in promoting secretarial practice in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. Public relations officers and secretaries inclusive try to make it clear that the success of their job depends on the promises and that nothing should happen by an accident. It is ‘planned’ because a public relation practitioner is always in control of what is being done; he leaves nothing to chance, so he must work to a plan and on a planned basis. The thought is sufficiently vital for it to demand the double emphasis of ‘deliberate’ and ‘planned’. It is also “sustained” because a public relations practitioner always tries to implement a thought or an idea and it continues for long time.

Public Relations as a tool forms mutual understanding between the organization and its public is necessary, because no man can work in a vacuum. Everybody works for somebody. A public relations practitioner works for an organization- a govt., a public sector undertaking, business, charity or any other. The PR deals with the ‘Public’, because the organization for which he works, wants to be understood and appreciated by the people around it, who affect what it does or are affected by what it does.

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the study:

- Nigerian secretaries should fully embrace and adapt to the use of new media technologies in other to fully remain relevant in the job.
- To ensure effective and maximum utilization of public relation, efforts should be made by the secretary to ensure that public issue are attend to perfectly
- Government as a matter of policy must ensure that there is total removal of all barriers militating against the acquisition of public relation on secretarial performance.
- For the communication scholars, there is the need to understand that the secretaries need formal training on public relation on secretarial performance.

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