PERCEPTIONS OF OFFICE WORKERS IN THE OFFICE

By

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APPROVAL

of a professional paper submitted by

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This professional paper has been read by each member of the graduate committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency.

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Chairperson, Graduate Committee

Approved for the Major Department

7-30-92
Date

Norman J. Dillikin
Head, Major Department
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Date July 24, 1992
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem statement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions to be Answered</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Description</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress in the Office</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers' Viewpoint</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. PROCEDURES</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Data</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of the Survey Instrument</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of the Instrument</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Data</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. PRESENTATION OF DATA</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Data</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Data</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDITIONS</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Colleges</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Businesses</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for P.S.I. Chapter</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Further Research</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this study was to determine the Medicine Hat, Alberta Chapter of Professional Secretaries International’s (P.S.I.) members’ perceptions and attitudes of their role in the office and their employers’ perceptions and attitudes of the secretary’s role in an office. The population selected included the entire membership of the P.S.I. chapter that were currently employed as office workers as well as their employers. The sample size was thirty office workers and twenty-nine employers. Data were gathered through a literature review and a survey instrument. The interviews were carried out in-person with a 100% response rate.

The main conclusions of this study were: (1) Medicine Hat employers are generally communicating very well with their office workers; (2) employers are making office workers a part of the decision-making process; (3) office workers are provided with paid training when it is needed; (4) employers will help their employees deal with work-related stress, but are not as willing to deal with stress caused by personal problems; (5) employers think their office workers complete challenging tasks and respect them for it.

To community colleges the recommendations were to: (1) provide students with problem-solving skills; (2) emphasize the ever-changing role of the secretary and the need for continual upgrading; (3) encourage students to join P.S.I. and to write the Certified Professional Secretary exams. To Medicine Hat businesses, recommendations were to: (1) review their pay schedules for office workers; (2) provide office workers with more frequent performance appraisals; (3) provide financial support for the membership dues of Professional Secretaries International. To the Medicine Hat Chapter of P.S.I. the recommendation was to become more visible in both the community and the local college so as to attract more members. For further research, the recommendation was for a further study to be done using a population of office workers who are not members of P.S.I. and their employers.
Chapter I

Introduction

With major economic and technological challenges and increased organizational complexities now confronting most organizations, close examination and reevaluation of the role of secretaries is needed. An alternative style of management, one that will enable the secretarial role to evolve into a more integral part of the management team, can lead to a more rewarding environment. (Tissue, 1988)

Typically, the secretary in the office of the 90’s is not the same employee that was there five years ago. In today’s information office the secretary is taking on more responsibility and is making more decisions.

The information-age secretaries have many concerns regarding the responsibilities that are now bestowed on them. Managers and their secretaries need to work together to ensure that the new role of the secretary meets their expectations and their needs.

Problem Statement

The major purpose of this study is to determine the Medicine Hat, Alberta Chapter of Professional Secretaries International’s members’ perceptions and attitudes of their role in the office and their employers’ perceptions and attitudes of the secretary’s role in an office.
Questions to be Answered

1. Do employers and secretaries see the role of the secretary in the office as being the same?
2. Do secretaries feel that their roles are appreciated and understood?
3. Is the secretary’s role in the office changing?
4. Are secretaries experiencing any stress related to role changes?
5. Are there open communication lines between secretaries and their employers?
6. Are secretaries satisfied with the job recognition they receive?
7. Are secretaries satisfied with their jobs?
8. Are employers satisfied with the role their secretaries are playing in their offices?

Need for the Study

This study is important because it involves secretaries and their employers -- a vital link in any office. The views that each have of the secretary’s role in an office may determine the type of work environment and possibly the productivity level of its workers.

With the introduction of more and more technology secretaries are finding that their role in an office is becoming more of an administrative one. (Lazary, 1988) If this shift in skills is not recognized, and training is not provided, the secretary may experience high levels of stress and burnout.
Limitations of the Study

The following limitations were placed on the study:

1. Participants were limited to secretaries and their employers in the city of Medicine Hat, Alberta.

2. All secretaries were members of the Medicine Hat Chapter of Professional Secretaries International.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to assist the reader in order to insure clarity in reading.

Secretary and Office Worker: "a person who is at the center of communications within a firm, processes and transmits information to the staff and other organizations, as well as performing a wide variety of administrative and clerical duties." (Hawes, 1984)

Employer: "a person or organization who regularly employs one or more persons to work for a money payment." (Adam, 1982)

Professional Secretaries International: "a professional organization for secretaries; grants Certified Professional Secretaries Certificates for successful completion of six examinations; monitors related legislative and governmental activities; sponsors Professional Secretaries Week and selects International Secretary of the Year." (Burek, 1992)

Bonus: "After-the-fact, discretionary, extra cash compensation paid to employees according to productivity, profits, savings, cost avoidance or a combination of two or more of these." (Tracey, 1991)

Professional Development: "The process of keeping current in one’s occupation or profession, maintaining competence in one’s practice and remaining open to new theories, techniques and approaches." (Tracey, 1991)

Performance Appraisal: "Systematic, periodic review and analysis of employees’ performance with the objective of improving that performance so that employees can realize their full potential." (Tracey, 1991)
Summary

Being a secretary in today's office means more than typing letters and answering the phone. Modern secretaries are more like executive assistants who play a major role in the company, through their problem solving, time management and computer skills to name a few. Both secretaries and supervisors must learn to adapt to their changing role so that both are satisfied with the results.
Chapter II

Introduction

Due to the introduction of technology into today’s offices the roles that secretaries play there have undergone some major changes. These changes have meant that both secretaries and their supervisors now have different responsibilities and expectations of each other.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the literature relevant to the changes that have been occurring and the issues that have come to the forefront because of it. The main issue is one of job satisfaction, but this is not an issue unto itself. Rather, it consists of many underlying components that must be examined. First, the component of communication will be explored, and how it is crucial to the idea of team work. Second, the area of job descriptions will be discussed and how delegation and flexibility are important. The third issue will include an examination of professional development and compensation policies. Finally, a look at the stress that is being caused by these changes will be reviewed.

The above issues are approached most often from the perspective of the secretary. There has also been some research done regarding the manager’s viewpoint on the secretary’s changing role. An examination of their attitudes and the obstacles that have arisen will also be made.
Communication

Many problems that arise in our personal and professional lives are a result of a communication breakdown. The situation of job satisfaction in the office is no different. Secretaries and their supervisors have been experiencing a lack of communication. (Gayle, 1988) This problem has caused both to become isolated and therefore, not as efficient.

To overcome this problem secretaries and their supervisors need to be meeting on a regular basis to go over their goals and to ensure that they are on the same track. Betsy Lazary, in her article that appeared in Management Solutions, 1988, found that, "A secretary who is less than fully and accurately informed is inhibited from working at maximum performance." Each of them should be able to see the "big picture".

It's crucial that the secretary feel a part of the team. This can be done by ensuring that they not only take the minutes at meeting, but play an active part. (Jackson, et al, 1988) If secretaries feel a part of the decision-making process then they will be more likely to buy into the decision and work towards its success.

Another reason to support the idea that open communication is critical is the fact that we are now living in an information age. A supervisor does not have the time or inclination to go through much of the information that is produced and therefore could make good use of the secretary who has now become the information manager. (Lazary, 1989) This benefit cannot be fully gained if the
lines of communication between the two are not fully open with the two of them knowing exactly what is expected.

Job Descriptions

Many secretaries today feel as if they are floundering. Gayle Tissue, in his article on empowering the secretary, in Personnel, 1988, found that secretaries are being asked, even expected, to do many things now that they were not expected to when they were hired only a few short years ago. On the other hand, many feel that they are being given the responsibility for many more tasks, but not the authority to carry them out fully. (Jackson, et al, 1988) This is producing a high rate of job dissatisfaction.

The key to designing the new job is to include the secretary in the process. Both the supervisor and the secretary should sit down and discuss their expectations regarding job duties and responsibilities. (Tissue, 1988) "New job titles should be designed that reflect more variations in responsibilities and more participation in functions." (Tissue, 1988)

It is important to note though, that these new job descriptions not be written in stone. Flexibility on both the part of the supervisor and the secretary is a necessary ingredient to ensure that these same problems dealing with job expectations are not re-occurring five years from now. (Lazary, May, 1988)

Because technology has freed up the time of the secretary a good supervisor must be aware of this new resource that is now available and make full use of it. Delegation of creative as well as routine responsibilities is a technique all managers of the 90's
should be using on a regular basis. (Vreeland, 1989)

By using secretaries to their fullest potential the supervisors will be able to make better use of their time. It will also make the secretary more of an integral part of the team and thereby produce more job satisfaction.

**Professional Development**

Like any profession, keeping current is an important factor for any member. The secretarial field is no different. "An essential element in an organization’s quest for excellence is risk taking." (Tissue, 1988) Secretaries generally aren’t risk takers because they feel too vulnerable and do not want to take the chance of meeting with failure. (Tissue, 1988) If more responsibility is to be given to them it must be done gradually and the proper training must be provided. Secretaries need to be encouraged to join professional organizations and attend seminars so that they can meet with the new demands of today’s office environment. (Vreeland, 1989)

Job enrichment is also a growing area of professional development. By making the secretary’s job more interesting and challenging the employer will help satisfy their need for more responsibility. One of the problems that has arisen with job enrichment is the fact that some employers feel that is and should stay separate from promotions and higher pay. (Berg, 1970) This is not the attitude of the secretary who would like higher pay often before any other form of enrichment. (Berg, 1970) A second problem area is the fact that the managers often make all the decisions
regarding enrichment without consulting their employees and they also tend to feel that everyone desires the same type of enrichment. (Berg, 1970)

Also, along the lines of professional development, is the idea of performance appraisals that provide the secretary with needed and timely direction. Tissue, 1988, stated that appraisals should be done on more of an on-going basis and should be a collaboration between the manager and secretary. Feedback is crucial whenever an employee is attempting something new because it provides them with the direction needed to make adjustments.

Appraisals may also take the form of recognition programs. "Recognition can change attitudes and behaviour because it bonds people to the organization, builds commitment and increases productivity." (McGee, 1988) People know when they are doing a good job, yet they need a supervisor to recognize it. (Nelson, 1988) Something this powerful should not be overlooked by the supervisor who is trying to increase job satisfaction.

**Stress in the Office**

"One of the clearest features of social relations in an office is that clerical workers are subordinates." (Balshem, 1988) This feeling of inferiority also brings with it a feeling of stress. In a study done by Balshem (1988) it was clear that the unsupportive boss was the single factor most clearly related to job stress for office workers.

Much of the stress was brought on by the issues that have already been addressed in this chapter. Many office workers feel
that they do not have enough control over the responsibilities that they are given. One secretary was quoted in the Balshem study as saying: "We do not get to make decisions yet we have to deal with the consequences." They feel that more delegation must occur as well as a more coordinated approach when there are multiple bosses. Many secretaries feel that they also must deal with more pressure as their supervisors move up the corporate ladder and that emotional and sexual harassment occur all too frequently.

If supervisors want productive team players in their offices they must begin to address some of the concerns regarding the stress that their secretaries are feeling. They must become more responsive and provide the needed support that secretaries are so badly needing.

Managers' Viewpoint

In Roberta Cava's book, *Escaping the Pink Collar Ghetto* (1988) she looked at the reasons that managers gave for not promoting women. Almost all of the managers that she spoke to were male and their leading reason was that women have not set concrete career goals for themselves. While this may be true for some Roberta felt that rather than not having goals women were just more reluctant to make their goals known to their employers.

Another major problem area dealt with the idea that women bring too many of their personal problems into the office. This includes the idea that they would miss more days due to children being ill and also have problems with business trips and relocation.

Managers also felt that women shouldn't be promoted because
they don't stand up for their ideas, that is, they are afraid of confrontation. They take things too personally. Women are also often misunderstood because they are poor communicators.

Because of the above opinions managers explained how they were able to then hold women back from promotions. Many managers expressed almost a fatherly feeling towards their secretaries and therefore, thought that by not promoting them they would be saving them from the trials and demands of management.

Some male managers would overtrain their secretaries before letting them use their expertise. Their reasoning was that by training their secretaries and keeping them in their current positions they would have good, inexpensive trainers for other new employees.

Other managers would do almost the exact opposite by promoting secretaries into positions for which they had little or no training. This method would almost guarantee failure and make the secretaries want to come back to their old positions.

Outdated job descriptions was another method used by some managers to make it hard for a new employee to know exactly what was expected of them. This also made it easier for the manager to be more biased when evaluating an employee because no standards had been previously set.

The last two methods deal with the behaviour of the woman in the office. Many managers encourage women to use their unique abilities when dealing in the business world and even discourage them from imitating men. This may put women at a disadvantage
because there are certain rules in business that must be followed in order to succeed regardless of your gender. Managers also felt that aggressiveness was tolerated in men—sometimes even admired—but aggression is forbidden for a woman.

Summary

The scene in today’s office is a different one from even five years ago. The secretary has taken on a different role due to the implementation of technology. Both the secretary and the supervisor must recognize this change and be willing to adapt. Communication lines must become more open with more of a team approach used on problems. As well, secretaries need to know exactly what is expected of them through clear job descriptions and appraisals. They also need to be encouraged to obtain the necessary skills to function and cope effectively in the information office.

Managers must also become more open about their true feelings regarding their secretary’s role. By openly discussing some of their biases they may in time overcome them and allow their secretaries the opportunity to take on the responsibility they desire as well as the recognition they deserve. By accomplishing these things both the secretary and the supervisor will experience more job satisfaction.
CHAPTER III

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover the secretaries’ perceptions of their role in an office as well as their employers’ perceptions of their secretaries.

This chapter outlines the procedures followed in completing the study.

The following areas were examined:

1. Sources of Data
2. Construction of Data Instrument
4. Analysis of the Data

Sources of Data

This study was begun in July of 1991. By using the facilities at Roland R. Renne Library, Montana State University, and those at the Medicine Hat College Library, Medicine Hat, Alberta, the researcher was able to analyze literature dealing with the areas of job satisfaction, communication, job descriptions, professional development and stress as it related to secretaries. Throughout the period of the study the researcher was able to continue reviewing current journals and other sources of information.

Construction of the Survey Instrument

After a review of the literature the researcher focused on the issues that seemed to be of main concern in the modern office to use as a base for the development of a questionnaire. These issues
were also reflected in the "Questions to be Answered" section of Chapter one.

With the assistance of Dr. Norm Millikin of the College of Business at Montana State University a questionnaire was designed. A draft of this questionnaire was critiqued by the Business Education Research Class at Montana State University. During July, 1991 revisions were made in the wording so as to make the questionnaire as clear and concise as possible.

A draft of the questionnaire, Appendix A, was tentatively approved in July, 1991 and a pilot test was done in January 1992 using secretaries employed at Medicine Hat College, but who were not members of Professional Secretaries International. Final adjustments were made and the instrument was approved for use.

Administration of the Instrument

The questionnaire was delivered in-person to thirty secretaries who were selected from the membership list of the Medicine Hat Chapter of Professional Secretaries International. Out of a membership of thirty-five the criteria used in the selection process was that the member had to be currently employed and had to be working as a secretary or office worker.

A second version of the questionnaire was adapted for employers and was also administered in-person to each chosen secretary's employer. During January and February of 1992, the respondents were telephoned so as to get their approval and also to set up a convenient time for the interview.
Analysis of Data

Data obtained from the surveys were tabulated, compiled and summarized using dBase IV. Tables and figures were designed using Quatro Pro and WordPerfect 5.1 to present the information in an understandable form.

Comparisons between the secretaries' responses and their employers' responses occurred on relevant items.
Introduction

This chapter provides the tabulation and analysis of data obtained from the survey of office workers who are members of the Medicine Hat Chapter of Professional Secretaries International and their employers.

A questionnaire was administered in-person to thirty members of the Medicine Hat Chapter of Professional Secretaries International and their employers. The findings from the questionnaire were used to determine the similarities and differences between employers' and office workers' perceptions of the role of the office worker in today's office setting.

This chapter is broken into two parts:

1. Personal Data
2. Job Data

Both of these sections have been further broken down into responses from the office workers (o.w.) and responses from the employers. Because the questionnaires were administered in-person there was a 100% response.

Personal Data

The first section was on general information. This included questions dealing with topics such as: gender, age, type of business that they worked for, the number of office workers in their office, whether or not they used a computer and their job titles. The results from these questions are presented in graphs 1-7.
Of the 30 employers interviewed 73.3% of them were male and 26.7% were female. Of the 30 office workers interviewed 100% of them were female.

Of the 30 employers that responded one was between the ages of 18--24; one was between 25--30; eight were between 31--40; sixteen fell between 41--50; and four employers were over 50.
Of the 30 office workers that were interviewed three were between 18-24; five between 25-30; 13 between the ages of 31-40; five workers were between 41-50; and four were over 50 years of age.

The third question dealt with the type of business that the workers were working for. In all 30 cases the employer and employee responses matched. Of the 30 responses 23% said that they worked in the private industry; 60% worked in the government service area; there were no businesses in the retail area; one business or 3% were in the wholesale industry and 3% were in manufacturing.

This type of business breakdown is not representative of the Medicine Hat business community. John Hamill, Executive Officer of
the Medicine Hat Chamber of Commerce, reported that 30% of the businesses were in the government service area, 30% in retail, 20% in wholesale and 20% in manufacturing. The reason for this discrepancy may be the fact that both the Medicine Hat College and the City of Medicine Hat will pay their secretaries' membership dues for P.S.I. It may also be skewed by the fact that very few, if any, businesses in retail would have a secretary on staff.

Figure 5 shows the number of office workers in each office. Again, the responses were the same from the employers and the employees. Seven of the offices had only one office worker; eleven had 2-4 workers; two offices had 5-7 workers; and ten had over 7.

Figure 5
Question five asked whether or not the office worker used a computer. The results showed that 83.3% of the employees did use a computer while only 18.7 did not.

The final question in the personal section asked for the job title of the office worker. There were many different responses with secretary and job titles that contained the title of secretary being the most common. Figure 7 shows the percentages of employer/employee responses that matched.

Job Data

The second part of the questionnaire dealt with the specifics of the office workers' jobs. Employers and employees were asked the same questions regarding their perceptions of the office worker's role in the office.
The Employer Appreciates the Work of the O.W.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

Table 1 shows that 100 percent of the employers appreciated the work of their office worker. Ninety-seven percent of the office workers felt that they were appreciated by their employer.

It does appear, however, that more employers feel they strongly appreciate their employees. This may indicate a lack of communication between the two, either formally or informally, regarding positive reinforcement.

Employer Understands the Work of the O.W.

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<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
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Table 2 illustrates that 100 percent of the employers felt that they understood the work of their employees. Ninety-three percent of the employees felt that their boss understood their work.
Table 3

O.W.'s Duties Have Changed Over the Past Five Years

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<td>Employee</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
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</table>

Table 3 depicts that 80 percent of the employers felt that their o.w.'s job had changed over the past five years. Seven percent did not respond to the question because the employee had not been employed with their company for five years. Of the employees, 73 percent responded that their job had gone through some remodelling over the past five years. Thirteen percent declined to answer the question due to the length of their employment.

Table 4

O.W. is Involved in the Planning of Their Job

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<th>SA</th>
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<td>Employer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
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</table>

Table 4 shows that 90 percent of the employers agree that
their office workers take part in the planning of their jobs. Ninety-six percent of the employees agree as well.

Table 5

Training is Provided for O.W. When New Skills Are Needed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
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<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
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Table 5 illustrates that 100 percent of the employers felt that they provided training when they required it. However, 10 percent of the employees felt that no such training was provided.

It appears that some employees may be assuming they cannot receive training without first asking their employers to confirm that. This may indicate a lack of communication of the part of the employees.
Table 6
Likes the Role That the O.W. Plays in the Office

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<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
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<th>D</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**one questionnaire was left blank for this question**

Table 6 indicates that all the employers were pleased with the role that their o.w. played in the office and 97 percent of the employees were also happy with their role.

Table 7
O.W. Has Experienced Job-Related Stress Recently

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>11</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 illustrates that the level of job-related stress felt by the o.w. recently is at 43 percent. The employer’s perception of stress felt by the o.w. is 57 percent. This appears to indicate that the employer is fairly well aware of the stress that is related to the job of their office worker.
Table 8
Employer Gives O.W. Recognition For a Job Well Done

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
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<th>D</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows that all employers feel that they give recognition when it's due. However, 13 percent of the employees felt that they did not receive recognition when they had done a job well.

Table 9
Employer Provides Bonuses When O.W. Works Hard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
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<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2 questionnaires were left blank

Table 9 deals with the issue of bonuses which caused some concern regarding its definition. Before the questionnaire was administered each respondent was told that the word "bonus" as used here meant anything, including supplementary wages, that was given
to employees as a positive reinforcement. Examples such as: lunches, flowers, and leaving early were given as illustrations. Eighty percent of the employers felt that they or their company provided bonuses while 87 percent of the employees felt that they had received a bonus at some time.

Table 10

The O.W. Can Approach their Employer with Work-Related Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Employer</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 shows that 97 percent of the employers felt that they were approachable when it came to work-related problems and 93 percent of the o.w. agreed with that.
Table 11
O.W. Can Approach their Employer with Personal Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 shows the approachability of employers regarding personal problems of their employees. Seventy-seven percent of the employees feel that they can approach their employers. However, 67 percent of the employers felt that their employees could not approach them. This would seem to indicate that employers do not perceive themselves to be approachable, but their employees do.

The difference here may be due to the nature of the problem. Employers may either not be comfortable discussing personal problems with their employees or they may have felt that they aren’t supposed to be discussing personal problems, and therefore, answered the question as they thought they should rather than how it actually is.
Table 12
O.W. is Given Responsibility to Make Decisions for their Own Jobs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 shows that 100 percent of the employers responded that their office workers could make decisions regarding their jobs. Only 10 percent of the office workers felt that they did not have this responsibility.

Table 13
Some of the O.W.'s Tasks are Challenging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 indicates that 93 percent of employees feel that some of their tasks are challenging. Ninety-seven percent of the employers felt the same.
Table 14
The Employer Respects the O.W.'s Role in the Office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 shows that 100 percent of the employers respect the role that the office worker plays in their office. Of the employees only 3 percent, one person, responded that their role was not respected.

Table 15
The O.W. Wants More Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15 indicates that 30 percent of the employers thought that their employees did not want more responsibility. Twenty-three percent of the employees also responded that they did not want more job responsibility.

It appears that employers and employees are thoroughly discussing their roles at the time of hiring so that both are certain of what their expectations in the office are.
Table 16
The O.W. is Satisfied with Their Job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16 dealt with the area of job satisfaction of the employee with 87 percent of the office workers responding favourably, while 100 percent of the employers felt their employees were satisfied. However, thirteen percent of the office workers did express some dissatisfaction with their jobs.

That fact that no employers are aware of this discontent again indicates a communication break down probably on the part of the employees. This may be because they are not strongly dissatisfied and so may feel that it is not important enough to bring up or they may think that if they broach the subject it may result in stronger consequences than they intended.
Table 17

The Employer is Satisfied with the Work of the O.W.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 indicates that only 3 percent of the employers are not satisfied with their employee's work while no office workers felt that their employers were dissatisfied. This would appear to indicate that there are good lines of communication between employer and employee regarding workers expectation.

Table 18

The Employer Pays for O.W. to Take Courses to Increase Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
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<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18 shows that 90 percent of the employers pay for their employees to take work-related courses while 87 percent of the employees responded that they received compensation.
Table 19

The Employer Encourages O.W. to Increase Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Employer</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19 illustrates that 100 percent of the employers encourage their workers to increase their skills. The office workers were also in agreement 100 percent. This again indicates that there are open lines of communication between employer/employee.

Table 20

The Employer Asks O.W. for Advice on Projects They’re Working On

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**one employer left this blank**

Table 20 depicts that 90 percent of the employers ask for input from their employees and 87 percent of the employees would also agree that they are asked for their input.
Table 21
The O.W. is Being Paid What They are Worth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>SA</th>
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<th>SD</th>
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</thead>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21 indicates that 34 percent of the office workers do not feel that they are paid what they are worth. Interestingly, 47 percent of the employers felt that their employees should be receiving more pay. This may show that office workers are selling themselves short when it comes to wages because their employers may think that they deserve more, or that the employer would like to pay more but cannot due to financial constraints.

Table 22
The Employer Would Like the O.W. to Take on More Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>SA</th>
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<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22 depicts that 43 percent of both the employers and the employees do not want their office worker to take on any more
responsibility. This identical percentage again indicates that both workers and employers are clear on the expectations made of the office worker.

Table 23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>one employer left this blank</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23 indicates that 47 percent of the employers responded that they provide regular performance appraisals while 60 percent of the employees showed that they received regular evaluations. The discrepancy in these numbers may be due to the respondents definition of "regular" and of "performance appraisal".

The fact that 50% of the employers responded that they do not provide regular performance appraisals indicates an area that they need to look at and improve on.
Table 24

The O.W. Enjoys Her Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
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<td>22</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 24 both the employers and the office workers responded with 100 percent agreement that the o.w. enjoys her work.

The final question that was asked dealt with the number of times that the employer and office worker met to discuss the worker's duties. Figure 8 shows that eight employers met on a daily basis, eight on a weekly, seven on a monthly, and seven felt that they met with their employees rarely. The office workers responded that nine met with their employers on a daily basis, six
on a weekly, two monthly, and thirteen felt that they rarely met. This question seemed to have caused some concern because respondents were not sure exactly what constituted a "meeting". Because of this confusion I do not feel that the results gained from this question are representative.

Comments

Office Workers

-I enjoy the work I do as a professional office worker but do feel that more recognition should be given to those people and not be branded as "just secretaries".

-Because of the changes in our job description, I am finding it harder to put as much effort into enjoying my work.

-I enjoy my job as a secretary and enjoy the people I work with.

-I’ve only been here 2 1/2 months. I feel I know the facility well by having been a student here. It’s possible for things to feel differently when the "honeymoon" is over.

-I really enjoy working here— with automation my job will be more of a challenge and I’m looking forward to it.

-The training which I received at college has improved my working skills and as a result has made me a better person and employee.

-It is very easy to work and accomplish goals in an office setting that is relaxed and the people are always willing to help you and easy to get along with.

-Ever-changing; challenging; get out of it what you put into it.

-I feel that my employer values secretaries less than other positions such as manager, buyers, operators, etc.

-This type of job is what you make it. You can move ahead if you are willing to work for it.

-I enjoy the challenge and responsibility when I am allowed to exercise my own authority in matters. I have a hard time sitting back and watching things be done in a "less-than efficient" way— when changes are requested the "old" staff bucks and wins.
-Sometimes there are a lot of extra duties passed on to me that are not necessary and not part of my duties. Some people tend to take advantage of us.

-I feel my role is a very important one in our office and I enjoy it very much!

-At times I would like more information as to a specific job/project—better communication rather than me guessing (some bosses not consistent in the way they like things done); more discussion on his needs.

Employers

-It is unfortunate that as an office worker's supervisor, I have less knowledge of that role than the office worker does.

-Well respected.

-Quarterbacks office activities.

-A valued employee.

- Plays a key administrative/support role.

-Her position in a small office is very important to the functioning of the company.

-My office worker actually discusses my duties and schedules with me. I merely transfer my requirements for her organizing.

-Plays a very important role in the office as most senior member of the secretarial group.

-I'm very satisfied with their work.

- Very reliable support staff member.

-New person on staff three months.

-She is a very willing worker. She has come a long distance from the beginning.

-She is very important part in our operating system. If she fails to complete her part (which certainly is not happening) the whole office, as well as herself will suffer. She most definitely does her part to help us all perform as a team.

-Role is being fulfilled.
- The person in this position is a front-line person and must have good PR skills. The office area gets very busy with instructors and students coming and going and so she must get along well with other office staff and assist them when possible.

- I probably should spend more time discussing her role and additional duties. Unfortunately, the AUPE contract spells out what she can do and how much she should be paid. If her real worth were recognized, perhaps she would be willing to take on more.

- She is treated as a competent worker. It is assumed if problems arise, she will express them. She is invaluable to the smooth running of the office and is greatly appreciated by all.

- I believe the workers have somewhat of an attitude—work for pay only. They really don't want to go beyond the call of duty—work only to fulfil what is on the job description.

**Summary**

Overall, it appears that the employers and office workers in the study are working well together. Generally, both appear to be communicating their expectations and are satisfied with the working relationships that have developed.

A weakness of the study may have developed because all of the interviews were conducted in-person. Because of this, some of the employers may have been a bit uncomfortable with the lack of anonymity and may have answered some questions the way they thought they should rather than how they actually felt. This was evident when one employer asked (after completing the questionnaire) if he had passed.
Chapter V
Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the Medicine Hat, Alberta Chapter of Professional Secretaries International’s members’ perceptions and attitudes of their role in the office and their employers’ perceptions and attitudes of the secretary’s role in an office.

To achieve this purpose questionnaires were administered to 30 members and their employers. The questionnaires were given in-person and therefore, there was a one hundred percent return. Responses from these questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed in Chapter 4. The findings were then applied to the review of the literature by dividing the questions into the related five areas from Chapter two. Conclusions and recommendation were then made in Chapter 5.

Conclusions

The research findings have led to the following conclusions concerning members of Professional Secretaries International in Medicine Hat and their employers:

1. Seventy-three percent of the employers interviewed were male.
2. All of the office workers interviewed were female and seventy percent were between the ages of 18 and 40.
3. Overall, employers and their office workers agree on the job titles used for the office worker.
4. Most office workers work in offices with one to four others
4. Most office workers work in offices with one to four others workers and they use a computer.

5. Employers are communicating their satisfaction with the work done by the office worker.

6. Employers are making office workers a part of the decision-making process.

7. Employers are aware of the type of work the office worker is doing.

8. Employers delegate tasks to their office workers.

9. Employers are satisfied with the role their office workers are currently playing in their offices.

10. Office workers are provided with paid training to increase their skills.

11. Employers encourage their office workers to increase their skills.

12. One third of the employees felt that they were not being paid a salary representative of their role in the office and nearly half of the employers agreed.

13. Employers are aware of the work-related stress experienced by their office workers and will help the office worker to deal with it.

14. The role of the office worker has changed over the last five years causing stress for the office worker.

15. Employers think that their office workers complete challenging tasks and respect them for it.
Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the review of the literature, the writer makes the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 1**

Colleges need to provide secretarial students with problem solving skills to better prepare them for their role in the office of the 90's.

As shown in the literature review and this study, a secretary’s job involves much more than typing, filing and answering the phone. Today’s secretary will be expected to become an active member of the company team by making decisions, taking on responsibility and planning her own job duties. Because this is a significant part of a secretary’s role, graduates need to be aware of this and be prepared to fill it. One way this can be accomplished is by providing more projects for students where they work in groups and make most of the decisions regarding the final product.

**Recommendation 2**

Colleges need to emphasize the ever-changing role of today’s office worker and the need for the secretary to be continually upgrading her skills after graduation.

Over the past five years the role of the office worker has changed and according to all forecasts it will continue to do so. Students entering the work force must realize that they are not in a static field and know that in order to survive they must keep their skills current. Failure to do so will result in job-related stress.
Recommendation 3

Colleges should encourage secretarial students to join Professional Secretaries International and to get their Certified Professional Secretary certificate by writing the required six exams.

If college graduates look at their role in the office as one of an office professional the employer--employee link will be strengthened even more. Employers have made it clear that they want their office workers to be integral members of the company; if graduates are aware of this and see themselves as such it will make the transition from college to the "real world" much easier. The literature also supports this idea of professionalism through membership in related organizations.

Recommendation 4

Businesses need to review their pay schedules to ensure that their employees are being paid a salary that is representative of the role that is expected of their office workers.

If businesses want office workers to become more of a part of the company team and to take on more delegated tasks then they must also provide the pay equal to that responsibility. The literature shows that secretaries want pay to be used as an incentive and a reward, therefore, businesses must concur if they want motivated employees that are willing to go the extra mile for them.
Recommendation 5

Employers need to provide their office workers with more frequent performance appraisals.

The literature indicates that part of a good working relationship is frequent contact and clear expectations. Both of these can be accomplished if employers meet with their office workers on a regular basis to discuss their progress and their objectives.

Recommendation 6

Employers should pay part or the total cost of membership in Professional Secretaries International for their office workers.

This study and the research have shown that employees who regard their job as a career are more motivated workers and are also more likely to increase their skill levels. Membership in a professional organization that is supported by the employer will help employees recognize their important role in the office and their employers' awareness of it.

Recommendation 7

The Medicine Hat Chapter of Professional Secretaries International needs to take a more visible role in the community and the local college.

This study has shown that membership in P.S.I. is a positive element in the office for both the worker and the employer. P.S.I. needs to ensure that more employers and secretaries see these advantages and therefore, will provide support for the local
chapter through either actual membership or financial support from the employers through payment of the annual fees.

**Recommendation 8**

The writer recommends that a further study be done using the same instrument, but change the population to office workers that are not members of Professional Secretaries International and their employers.

Being a member of a professional organization may account for the positive results found in this study. By administering the same instrument to office workers that do not belong to a professional organization this variable could be accounted for.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Burek, Deborah M. (Editor). Encyclopedia of Associations. (Detroit, Gale Research Inc., 1992)


Lowe, Graham S. Women in the Administrative Revolution. (Toronto and Buffalo, University of Toronto Press, 1987).


APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR OFFICE WORKERS

Personal Data: Please answer each of the following by checking the appropriate space.

1. _____ Male
   _____ Female

2. Age
   _____ 18--24
   _____ 25--30
   _____ 31--40
   _____ 41--50
   _____ over 50

3. Type of business that you work for.
   _____ Private Industry Service (doctors, lawyers, etc.)
   _____ Government Service (including education)
   _____ Retail
   _____ Wholesale
   _____ Manufacturing
   _____ Other (Please specify______________________________________)

4. The number of office workers working in your office.
   _____ one
   _____ 2--4
   _____ 5--7
   _____ over 7

5. Do you use a computer when you work?
   _____ Yes _____ No

6. What is your job title? ____________________________

Job Data: Please answer each of the following questions by placing an "X" in the appropriate space while using the scale below:

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

1. Your employer appreciates the work you do.
   _____ SA _____ A _____ D _____ SD

2. Your employer understands the work you do.
   _____ SA _____ A _____ D _____ SD
SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

3. Your job duties have changed over the past five years.
   ___ SA  ___ A  ___ D  ___ SD

4. You are involved in the planning of your job duties.
   ___ SA  ___ A  ___ D  ___ SD

5. You are provided with training when new skills are required that you don’t presently have.
   ___ SA  ___ A  ___ D  ___ SD

6. You like the role that you play in your office.
   ___ SA  ___ A  ___ D  ___ SD

7. You are presently experiencing or have recently experienced job-related stress.
   ___ SA  ___ A  ___ D  ___ SD

8. Your employer gives you recognition when you have done a job well.
   ___ SA  ___ A  ___ D  ___ SD

9. Your employer provides bonuses when you work hard and do a good job.
   ___ SA  ___ A  ___ D  ___ SD

10. You can approach your employer with any work-related problems.
    ___ SA  ___ A  ___ D  ___ SD
SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

11. You can approach your employer with any personal problems.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

12. You are given the responsibility to make decisions for jobs on which you are working.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

13. Some of your tasks are challenging.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

14. Your employer respects the role that you play in the office.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

15. You want more responsibility.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

16. You are satisfied with your job.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

17. Your employer is satisfied with the work that you do.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

18. Your employer will pay for you to take courses to increase your skills.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

19. Your employer encourages you to increase your skills.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD
SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

20. Your employer asks your advice for projects on which you're working.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

21. You are being paid what you are worth.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

22. Your employer would like you to take on more responsibility in the office.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

23. Your employer provides regular performance appraisals.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

24. You enjoy your work.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

Please check one answer for the following question.

25. You and your employer meet and discuss your duties:
    ____ on a daily basis.
    ____ on a weekly basis.
    ____ on a monthly basis.
    ____ rarely if ever.

26. Comments you wish to make regarding your role as a professional office worker.
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EMPLOYERS

PERCEPTIONS OF OFFICE WORKERS IN THE OFFICE

Personal Data: Please answer each of the following by checking the appropriate space.

1. _____ Male  
   _____ Female

2. Age  
   _____ 18--24  
   _____ 25--30  
   _____ 31--40  
   _____ 41--50  
   _____ over 50

3. Type of business that you work for.  
   _____ Private Industry Service (doctors, lawyers, etc.)  
   _____ Government Service (including education)  
   _____ Retail  
   _____ Wholesale  
   _____ Manufacturing  
   _____ Other (Please specify__________________________)

4. The number of office workers working in your office.  
   _____ one  
   _____ 2--4  
   _____ 5--7  
   _____ over 7

5. Does your office worker use a computer when she works?  
   _____ Yes  _____ No

6. Your office worker’s job title is: ____________________.

Job Data: Please answer each of the following using the scale below:
SA = Strongly Agree  
A = Agree  
D = Disagree  
SD = Strongly Disagree

1. You appreciate the work that your office worker does.  
   _____ SA  _____ A  _____ D  _____ SD

2. You understand the work that your office worker does.  
   _____ SA  _____ A  _____ D  _____ SD
SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

3. Your office worker's job duties have changed over the past five years.
   __ SA  __ A  __ D  __ SD

4. You involve your office worker in the planning of her job duties.
   __ SA  __ A  __ D  __ SD

5. You provide training when new skills are required of your office worker that she doesn't presently have.
   __ SA  __ A  __ D  __ SD

6. You like the role that your office worker plays in your office.
   __ SA  __ A  __ D  __ SD

7. You are aware that your office worker is presently experiencing or has recently experienced job-related stress.
   __ SA  __ A  __ D  __ SD

8. You give your office worker recognition when she has done a job well.
   __ SA  __ A  __ D  __ SD

9. You provide bonuses when your office worker works hard and does a good job.
   __ SA  __ A  __ D  __ SD

10. Your office worker approaches you with any work-related problems.
    __ SA  __ A  __ D  __ SD
SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

11. Your office worker approaches you with personal problems.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

12. You give your office worker the responsibility to make
decisions for jobs on which she is working.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

13. Some of your office worker’s tasks are challenging.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

14. You respect the role that your office worker plays in the
go. 
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

15. Your office worker would like more responsibility.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

16. You are satisfied with your office worker’s work.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

17. Your office worker is satisfied with the work that she does.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

18. You will pay for your office worker to take courses to
increase her skills.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD

19. You encourage your office worker to increase her skills.
   ____ SA   ____ A   ____ D   ____ SD
SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

20. You ask your office worker for her advice for projects on which she is working.
   ____ SA  ____ A  ____ D  ____ SD

21. You pay your office worker what she is worth.
   ____ SA  ____ A  ____ D  ____ SD

22. You would like your office worker to take on more responsibility in the office.
   ____ SA  ____ A  ____ D  ____ SD

23. You provide regular performance appraisals for your office worker.
   ____ SA  ____ A  ____ D  ____ SD

24. Your office worker enjoys her work.
   ____ SA  ____ A  ____ D  ____ SD

Please check one answer for the following question.

25. You and your office worker meet and discuss her duties:

   ____ on a daily basis.
   ____ on a weekly basis.
   ____ on a monthly basis.
   ____ rarely if ever.

26. Comments you wish to make regarding your office worker's role in your office.