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THE EUROPEAN SECRETARY AND ASSISTANT FUNCTIONS IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL – MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATIONS¹

Florentina Chirodea²

Abstract: *Two important factors that marked the rise of the professions of secretary, assistant manager respectively are technical developments in communication and control systems. Globally, secretaries and assistants can be found in any organization, regardless of the nature, origin of capital, organization size, etc. In Romania, concepts of secretary and assistant manager two formulas are moving today to describe the same type of activity. The formula has become assistant manager for private companies, with imposing time manager and use English in business. For companies looking today, a secretary or an assistant, secretarial basic techniques alone are not sufficient to handle this functions, the job description is full of other details and other required skills: linguistic, commercial, financial etc. But these new powers are not used to anything if the possession does not know how to classify, to organize work to ensure the operations, to circulate written and oral information, take notes and prepare minutes, which gives even more than ever, a real added value along with other skills. Limited time in typing and shorthand, secretarial techniques currently encompasses all aspects of communication processes within an organization, being used in an environment more and more modern.*

Keywords: *communication function, organization, secretary, assistance manager*

The organization as a concrete form of developing of human activity in several fields, functions as a system of which components are closely connected in order to interfere at the appropriate moment with proper means, to answer to a need³. It interacts with the removed external

¹ This paper was published in Fabien Maron, Grzegorz Pozarlik, *Identities, Citizenship and Democracy: 20 years after*, Collection voisinages européens, no. 6, Bruylant, Bruxelles, 2011, ISBN: 9782802730859, p. 345-356

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³ Nina Vârgolici, "Tehnici de secretariat" în Adina Berciu – Drăghicescu – coord., *Manual de secretariat și asistență managerială*, <http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/StiinteADM/secretariat/8.htm>, p. 1

environment, caused by economic, social, political, technological and ecological benefits fully independent organization concerned with near or operational environment. In the context of the existence of complex correlations between the organization as an open system and surrounding systems, organizational communication is defined as one of the most important manifestations of the interplay between organization and environment⁴.

Rethinking the role of management as the main vector of socio-economic efficiency, without the actual communication between managers and subordinates as part of managerial processes more dynamic and, concomitantly, as a condition of an appropriate motivational climate and organizational objectives. Their effectiveness depends on communication system designed, developed and used within the organization⁵.

The interface between the manager and staff or outside the institution, within an organization, is taken as a secretary, in some cases by doubling the providing ancillary departments, by accepting the division of duties of staff, administrative work or work relations public⁶. The term secretary may designate a profession exercised in a different organizational structure and management of temporary positions in public administration, political organizations, cultural societies and other nonprofit organizations.

In this study we will pay attention first to the sense of the term, that of service in an organization and profession of secretary exercised in this context. In literature, a secretariat is defined as core activities, tasks and individual tasks complex. For this reason, organizational structure and shape, size, number of functions and some functions are different from one organization to another⁷.

Traditionally secretarial offices have been designed to function as an auxiliary direct and indispensable leadership, with the basic task of freeing its routine administrative tasks⁸, thus the specific functions of the Secretariat, circumscribed various communication activities, are theoretically defined as⁹:

⁴ Maria Pariza, *Curs de secretariat și asistență managerială*, București, Editura C.H. Beck, 2008, p. 52

⁵ Ph.D. Ovidiu Niculescu, Ph.D. Ion Verboncu, *Fundamentele managementului organizațional*, Cap.5 Managementul resurselor umane și motivarea, <http://www.biblioteca.digitala.ase.ro/biblioteca/carte2.asp?id=60&idb=7>, p. 14

⁶ Nina Vârgolici, *op.cit.*, p. 3

⁷ Maria Pariza, *op.cit.*, p. 3

⁸ Nina Vârgolici, *op.cit.*, p. 3

⁹ Maria Pariza, *op.cit.*, p. 58

- filter function and communicational link between the manager and others;
- representing the executive function in contacts with outsiders;
- the position of assistant manager to direct the meetings, workshops, meetings and other special events.

Handling, collection, recovery and the directed transmission of information is a central task of modern secretarial work, exchange of information being continuously to support business activity management. From this perspective, the secretariat is increasingly transforming into an information communication center, where they converge from all parts of the company and outside. The secretarial modern work is characterized in processing, storing and transmitting information of various kinds: data, text, graphics, images and speech, work results are usually documents. In addition to configurations consisting only of text or numbers appear increasingly more mixed documents. Drafting whereas it is not actually an end in itself, is important and distributing them to recipients, the secretariat constitutes an important information channel, an intermediary in the transmission of information or a transmitter of information, in this context served as secretary the disseminated information and communication technician¹⁰. Thus, modern secretary is an educated and educated person who has the ability to communicate with people verbally and written, to understand their psychology, a person who possesses in addition to a code of professional ethics, knowledge of company profile and specific technical operations of secretarial work, and quality management as developed as those running the institution to which it belongs¹¹. The transformation we are talking about is a title at the office as a burden that the Secretary has met today. These include managing the daily agenda of the manager, setting appointments with prospective customers, manage relationships with subordinate personnel manager, attending meetings and preparing minutes, making PowerPoint presentations and service protocol¹².

Also, the occupation of secretary is not an independent work. Unlike an accountant or a public official, the secretary is always connected to an individual or a department. It works for others; her work uses the work of others, her main role being to help. Meanwhile, secretary and manager must form a team in every sense of the word with reciprocal rights and

¹⁰ *Ibidem*

¹¹ Nina Vârgolici, *op.cit*, p. 11

¹² Site of Professional Secretaries Association in Romania, <http://blogulaaspr.wordpress.com>

obligations for each member of her¹³. The secretary and his chief must to form a team in every sense of the word, the rights and obligations for each. In today's business environment, teams seem to be a requirement for success, and managers are constantly trying to transform groups into teams¹⁴, so that the work performed by a director and a secretary are difficult to separate the actions of two actors work complementary in team and directed toward the same goal. In this case, the management needs to relieve the functions of a traditional employment context and to look closely to observe the environment and the organization's strategic positioning. This was possible after 1990 by the apparition of self-managed development teams. They consist of 5-15 people creative qualified, with interoperable training, which interact and have the responsibility and authority to perform a series of activities. They are planning, organizing and controlling activities in accordance with some guidance from management and minimal intervention of this. Self-managed teams are increasingly common in organizations structure, being, on the one hand, required by today's business environment, and secondly, the satisfaction of employees who want greater freedom at work¹⁵.

Lately, however, it was noted that the Secretariat is the service manager that enhances all aspects of its work function, contributing decisively to the rational organization of business managers, so that the word secretary is becoming increasingly replaced by the assistant manager¹⁶. The Assistant manager position has evolved so much, given the complexity of activities involved person on this post. The Secretary today is manager and holds right hand information from all areas of activity the company is actively involved it is active implied in the in projects of the department or company, mediates the relationship with subordinates. An assistant manager responsible must provide a range of skills and quite complex: to have a degree, to know at least two foreign languages, have advanced computer operating skills and know the business community. In addition, there are required very good communication skills, diplomacy, distributive attention, attention to detail and planning and organizational spirit.

¹³ Nina Vârgolici, *op.cit.*, p. 11

¹⁴ Ph.D. Alexandrina Deaconu, Lecturer D. Simona Podgoreanu, Ph.D. Lavinia Rasca, *Facorul uman și performanțele organizației*, Cap.1 Comportament organizațional și punerea în practică a strategiei, <http://www.biblioteca.ase.ro/biblioteca/pagina2.asp?id=cap1>, p.1

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, Cap.6 Managerul și munca în echipă, <http://www.biblioteca.ase.ro/biblioteca/pagina2.asp?id=cap6>, p. 2-3

¹⁶ Nina Vârgolici, *op.cit.*, p. 3

It is generally considered that the post of assistant station manager is an entry - level to be doing it a year or two and then you can occupy a position of your studies. Although if it does not represent a crowning career itself¹⁷, not a job for life, the job of assistant develops multilateral the employee, both professionally and personally and offers many challenges when utilized to its real potential. The more the business manager has a more dynamic and exposed internal and external customer relationships with both his assistant, the more he has to learn. On the other hand, the assistant manager became in turn, an interface between the internal environment (colleagues, employees) and externally (customers, suppliers, media). How information is transmitted outside the company depends, in the same way as if the secretary, who mediates the relationship with everyone involved, and the company's image is closely related to the manager that the assistant knows how to communicate and express desired messages¹⁸.

The secretary can contribute as well to the public image of a company or institution, representing the first image of the company, the first person to be in contact with. How visitors are received, how they are communicated certain information, how they are addressed to by the secretary, in which the room layout, appearance of the secretary, say something about the company claims on employee behavior. Practice has confirmed that a grown consistently and weighted behavior may influence any person that the secretary gets in contact with.

These issues are increasing awareness of contemporary companies and the supply of labor, requirements for behavior and communication skills compete with professional requirements¹⁹.

The selection criteria used by employers to fill positions of secretary and assistant manager are available to those interested in professional secretaries association websites, or even ads posted by employers on the Internet. The information offered by these sites is synthetically presented in table below.

¹⁷ James Stroman, Kevin Wilson and Jennifer Wauson, *Administrative Assistan's and Secretary's Handbook*, Third Edition, 2008, <http://books.google.ro/books?id=cHjDPFRjo4YC&pg=PA516&dq=secretary+and+assitace+management&lr=&cd=7#v=onepage&q&f=false>, p.2

¹⁸ Site of Professional Secretaries Association in Romania, <http://blogulaaspr.wordpress.com>

¹⁹ Nina Vârgolici, *op.cit.*, p. 12

Table 1. Selection criteria for the post of secretary/assistant manager used by employers in Europe and U.S.

Country	Selection criteria
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - professional competence - leadership skills - humor - team spirit
Switzerland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recognized professional competence - the candidate's temperament which determines its behavior at the team level - the personality test for candidates tie
Great Britain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - technical competence - anterior experience of candidates - personality - secondary role
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attention to detail - the enthusiasm - spontaneity
Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - personality and professional skills - the key selection criteria - previous responsibilities - the ability to manage budgets - the number of subordinates coordinate
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - knowledge of Foreign languages - particularly English at advanced level - PC knowledge (Word and Excel, Internet navigation) - networking and communication skills - preparation of specific reports and database management - the primary accounting knowledge - organizational ability and attention to the details - teamwork skills - Availability and stress resistance
USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extensive knowledge of software (especially the use of publishing software, project management, accounting and database management) - communication skills - management and organizational skills - Initiative and ability to work independently - adaptability and versatility

Source: Association of Professional secretaries of Romania (A.A.S.P.R.) for data on European countries (<http://blogulaaspr.wordpress.com>) and United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics for data from the U.S. (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos151.htm>)

Analyzing these criteria is noted that under modern organization is very important for organizations to select staff, to consider not only the training, knowledge of general culture, but certain qualities and skills²⁰. This is because the effectiveness of the secretariat involves both strategic skills and expertise in areas of the most diverse of the specific activity of the company/institution acting assistant manager in related disciplines such as corporate culture, brand communication, marketing, Human Resources etc. The reason for these changes is generated primarily by the emergence of new information and communication technologies which, on one hand make a "secret" an effectively part of the business manager work, and on the other hand, access to information and support for decision-making, is the work of the Secretariat to get a managerial connotation²¹.

The Growing volume of information analyzed and interpreted, often impressive number of contacts, the complexity and diversity of managerial work duties and specific duties imposed and powers auxiliary or basic revaluation, the Secretariat. Secretaries have become true managerial communication nodes, the role of ensuring the preconditions for making the contacts manager of operational and effective. Thus, the secretariats work has been a decisive shift from skill in relation to writing skills in relation to people. Their effectiveness depends, increasingly, on communication skills and good psychologist, able to work together to behave differently depending on the personality that comes in contact with. In this context, women have proved more endowed than men with certain psychological skills, such as loyalty, intuition, relational ability and emotional intelligence²². Gathering all these qualities and skills the secretary has been defined in the booklet of European Association of Secretaries a person who has sufficient knowledge and executive activity taking place in this sphere

²⁰ Ph.D. Alexandrina Deaconu, Lecturer D. Simona Podgoreanu, Ph.D. Lavinia Rasca, *op.cit.*, <http://www.biblioteca-digitala.ase.ro/biblioteca/pagina2.asp?id=cap6>, p. 2-3

²¹ Site of Seminar *Managing the Managers' Agenda – Importance of Assistance Manager in Company Development*, Bucharest, 10.07.2008 <http://www.formare.info/formare/articol/seminar-managing-the-managers%E2%80%99-agenda-importanta-asistent-managerului-in-dezvoltarea-companiei-buc.html>

²² Maria Pariza, *op.cit.*, p. 6

to be able to make decisions, give instructions and provide executive on several occasions²³.

In Romania, according to the Occupations in Romania (COR), secretaries belonging administrative officials, having to turn 3 subgroups: secretary, secretary typist and secretary for processing text and based on job requirements, the secretary would sound like this definition: *Secretaries out collation and transcription of correspondence, reports and reports on a typewriter or word processing tool, select and send correspondence and other documentation*²⁴. We could say that the European definition, but in the year 1998²⁵ in terms of recruitment criteria.

In the past 10 years, however, new techniques have led restructuring paper documentation systems, communication, acquisition of information by using computer, mail and communication services via fax / modem, which require further improvement of the human operator²⁶.

From this point of view, would be more appropriate definition of the profession by the Working Group on Information and career counseling, the Institute for Education Sciences, namely: *Secretary Office is the official administrative record and processing the information, running office and secretarial work (preparation and submission of correspondence and documents, subject to the Rules of organization and functioning), operate with accounting machinery and shorthand typist etc.*²⁷. Unfortunately "shorthand typist" there is not a current method, although it is a good technique for writing fast, and therefore this definition is outdated.

²³ John Harrison, *Curs de secretariat*, București, Editura All Beck, 2000, p. 213

²⁴ Site of Professional Secretaries Association in Romania, <http://blogulaaspr.wordpress.com>

²⁵ During the year 1998, the main recruiting criteria were: **Basic knowledge:** high level of studies, knowing foreign languages, knowledge about the new technologies (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, electronic mail), well written expression, technical knowledge in a specific domain; **Experience:** treating the written and oral information, participation to meetings, noting and drafting the process – verbally, organizing journeys and meetings, keeping the book and planning, preparing and following the business files, exploiting the data basis, classifying and keeping in daily order of work documents, ensure budgetary monitoring; **Attitudes and behaviors:** good expression, communication, sense of contact, diplomacy, look, discretion, leadership, strong commitment, enthusiasm, autonomy, motivation, thoroughness, method, sense of organization, observation, self-synthesis, memory, intellectual curiosity, natural authority, determination, team spirit, animating a team capacity, availability and effective; see Dorothee Bazin, Anne Broillanrd, *Le Guide de la Secretaire de la A à Z*, 2^e Édition, Editura Dunod, Paris, 2003, p. 20-21

²⁶ Maria Pariza, *op.cit.*, p. 6-7

²⁷ Site of Professional Secretaries Association in Romania, <http://blogulaaspr.wordpress.com>

Also from COR we find out the description of the profession hierarchically superior of Secretary, that the assistant manager. This group belongs to the major group of administrative secretaries and has in turn 4 subgroups: administrative secretary, secretary - assistant manager, assistant manager, office assistant. Core group is defined as *the comparable administrative secretariat and assist the Head of Unit on matters of communication, documentation and coordination of internal management of an administrative unit, drafted letters and respond to commercial letters received*²⁸.

The Assistant manager is found at higher hierarchical structures of the company, as a first subordinate and close simultaneously (right hand) of the director (general or department). Assistant manager can not give anyone provisions without being delegated to do so by the Director unless it has, in turn, subordinates (Secretary/s). But there are many cases where, by delegating responsibilities, assistant manager and reports to directors of departments, their assistants etc.²⁹. Schematically, these relationships within an organization are shown in the figure below.

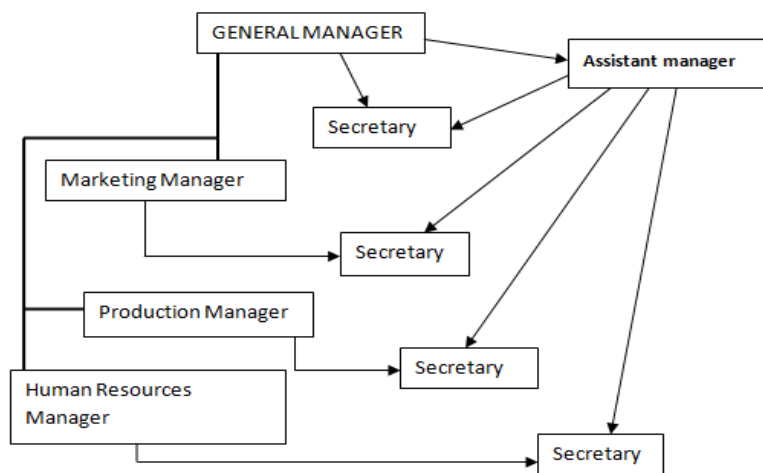


Fig. 1 The assistant manager place in an organization structures
 Source: Association of Professional secretaries of Romania,
<http://blogulaaspr.wordpress.com>

²⁸ *Ibidem*

²⁹ See www.JobAvantaj.ro, http://www.jobavantaj.ro/articol/gestiuneacarierei/profil-de-ocupatii-asistenta-manageriala-intre-aburi-de-cafea-si-relevanta-informationala_38/

In conclusion, two important factors that marked the rise of the professions of secretary, assistant manager respectively are technical developments in communication and control systems. Developed societies, with economies oriented to consume and service, change their policy areas, working techniques, ways of organizing and training structures, promoting a body of values on human resources recovery, informational and communicational in the leading work³⁰.

About secretariat function in modern organizations, we can speak from the industrial age, which has accelerated the division of labor, being dominated by the principle of specialization. Also new managerial work values, outlined in a clear position, all the early twentieth century, increased opportunities for women to occupy an increasing proportion of high posts of secretariats³¹. Thanks to the greater obedience, inclination to detail, loyalty, relational ability and even greater emotional intelligence, secretary job fits "like a glove" to the women, and this is confirmed by statistics, that 95% of functions Secretary are held by women³².

Furthermore, any director wants an assistant to receive provisions without contradicting be absolutely loyal and discreet, and independence, intelligence, solicitude and responsibility are those functions that should have an assistant manager to relieve the burden, the support and assure the success³³. Assistant manager has a representative function within the firm, representing the card company before business partners³⁴.

Globally, secretaries and assistants can be found in any organization, regardless of the nature, origin of capital, organization size, etc. In Romania, concepts of secretary and assistant manager two formulas are moving today to describe the same type of activity. The formula has become assistant manager for private companies, with imposing time manager and use English in business³⁵. Given that these occupations are still an upward trend; statistics indicate a number of annual vacancies 20-30000. Training those involved in this work is based on generic skills generally acquired through self-study or training at work (communication, documents, databases, computer use, etc.), or if rookie, the things learned

³⁰ Maria Pariza, *op.cit.*, p. 65

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 4-6

³² *Ibidem*, p. 6, vezi și Nina Vârgolici, *op.cit.*, p. 11

³³ Site of Professional Secretaries Association in Romania, <http://blogulaaspr.wordpress.com>

³⁴ Nina Vârgolici, *op.cit.*, p. 14

³⁵ Maria Pariza, *op.cit.*, p. XV

specialized schools (high schools, post-secondary or university)³⁶.

For companies looking today, a secretary or an assistant, secretarial basic techniques alone are not sufficient to handle this functions, the job description is full of other details and other required skills: linguistic, commercial, financial etc. But these new powers are not used to anything if the possession does not know how to classify, to organize work to ensure the operations, to circulate written and oral information, take notes and prepare minutes, which gives even more than ever, a real added value along with other skills³⁷. Limited time in typing and shorthand, secretarial techniques currently encompasses all aspects of communication processes within an organization, being used in an environment more and more modern.

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³⁶ www.JobAvantaj.ro, http://www.jobavantaj.ro/articol/gestiunea-carierii/profil-de-ocupatii-asistenta-manageriala-intre-aburi-de-cafea-si-relevanta-informationala_38/

³⁷ Dorothee Bazin, Anne Broillanrd, *Le Guide de la Secretaire de la A à Z*, 2^e Édition, Editura Dunod, Paris, 2003, p. 14

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<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos151.htm>

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