

## **Abstract**

Innovations in office technology have continued to grow at a fast rate. These innovations are taking place as a result of more powerful processors and software. Changes are also taking place in the way processing systems are located and organized while managers, executives, professionals and the support staff are all becoming end users. In the light of the above this paper took a look at some of the ways that word processing skills can be applied to managerial functions in order to make for efficiency. In word processing, information is the ultimate product. An efficient manager in the automated office must be one that can create, receive, process, distribute and store information using the technological equipment available.

## **Introduction**

In the past, creation and processing of information used to revolve round the executive and the secretary. Today, the situation has changed. Much of the information processing has been taken over by computers. Word processing is the term used to describe the activity of writing with the aid of a computer. This will include the production of personal or business documents such as letters, reports, memoranda, articles, books, legal documents and even the addressing of envelopes. According to Knott and Waites (1995) any situation that requires communication by the printed word (including graphical images) may be appropriate for word processing.

Information revolution has radically affected the patterns of communication in the office thus increasing job efficiency. By the use of computers, one can now create, process, manage and distribute information more rapidly. Managers can now make more informed decisions and also provide better services since they can access and act on information quickly.

The force behind this information revolution and office automation is the micro computer also known as personal computer. Office workers can now communicate with themselves by the use of computers. The flow of information in the office is no longer between persons but between a person and a computer. Individuals could rapidly exchange or access information located in computer files. According to Akinyemi (2000), a manager can now locate a particular file he wishes to examine in the computer without either leaving his office or using the secretary's time to retrieve the file. He can find out his appointments for a particular day by simply enquiring from his computer. He could make plans, schedule conferences with other people in the organization by just retrieving their daily schedules. The executives can transmit a message of any of the other personal computers in the keyboard. Managers can also access through the computer, mailing lists and telephone numbers of associates and customers.

Innovations in office technology according to Akinyemi (2000) have continued to grow at a fast rate and these innovations are taking place as a result of more powerful processors and software. Due to advancement in office technology, paper also known as hard copy is hardly moved around the office. Rather, information is moved electronically. Transmitting information electronically enables managers to make faster and more informed decisions. It also shortens the response time as a single document can be addressed and sent to more than one user at the same time. Electronic mail users can send word processed communication to one another without having to produce any hard copy. The person or persons receiving the electronic mail may choose to read it on the screen or print it if they prefer. The sender and the receiver need not be on-line simultaneously as in the case of telephone. This removes the frustration and loss of time associated with planning and returning calls without ever really making a connection.

## **Applications of Word Processing Skills to Managerial Functions**

Computer based message system (CBMS) helps to decrease information lag. It also increases white-collar productivity. If the manager of a large organization where there is no local area network (LAN) or CBMS, drafts an inter office memo, he sends it to the word-processing centre by inter-

office mail. After processing, the centre sends the mail back to the manager for proofreading. If he finds it errorless, he then distributes it through inter-office mail. This process can take 3 hours to 3 days depending on the workload of the centre and the speed of the inter-office mail.

In a situation where there is LAN, the executive would just draft and revise his memo on his word processor, and send it electronically to all recipients by the use of the system's multiple address capability. Within seconds, they would receive the memo at their workstations.

Another application is that the manager can find out if any messages were left for him by checking his table of contents. If any of the messages need an immediate reply, the manager keys in his reply and forwards it over the network. If he wants a memo to go to all departmental heads, he just commands the system to broadcast the message and it will be automatically sent to all heads. If he desires to have a copy of the memo, he instructs the computer to make a file copy.

The executive can also with his electronic calendar, schedule a meeting of department heads by instructing his computer to check their calendars for their free time slots. The computer then schedules the meeting to coincide with the time when everybody is free. Thus, the manager does not have to waste his time checking a schedule in order to arrange meetings neither does he need to use the secretary time to be able to do this.

By the use of a modern and satellite transmission, a manager could make use of the electronic mail to cut across time zones, weekends or other hindrances that interfere with the flow of inter-office or inter-organizational communication. In other words, he could instruct his computer to send a memo to their branch offices located in different parts of the world having different time frames to reach them at a time that would coincide with a specific local time. If he wants the memo to reach at say 12.00 noon local time, the computer will calculate the time differences for each country/continent and send it to arrive at a time that corresponds with 12.00 noon local time.

Technology has helped to minimize much of the executive's time that is wasted in internal communication between him and his secretary. Quoting the management consulting firm Booz Allen & Hamilton, Dummont and Lannon (1985) reported that:

Managers spend only 29 percent of their time in actual "thought work" such as writing proposals and reports, reading and problem solving. Most of their time was consumed trying to schedule meetings or conferences or waiting for the preparation and processing of information...

Much of this wasted time can largely be eliminated by providing the multifunctional workstations with communication capabilities for managers or "thought workers". According to Rick (1981), the executive workstation allows the manager flexibility in arranging his activities, scheduling conferences using electronic mail, designing graphics, revising writing and accessing large data bases for managers.

### **Implications for the Training of Managers**

To use the executive workstation efficiently, managers must master the very basic skill of typing now known as keyboarding. It was reported from studies carried out in advanced countries according to Azuka (1999) that if workers used typewriters to create information instead of pencil or pen, they would increase their output by nearly 150 percent, providing they were skilled in the use of the keyboard. There are many people who are using the computer but are not skillful in keyboarding. They just pick the keys using 'hunt-and-peck' method. This will certainly not make for speed and efficiency in the operation of the equipment and in the execution of office work. A communication firm was reported to have carried out a study of different persons who used computer terminals. The study revealed that more professionals i.e. engineers, doctors, managers, administrators, marketers, bankers etc spent quite some considerable time on the keyboard. Many actually spent more than half their time on computer systems. Prompted by the finding, the firm decided to teach keyboarding for one week to all its staff who used terminals. The result was that two months after the one-week course, the managers of the employees given the training were interviewed. All the managers reported some improvement on the performance of the staff that underwent the training but particularly reported that the output on the system of some of the workers (trained) had more than doubled. The managers also reported a perceptible improvement on the quality of work produced by these workers.

The employees themselves also affirmed that after the training given to them on keyboarding, they were able to get more work done within a given time frame. They found the work less tedious than previously and they now used the time they gained which previously used to be wasted on keyboarding to analyze and research information. In an age where word processors, electronic mail and telephoning are becoming the vogue, possession of typing will soon become a pre-requisite for employment.

In the past, it was viewed as demeaning to have a typewriter placed on the manager's desk. It was as if the manager was reduced to the status of just "an ordinary typist". Of course they saw typing as a scut work. Now the advent of office automation has made typing to become an important skill. It is an integral part of the new communication pattern. Even though the personal computer has a keyboard similar to that of a typewriter, it serves many different functions. A manager can still be respectable even with a personal computer in his desk.

Other important skills that are necessary for a manager to learn include skills in composing and editing texts and in dictating when necessary. They equally need to learn the skills of search-strategy for obtaining information in the correct form. This function used to be delegated in the past to librarians. They also need to develop a minimal understanding of the logic of truth-functions while also paying very close attention to spelling skills. This is necessary because the computer will not usually access information for any one unless it is called up by a correctly spelt name.

### **Recommendations**

The curriculum of training for managers should be reviewed to ensure that the skills they need to function in the present day automated office are imparted. If the ability to type has become a necessary condition for keyboarding and accessing information, then typewriting as a subject should be introduced into the curriculum of study for managers as a compulsory subject.

Also the task of dictating to a secretary who can ask questions, make different from that of dictating by machine to a word processing centre which may not provide an immediate response to the dictators. All the computerized devices used to speed up the flow of information in the automated office cannot convert poor writing to a good one or computers are just passive electronic devices awaiting human commands although they can process and send information rapidly. Therefore instructions to a computer requires "the same precise phrasing, logical organization, and exact punctuation required of any good letter, memo or report" (Dummont and Lannon, 1985). If this is not so, the message will not be understood by the receiver whether machine or human.

Managers should try as much as possible to overcome their fear of change in working with machines. They should understand that it will save time as well as result in effective communication. Therefore they should not be reluctant to dictate to machines instead of secretaries.

### **Conclusion**

In the world of word processing, information is the ultimate product. Efficient information processing will continue to be important and central in managerial decision-making. Only the managers who are skillful in the operation and use of the various technological gadgets available for processing information can lay claim to efficiency at work in this era of information revolution.

### **References**

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