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A Survey to Determine Methods Used by Selected Employers of Cache County, Utah, to Assess Desirable Personal Characteristics Need by Typists, Stenographers, and Secretaries

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A SURVEY TO DETERMINE METHODS USED BY SELECTED EMPLOYERS OF CACHE
COUNTY, UTAH, TO ASSESS DESIRABLE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS
NEEDED BY TYPISTS, STENOGRAPHERS, AND SECRETARIES

by

Gail Verderamo Benson

A Plan "B" report submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Business Education

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Gail Verderamo Benson

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

One major aspect of business education has always been character training. In many cases, businessmen feel that the technical skills are not as important as good character. Therefore, business educators must consider the wishes of the businessman and train their students to fill the jobs he offers. By trying to instill many of the desirable personal characteristics in students, business educators may help meet this goal.

The character traits needed by business would depend on the needs of the individual business and the personal preferences of the person in charge of hiring. There are differences, both in quantity and quality, in desirable characteristics among various business occupations. Those traits that are important to salesmen may not be important to typists. Those traits important to typists may not be important to secretaries. This concept can apply to all occupations.

It is commonly recognized that the possession of certain skills, knowledges, and understandings do not, of themselves, assure success on the job. Most office workers perform their tasks under the supervision of and in association with other people. It would seem, then, that it is important for the office worker to develop those personal characteristics which will contribute to his success in situations of this type.

If general education is considered to be the adaptation of the person to his surroundings, then business education must be the adjustment of the person to his business environment. Therefore, business educators must train students for specific jobs as well as give students the ability to

survive in the business world by trying to develop in them the characteristics necessary for their survival.

Character traits are too subtle to be taught as such (40). So, business teachers have to try to create an atmosphere that will lead to the development of desirable characteristics. This may be accomplished by teaching in a businesslike manner or by simulating an actual office. The students will then be able to get an idea of what the world of work is actually like. They will begin to see what will be expected of them once they are employed in an office.

Although development of personal characteristics usually goes along with effective subject-matter teaching, there must be some planned activities which would emphasize the particular traits desired.

The business teacher will probably be following the wisest course if he projects his teaching situation in skill and factual learnings and then determines the kinds of personality factors he should emphasize. In other words, the performance objectives of a unit of teaching should be stated as skills and facts. Then the teacher should determine the attitudes needed to form these skills and facts into overall performance competencies. Attitudes can be taught best in relation to the more tangible learnings rather than by themselves, as abstract character traits (40, p. 105).

The teacher is always helping to develop personal characteristics in his students whether it is intentional or not. Students will imitate the instructor's standards and attitudes. If the instructor is lax in arriving for class on time, the students will follow this example. If instructors talk about their superiors behind their backs, can the students be expected to do otherwise? It is the teacher's responsibility to set a good example. The teacher should make sure he appears as an upstanding example of all the personal characteristics that he expects his students to have. All possible opportunities to develop good attitudes should be taken advantage

of; this is especially true in real situations. For example, any phone calls that have to be made could be delegated to students in an attempt to develop their telephone manners.

Statement of the Problem

In training students for the world of work, a marketable skill is the goal of most business educators. In the office education field, type-writing and shorthand seem to be the skills most employers look for.

Is any attention given to the personal attributes necessary to be successful in the office? Do these qualities need attention? How do employers assess these qualities in an applicant?

This study will be an investigation to determine which personal characteristics are desired by selected employers of Cache County, Utah, and how they assess those characteristics in applicants for typing, stenographic, and secretarial positions. All of these positions have different skill requirements (10), and it is assumed that they also have different requirements for personal qualities. Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to see exactly what personal characteristics are looked for in each of the above-mentioned job titles and how these characteristics are assessed by the selected employers of Cache County, Utah.

Importance of the Study

As mentioned previously, the mere possession of and ability to use office skills appears to be insufficient to guarantee employment. Job applicants must also exhibit some personal traits that show they will be able to handle the job for which they are applying. When applying for the job of secretary, the applicant should be aware of the personal characteristics necessary for success in a job of that type; and she should have had some

assistance in developing those characteristics. The same applies to the typist and stenographer. It is the belief of the writer that it would be the business teacher's responsibility to acquaint the students with this information as it applies to the occupations discussed and trained for in class.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will reassure business educators that they are considering the characteristics most sought after by employers. Also, by seeing how these characteristics are assessed by the employers of Cache County, Utah, business educators may be able to use this knowledge in preparing their students for the world of work.

Limitations

Since the characteristics used were not defined for the employers, their answers may not be in the same frame of reference.

Delimitations

The findings of this study are applicable to typists, stenographers, and secretaries and should not be generalized to all office workers.

This study was conducted in Cache County, Utah. No comparison will be attempted with other geographical regions. It is possible that the reader may be able to make some generalized comparisons with his local area.

Only selected employers from Cache County, Utah, were used; therefore it cannot be assumed that the findings hold true for all Cache County employers.

The employers were not chosen by a method of random selection because this could have eliminated the major employers in Cache County.

This study is of a descriptive nature and no attempt to prove the validity of the methods used by the employers of Cache County, Utah, will be made.

Definitions

The following definitions will be used throughout the study:

Typist. Types letters, reports, stencils, forms, addresses, or other straight-copy material from rough draft or corrected copy. May verify totals on report forms, requisitions, or bills. May operate duplicating machine to reproduce copies (10).

Stenographer. Takes dictation in shorthand and transcribes dictated material on a typewriter. Performs variety of clerical duties, except when working in a steno pool. May transcribe material from sound recordings (10).

Secretary. May or may not take dictation in shorthand or on stenotype machine and transcribe notes on typewriter or transcribe from voice recordings. Relieves officials of clerical work and minor administrative and business details. Composes and types routine correspondence. Handles callers and visitors. Files. Handles incoming mail (10).

Characteristic or quality. These two terms have been used interchangeably to refer to the distinctive traits such as dependability, loyalty, initiative, honesty, cooperation, and maturity mentioned in this study.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The articles and studies reviewed seemed to fall into two basic categories: those that told what personal characteristics were desirable for success in the world of work, and those that told of ways which employers use to determine those qualities.

Therefore, the writer believes it is necessary to divide this chapter into two parts. Part One is concerned with the opinions of workers, businessmen, educators, government (through their publications), and combination groups (businessmen and educators) regarding which personal qualities are necessary for success. Part Two is concerned with the selection devices used by employers to locate these qualities, as well as the decision of whether or not to hire an applicant.

Part One: Expressed Opinions of Personal Characteristics

Only one study was located in which the workers give opinions on the characteristics they feel are necessary in the world of work. The two characteristics which ranked highest were accuracy in their work and a sense of responsibility. Other characteristics which ranked high were regularity of attendance, dependability, neatness of work, being well organized and the ability to work well with supervisors. The characteristics which were ranked low were a sense of humor and expression (written and oral) (4).

In a study by Mary Heyer (16) in 1958, 117 businessmen replied to a questionnaire in which it was found that personal characteristics were weighed heavily for promotion and discharge. Seventy of those replying said they believed that personal characteristics were equal to skills; 28 favored skills, and 18 favored personal characteristics. The most important traits listed were dependability, ability to get along with others, initiative, ability to follow directions, and loyalty to the firm. Also, 88 percent of those businessmen listed personal characteristics as a reason for loss of job.

Interest and attitude are major criterions of hiring according to the findings of B. W. Stehr (39) in a study done with 323 firms in Oklahoma. Flexibility and the ability to adjust to new office conditions were also mentioned.

Half of those surveyed in a study by Virginia Marston (23) rated personal characteristics equal to skills and knowledge. (This recalls the above-mentioned Heyer study where 70 out of 117 rated skills and knowledge equal. This was more than half.) Characteristics rated highest in the Marston study were honesty and trustworthiness, dependability, and willingness to learn. They also mentioned three characteristics that they thought employees were weak in: initiative, ability to plan and organize work, and ability to make decisions.

Yvonne Lovely's article (21), *Standards of Office Etiquette for the Businesswoman*, is noteworthy because the article is geared toward the ability to get along well in an office situation. Appearance and poise were also discussed to some extent. Some job-directed personal qualities are mentioned, but the majority of the article deals with social qualities.

In a study done at Utah State University, Darwin Manship (22) sent questionnaires to 500 firms in the Salt Lake City area to determine the methods used in employing typists, stenographers, and secretaries. Calling attention to only his findings in the personal characteristics area, he found that employers considered them quite important. For the typists and stenographers, the three qualities most looked for were typing accuracy, attitude, and speed (in that order). For secretaries, it was attitude and accuracy. Grammar and appearance tied for third and fourth.

What competencies are needed by beginning office employees as seen by business and industry? Replies to this question seemed to show that other than the typewriter, they are in the social and personal development area. The ability to make decisions and willingness to assume responsibility were mentioned by 30 percent of the 60 training directors surveyed (7).

A publication by Litton Business Systems, Inc. says, "A secretary's personal qualities and abilities determine her degree of success on the job." (33, p. 5) It also gives a list of things a secretary should be: attractive to look at, cheerfully poised, highly responsible, good at detail, and excellent in secretarial skills.

"If employees will use a few minutes each day to improve themselves, it will pay tremendous dividends in enthusiasm for their jobs, self-satisfaction, and confidence." (30, p. 288) This statement and the article in which it appeared give some very helpful hints to the beginning worker on how to get along well in the job and be successful. Again, characteristics are listed: attitude, good habits, organization, initiative, and skills. Skills include a knowledge of typing, shorthand, grammar, punctuation, syllabication, and spelling. Jeanne Oliver also says, "There are

two words that can wreck a secretary, and those two words are "I forgot." (30, p. 288) This, too, has meaning for any office worker. Once out in the world of business, the person in charge is not going to constantly remind you of work that has to be handed in. You are on your own and have to assume the responsibility to handle the job you were hired for.

Secretarial Practice for Colleges, a college text, gives some interview hints to the student. You should look neat, attractive, and efficient. This is probably an implication that it is during the interview that the "sizing up" is done and the decision to hire or not to hire is made. Also mentioned in this text is the fact that employers are looking for ability to plan ahead (being fully prepared for the interview) and promptness (being on time for the interview) (19).

Gordon F. Culver and Elsie M. Jevons (8) state that a secretary needs educational preparation, specialized preparation (skills), and personal and social competencies. In regard to personal and social competencies, they say promptness, neatness, a pleasant and friendly manner, and an attractive personal appearance are necessary in the office today.

The A B C's of personal conduct as recorded by Ruth B. Carter (5) are attitudes, basics, and common sense. The attitudes discussed here refer to the general outlook toward the job and its duties. The basics include pleasantness, dependability, loyalty, enthusiasm, tolerance and genuine concern for others, cooperation, conscientiousness and humility. Common sense is very much a part of the necessary equipment of the office worker; but, this is the only article found in which it was mentioned.

The Occupational Outlook Handbook gives some very explicit descriptions of what should be looked for in hiring various office workers. For secretaries and stenographers, it says:

Employers should seek workers who are poised, alert, and have pleasant personalities. Discretion, good judgment, and initiative are also important, particularly for the more responsible secretarial positions (29, p. 288).

For typists, it states:

Important aptitudes and personality traits for this occupation include finger dexterity, accuracy, neatness, and the ability to concentrate in the midst of distractions. A friendly manner and an attractive personality are great assets (29, p. 290).

Dealing with various occupations, the Dictionary of Occupational Titles gives lists of worker requirements, interests, and occasional clues for relating applicants and requirements. These lists are to assist the employer in looking for certain traits which seem to be necessary to the job in question. Typists: willing to work under the direction of others; interests should be toward routine, concrete, organized matter. Stenographers: willing to work according to instructions; interests toward routine, concrete, organized matter, people and the communication of ideas. Secretaries: diplomacy and tact in dealing with people, interest in meeting different types of people, and the ability to adapt to fluctuating situations; interests, prefers contact with people and communication of ideas. The section on secretaries also includes the portion on relating applicants and requirements. Qualities an employer should be seeking in a secretary are: poise, good grooming, tasteful manner of dressing, and pleasant personality and speaking voice (11). This sounds most logical for a secretary because she is usually an office hostess. Therefore, she must present a good appearance. Also, she has occasion to use the telephone a great deal and is in that respect a representative of the company. This situation requires a pleasant voice.

New York City high schools have a form they send along with their student's grades when requested by employers. This form was made up by three high school principals, the city Director of Business Education, and four businessmen. The form was made up with the idea of including all the extra information that the prospective employer would like to know about the applicant. The section that deals with personality rating lists four characteristics: dependability, cooperation, courtesy, and appearance (14). Since this was a list formulated by a combination of educators and businessmen, it is possible to put some credence in these four qualities as being those most looked for by the employer.

Another study which dealt with both businessmen and educators was a study by Sharon S. Vincent (42), who conducted interviews with businessmen and teachers. Looking at the personal aspects of her study, the characteristics rated most important by both were: dependability, cooperation, ability to keep business matters confidential, honesty, good attendance, and punctuality. As in the case of common sense, previously mentioned, another new characteristic is specified: ability to keep business matters confidential. This was the only study in which reference was made to this characteristic.

These have been some of the various opinions of individuals and groups and their lists of characteristics necessary to the world of work.

Part Two: Devices Used to Determine Personal Characteristics

D. E. McFarland (25) says that some impressionistic and attitudinal information is valuable in reaching a final decision. Most likely, this would come from an interview. The interview is mentioned by many of the businessmen as the major source of information about the applicant. There

have been many references made to the interview in regard to its subjectivity and the fact that there are few skilled interviewers in the business. It was also mentioned that the problems of the halo effect and stereotyping could very easily arise. The interview seems to be the best source of obtaining information. The interview's basic purpose is to identify behavior patterns that are characteristic of the interviewee (24).

The interview appears to be the only feasible method of determining some characteristics. For example, personal appearance and a pleasing personality are determined through the interview. In a study by Elaine D. Pekar (32), personal appearance and a pleasing personality were found to be two of the most important factors in the selection of an employee.

The selection procedure and interviewing techniques used by an insurance company were discovered through research. The items to be discussed during the interview were listed for the interviewer. Ten characteristics to look for were defined and the interviewer was given instructions in how to look for them. (sample questions, attitudes) The interviewer was instructed to look for stability, industry, perseverance, loyalty, self-reliance, ability to get along with others, leadership, competitiveness, motivation, and emotional maturity (34).

In the interview situation, National Castings Division of Midland-Ross Corporation of Cleveland has a list of questions that the interviewer must ask himself about the applicant in order to rate him (34). After the interview has been completed, the applicant is rated by the interviewer in regard to several characteristics. The forms used for this purpose, of course, vary. Some forms list the items, and it is up to the interviewer to determine a rating. Others, similar to the last two listed above, define the term used and possibly ask some sample questions to determine the rating.

Another item that might be noticed in an interview is the applicant chewing gum loudly, suggesting immaturity and lack of experience in polite society. Similar implications can be drawn from the applicant being overdressed for the situation and some mannerisms or language that may be inappropriate for the job (20).

All companies replying to a questionnaire in the El Segundo, California, area gave a listing of qualities which seem to be most easily determined through an interview. The three most important factors in hiring personnel according to this study are job attitude, appearance, and speech (12).

One of the findings of Ellen F. Medley (26) in her study says that the interview impression by the applicant is the most important single factor when hiring.

The application blank can be used for a variety of purposes. As one article says, it indicates the applicant's ability to communicate, to write legibly and to understand and follow instructions (25). Writing legibly may be necessary in some jobs, but a generalization cannot be made. The ability to communicate clearly is important, especially in the use of the telephone and writing letters. This would probably not apply to the typist or stenographer as defined here. But, in the office occupations under discussion, it is felt that the ability to follow instructions is the most important of the three.

Maynard (24) says that information supplied on detailed information forms can often be interpreted by analysts to determine the applicant's stability, reliability, and perseverance. Considering the occupations being discussed, some of these in-depth analyses may not be necessary.

The interview and the application blank are the two primary sources of information about the potential worker. Other methods are also used and shall be briefly mentioned.

Character-reference checking is frequently used by prospective employers. If you have ever been used as a reference, you will recall that such characteristics as dependability, honesty, congeniality, appearance, industry, etc. are asked about. Almost every application blank has a section for personal references. Most applicants locate someone who will give a glowing report about them (20). As a result, these checks may be useless.

In addition to the application blanks and personal interviews, the Pekar (32) study found that school records are used to further screen the applicants. It was also discovered that personal qualities were the primary reasons for rejection. From this study, it would appear that even if you had excellent skills, you still have to exhibit some of the personal characteristics that the employer believes are necessary to the job.

Yoder's (44) Personnel Management and Industrial Relations gives a list of hiring requirements which include interests, emotional maturity, moods, motivation, and attitudes. The methods used to determine these qualities are also listed. They include application blanks, interview, employment records, references, biography, tests, inventories, personnel appraisals, and aptitude-morale scales.

Summary

Many of the studies, articles, and texts that have been reviewed have given lists of desirable personal qualities looked for by various employers, methods of selecting employees, and procedures to follow in the identification of personal characteristics. These items are important in the

process of hiring a new employee. It is not only the skill and intelligence a person has that make him a success, but also his ability to get along socially.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Introduction

This chapter will be divided into four sections describing each of the procedures used in conducting this study.

The first part will describe the development of a list of characteristics as well as the methods used to develop it. The second part deals with the selection of employers used in the study. The third part will discuss the procedure for interviewing these employers. The last part will describe the methods of handling the data.

Developing a List of Characteristics

In order to begin this study, it was necessary to develop a list of qualities which employers might look for. If the employers were asked to develop their own list, each employer would probably use different terminology and no comparisons could be made.

Thirty-seven of the studies or articles read by the writer included at least one personal quality or characteristic that the authors felt was necessary to the job. A tally sheet was kept, and the list of characteristics along with the number of times they were mentioned are given in the following table. Many of those listed could be combined and will be for use in this study, but the list which follows leaves the terms as the various authors listed them.

Table 1. Personal characteristics necessary for business (as reported by various authors)

Characteristic	Frequency
good appearance	23
pleasant	13
good attendance, promptness	12
dependability	12
speaking ability	9
courtesy and manners	9
attitude	8
cooperative	8
good speaking voice	8
poised	8
loyalty	7
honesty	7
initiative	6
writing ability	6
ability to work well with others	5
enthusiasm	5
neatness of work	4
flexible	4
maturity	4
follow directions	4
accuracy	3
responsibility	3
well organized	3
discretion	3
ability to make decisions	3
tact	3
interest	3
industrious	3
assurance	3
concern for others	2
reliable	2
perseverance	2
good judgment	2
ability to plan ahead	2
alert	2
intelligence	2
leadership	2
stability	2
welcome constructive criticism	1
tolerance	1
conscientious	1
humility	1
common sense	1
competitiveness	1

Table 1. Continued

Characteristic	Frequency
motivation	1
deportment	1
imagination	1
willing to learn	1
convincingness	1
drive	1
useful	1
social skills	1
respect	1
capable	1
energetic	1
sobriety	1
character	1
fair	1

After considerable thought, the writer grouped the above-mentioned characteristics and developed the 16 categories shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Sixteen categories to be used in conducting this study

Categories
dresses appropriately for the office
maintains good attendance record
is hard-working
is dependable
has a pleasant speaking voice
handles administrative details independently
handles people courteously
conducts self in businesslike manner
exhibits pleasant personality
is intelligent
adjusts easily to demands of the job
speaks and writes (composes) correctly
gets along with and cares about people
produces high-quality work in an organized manner
shows interest in work
displays creativity

The next step in the procedure was to place each item on the list in Table 2 on an index card. The handling of these cards will be discussed in the interview procedure.

Selecting Employers

The local employment office was contacted to determine if they could supply the writer with a list of firms that hire office workers in Cache County. They developed a list of 76 local firms that they considered to be representative employers of office workers.

The 76 employers were contacted by telephone to set up appointments for an interview. Sixteen of those employers could not be interviewed for the following reasons: Person in charge of hiring was not available. Person in charge of hiring has never hired anyone. The office does not employ typists, stenographers, or secretaries. Person in charge of hiring did not have time to be interviewed. Person in charge of hiring was out due to illness. Firm does not do their own hiring. Person in charge of hiring would not consent to an interview. This left 60 people to be interviewed.

Interviewing Procedure

The 16 characteristics shown in Table 2 on page 18 were placed on index cards.

The interviewee was told that the study was concerned with the jobs of typist, stenographer, and secretary. A brief explanation of the duties of each of these workers was given, and the employer was asked which of these types were employed in his office. The employer was then presented with the index cards and asked to select the characteristics that he checked on when hiring for the aforementioned jobs, and what procedure he

used in determining whether these characteristics were present. He was also asked to mention any differentiations he would make for typists, stenographers, or secretaries, either in characteristics looked for or methods used for determining those characteristics.

At the conclusion of the interview, he was asked to add any other characteristics which he felt were important but were not shown on the list of 16 characteristics. A record was kept of all responses.

Handling of Data

The characteristics will be compared to see which ones are looked for in typists, stenographers, and secretaries. The methods of determining each characteristic will also be tabulated and compared to ascertain the major methods used by employers. The additional characteristics mentioned by the employers will also be discussed.

CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

Sixty employers in Cache County, Utah, were interviewed for this study. Fifty-eight of those interviews were usable. Of the two interviews that were not applicable, one did not employ workers who fit into the study, and the other employer hired on a trial basis.

Of the 58 employers interviewed, typists were employed by 13; stenographers, by 10; and secretaries, by 56.

A general observation that could be made was that very few employers made any differentiation in their method for determining characteristics in different types of workers; for example, they determine intelligence in the same manner for a typist or a secretary.

Even though an employer reports that he may not seek a given characteristic, this should not give the impression that he does not believe that this characteristic is important. In most cases, the employers thought that all of the listed characteristics were extremely important; but those employers who did not use these characteristics as a factor for employment stated that they had no means of telling whether a person possessed this trait before working with him.

In the reporting of methods used to determine the characteristics, the reader will notice that the totals very often exceed 100 percent. This is due to the fact that many employers use more than one method to check on the existence of a trait.

Table 3. Percentage of employers interviewed who would look for the stated characteristics in typists, stenographers, and secretaries

Characteristic	Secretary	Stenographer	Typist	Average
Exhibits pleasant personality	94.6%	90.0%	69.3%	84.6%
Dresses appropriately for the office	82.1	80.0	84.6	82.2
Speaks and writes (composes) correctly	80.4	90.0	84.6	85.0
Is dependable	80.4	60.0	69.3	69.6
Is intelligent	76.9	80.0	69.3	75.4
Maintains good attendance record	75.0	70.0	69.3	71.4
Has a pleasant speaking voice	75.0	50.0	61.5	62.2
Handles people courteously	69.6	70.0	69.3	69.6
Produces high-quality work in an organized manner	68.0	80.0	92.5	80.2
Gets along with and cares about people	68.0	60.0	54.0	60.7
Is hard-working	67.5	70.0	54.0	63.8
Shows interest in work	66.1	80.0	69.3	71.8
Conducts self in businesslike manner	64.3	50.0	61.5	58.6
Handles administrative details independently	48.2	60.0	46.1	51.4
Adjusts easily to demands of the job	48.2	50.0	46.1	48.1
Displays creativity	30.4	30.0	30.8	30.4

Table 3 shows the percentage of employers who would actually make an effort to determine the given characteristics in job applicants.

A pleasant personality is sought more often than any other quality by the employers of secretaries and stenographers. The writer would assume that a pleasant personality is not as necessary to a typist because she would be doing a great deal of her work without being in contact with anyone else.

There is a wide variation in the number of employers who would check on dependability in a typist, stenographer, or secretary. From the comments made by the employers interviewed, many of them had trouble determining dependability; therefore, they did not look for it.

The intelligence of a typist does not appear to be as important as the intelligence of a stenographer or secretary. The work of a typist usually involves straight copying and would not require as many decisions or independent work as a stenographer or secretary.

A secretary has a great deal of contact with the public, both in person and over the telephone. Therefore, a pleasant speaking voice would be essential for a secretary. A stenographer, on the other hand, usually has no outside contact at all. Her personal contacts would be limited to her fellow employees. Hence it would not be so important to have a pleasant voice.

Producing high-quality work in an organized manner was sought by 92.5 percent of the employers of typists. Producing work is the main function of the typist; naturally, the employer would want to make sure it was of a high quality. A secretary performs a variety of duties, so her ability to produce high-quality paperwork is just a small part of the total amount of work she would be expected to do.

As mentioned previously, a secretary has a great deal of contact with the public and her fellow employees. A typist would have virtually no contact with the public and not very much contact within the organization. A characteristic like "getting along with and caring about people" would be much more important to the secretary than it would be to the typist.

The differences in the number of employers seeking a hard-working employee varied. Either the employers of typists thought there were other characteristics that were more important in determining success, or they did not have any way of determining this quality.

The employers of stenographers obviously believed that it was important for the stenographer to show an interest in her work. No comments on interest were made during the interviews of these employers, thus the writer was unable to determine why the employers may have thought this was important.

Need for a certain type of conduct in the business office would probably depend on the formality or informality of the particular office. The ability to conduct oneself in a businesslike manner would, therefore, be needed more often in a secretary, who has more contact with the public than either a typist or stenographer.

The ability to handle administrative details independently would seem to be necessary in a secretary more than in a typist or stenographer. The percentages, however, showed that less than half of the employers of secretaries and typists sought this quality. From comments made during the interviews, the writer can report that this is a quality they would like to have in all employees but have no possible way of determining it.

Adjusting easily to the demands of the job fits into the same category as handling administrative details independently. The employers would

like their employees to possess this trait, but they have no successful method of checking on it.

Creativity was sought by the least number of employers for either typists, stenographers, or secretaries. Most employers stated that this was not a characteristic that they felt necessary for the occupations under investigation.

Table 4. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant will dress appropriately for the office*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Observe during interview	63.6%	62.5%	73.9%
Tell applicant what is required	27.3	25.0	17.4
Check with previous employer	9.1	25.0	8.7

*Only three methods were used by the employers to determine appropriate dress, and only two of these could be considered methods of determination. The other was just to explain what would be required of an employee. The major way to determine dress was to observe during the interview. In addition to the methods being discussed, several comments were made by the employers about appropriate dress. Two employers said they would turn an individual down because of inappropriate dress. Two other employers mentioned that applicants are not always dressed well when they come for an interview. The writer finds it hard to believe that an applicant would not try to look his best when applying for a job. Another detail mentioned was that some of the employers would not really notice the attire unless it was extreme.

Table 5. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant will maintain a good attendance record *

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Check with previous employer	77.8%	71.4%	71.4%
Check with school	22.2	--	16.7
Check on activities	11.1	14.3	9.5
Ask about family situation	--	14.3	7.1
Ask about illness	--	14.3	7.1
Check for job hopping	--	14.3	7.1
Require physical	--	14.3	4.8
Give trial period	--	14.3	2.4
Tell what is expected	--	--	7.1
See if look healthy	--	--	2.4
Check with bishop**	--	--	2.4
Check for salary increases	--	--	2.4

*In Table 5, one method stands out as the primary way to check on attendance; this is to check with a previous employer. If the reader looks at items 2 and 3, he will note that they are also checks on attendance.

**This survey was taken in a primarily Mormon community where church activities are an important part of the society.

Table 6. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant will be hard-working*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Check with previous employer	57.1%	85.7%	65.8%
Determine attitude on hours	28.6	14.3	5.7
Determine outside activities	28.6	--	8.6
Discuss likes and dislikes	14.3	14.3	5.7
Check for job hopping	14.3	14.3	5.7
Check school grades	14.3	--	11.4
Check health record	14.3	--	2.9
Check type of experience	--	14.3	5.7
Tell what is expected	--	14.3	2.9
Discuss ability to handle job	--	--	5.7
Determine willingness to work	--	--	5.7
Give aptitude test	--	--	2.9
Discuss plans for the future	--	--	2.9

*Table 6 shows that the previous employer is consulted quite often as a means of determining whether an individual is hard-working. A discussion to find out the applicant's attitude on working hours is also a method which seems to be used quite extensively in determining a hard-worker. Discussing outside activities in which the applicant is involved also gives the employer some idea of effort put forth in areas other than the business office.

Table 7. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant will be dependable*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Check with previous employer	88.9%	83.3%	77.8%
Check on schooling and grades	22.2	16.7	13.3
Check church or organizational responsibilities	11.1	--	4.4
Check work experience	--	33.3	6.7
Check for job hopping	--	16.7	11.1
Ask if they are dependable	--	16.7	2.2
Check punctuality for interview	--	16.7	2.2
Tell what is expected	--	--	4.4
Check school attendance	--	--	4.4
Discuss family situation	--	--	4.4
Check illness patterns	--	--	4.4
Check personal references	--	--	4.4
Give situation questions	--	--	2.2
Give aptitude test	--	--	2.2
Check credit rating	--	--	2.2

*In Table 7, once more the previous employer stands out as the primary source of information about the applicant. An additional method that seems to be used more than the others is checking with the school for the applicant's grades.

Table 8. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant will have a pleasant speaking voice*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Listen during interview	87.5%	80.0%	95.2%
Notice if grating	12.5	20.0	2.4
Observe language usage	12.5	--	2.4
Call applicant on phone	--	--	7.1

*The most common way to determine a pleasant speaking voice, as shown in Table 8, is by just listening during the interview. The first item in the table is listening for a pleasant voice, and the second item is listening for an undesirable voice. In either situation, listening is involved.

Table 9. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant will be able to handle administrative details independently*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Check with previous employer	66.7%	66.7%	51.8%
Check type of experience	16.7	33.3	25.9
Determine ability to make decisions	16.7	16.7	7.4
Look for good personality	16.7	16.7	3.7
Look for good attitude	16.7	16.7	3.7
Give trial period	16.7	--	16.7
Give situation questions	--	16.7	14.8
Check teachers and school record	--	--	7.4
Ask if willing to assume responsibility	--	--	3.7
Observe questions asked	--	--	3.7
Observe reactions to discussion	--	--	3.7
Ask to wait on customer	--	--	3.7
Ask to write application letter	--	--	3.7
Give letter-writing test	--	--	3.7
Determine initiative	--	--	3.7
Look for interest in finding job	--	--	3.7

*In Table 9, it is again shown that the previous employer is used as a major source of information. The type of experience an applicant has had is also used quite extensively in determining his ability to handle administrative details on his own.

Table 10. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant will handle people courteously*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Observe how applicant treats interviewer	66.7%	42.9%	41.0%
Observe if they are friendly	22.2	14.3	5.1
Check with previous employer	11.1	42.9	25.6
Observe attitude in answering	11.1	28.6	7.7
Discuss home life	11.1	14.3	2.6
Discuss leisure time activities	11.1	14.3	2.6
Ask to wait on customer	11.1	--	5.1
Observe facial expressions	11.1	--	2.6
Get general feeling	--	14.3	12.8
Observe self-confidence	--	14.3	2.6
Check on applicant's experience in dealing with people	--	--	10.3
Discuss likes and dislikes	--	--	2.6
Ask employees to rate	--	--	2.6
Ask how they like to be treated	--	--	2.6
Ask how they get along with others	--	--	2.6
Ask how they like people	--	--	2.6
Check personal references	--	--	2.6
Check bishop**	--	--	2.6

*Table 10 would seem to indicate that observation during the interview is used to a great extent in determining whether the applicant will handle people courteously. The interviewer notices how the applicant is acting

toward him and whether the applicant is friendly. Again, though, the previous employer is consulted to some extent.

**This survey was taken in a primarily Mormon community where church activities are an important part of the society.

Table 11. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant will conduct himself in a businesslike manner*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Look for businesslike manner during interview	62.5%	80.0%	61.1%
Check with previous employer	37.5	40.0	13.9
Observe dress	12.5	20.0	5.6
Check employment office tests	12.5	--	2.8
Check type of experience	--	20.0	5.6
Look for enthusiasm	--	20.0	2.8
Discuss need for work	--	--	5.6
Observe questions asked	--	--	5.6
Look for polite answers	--	--	2.8
Ask why they wish this job	--	--	2.8
Look for neat application	--	--	2.8
Ask how they handle money	--	--	2.8
Ask to wait on customer	--	--	2.8

*In Table 11, it appears that the manner in which the applicant conducts himself at the interview is the main source of information on his ability to conduct himself in a businesslike manner. The previous employer is also considered in this area, but not to the extent that he has been in other areas.

Table 12. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant will have a pleasant personality*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Look for pleasant attitude at interview	77.7%	66.7%	71.6%
Have pleasant conversation	22.2	22.2	15.1
Check with previous employer	11.1	22.2	11.3
Check personal references	11.1	--	7.5
Discuss likes and dislikes	--	11.1	7.5
Give trial period	--	--	3.8
Observe whether applicant pays attention	--	--	1.9
Ask employees to rate	--	--	1.9
Look for relaxed feeling	--	--	1.9
Check with bishop**	--	--	1.9

*Table 12 indicates that observation during the interview is the most frequently used manner to determine whether an applicant will be pleasant on the job. Also, participating in a pleasant conversation appears to be used quite often to determine a pleasant personality.

**This survey was taken in a primarily Mormon community where church activities are an important part of the society.

Table 13. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant is intelligent*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Give tests	44.4%	37.5%	25.6%
Observe speaking ability	22.2	25.0	23.2
Check with previous employer	11.1	37.5	25.6
Observe way questions are answered	11.1	25.0	20.9
Get general feeling	11.1	12.5	18.6
Check type of experience	11.1	12.5	14.0
Look for possession of skills	11.1	--	7.0
Give trial period	11.1	--	2.3
Check educational background	--	25.0	14.0
Check grade point average	--	12.5	9.3
Check application blank	--	--	4.7
Check personal references	--	--	4.7
Discuss home organization	--	--	2.3
Check on school activities	--	--	2.3

*The methods used to determine intelligence, as given in Table 13, are more diverse than most of the other characteristics looked at thus far. The technique used most often is testing, not intelligence tests per se, but a variety of tests including performance, intelligence, and aptitude. The observation of a person's ability to speak intelligently is also taken into consideration.

Table 14. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant will adjust easily to the demands of the job*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Check with previous employer	83.3%	60.0%	44.5%
Give situation questions	16.7	20.0	11.1
Ask type of work they enjoy	16.7	20.0	11.1
Tell what is expected	16.7	--	18.5
Give trial period	16.7	--	7.4
Give tests	--	20.0	11.1
Check for job hopping	--	20.0	3.7
Check type of experience	--	--	11.1
Ask if they can adjust	--	--	3.7

*According to percentages in Table 14, we see once again that the previous employer is used as a primary source of information. Situation questions are also used to some extent, as is discussion with the applicant about the types of work he enjoys.

Table 15. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant can speak and write (compose) correctly*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Observe speech during interview	63.6%	55.5%	46.6%
Give tests	36.4	66.7	35.6
Check application form	27.3	11.1	40.9
Check with previous employer	18.2	22.2	15.5
Give trial period	18.2	--	2.2
Look for women	9.1	--	2.2
Ask for letter of application	--	--	11.1
Check educational background	--	--	4.4
Look for shorthand skill	--	--	4.4
Check data sheet	--	--	2.2

*In addition to observing a person's speech during an interview, testing seems to be the most frequently used means of determining his ability to speak and write correctly. The types of tests mentioned by those interviewed were: reading, punctuation, vocabulary, composition, mathematics, dictation, typewriting, spelling, grammar, letter revision, and proofreading. The application form is also used quite often as a means to check an applicant's ability to speak and write correctly. The previous employer is still questioned about the applicant's ability to speak and write correctly but not very extensively.

Table 16. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant gets along with and cares about people*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Get general feeling	71.4%	100.0%	47.5%
Ask about outside interests	28.6	--	10.5
Check with previous employer	14.3	33.3	21.0
Observe how they treat you	14.3	--	7.9
Ask if they like people	14.3	--	5.3
Check personal references	--	--	7.9
Check religious affiliation**	--	--	5.3
Get to know them	--	--	5.3
Ask why they left their last job	--	--	2.6
Ask employees to rate	--	--	2.6
Discuss likes and dislikes of previous jobs	--	--	2.6
Give problem questions	--	--	2.6

*It would appear that employers are not too scientific in their determination of an applicant's ability to get along with others; they rely almost totally on a general feeling. The employers of stenographers use this general feeling and the comments from previous employers as their only sources of information. Employers of secretaries do not seem to rely on this general feeling as much as employers of typists and stenographers, and they seem to use a greater variety of methods.

**This survey was taken in a primarily Mormon community where church activities are an important part of the society.

Table 17. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant will produce high-quality work in an organized manner*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Check with previous employer	50.0%	75.0%	60.5%
Give tests	25.0	50.0	26.3
Check neatness of application	16.7	12.5	15.6
Have applicant do something (work sample)	16.7	--	15.6
Give trial period	8.3	12.5	5.3
Check training	--	12.5	7.9
Check neatness of tests	--	--	5.3
Check data sheet	--	--	2.6
Ask how they feel about mistakes	--	--	2.6
Tell what is expected	--	--	2.6
Check type of experience	--	--	2.6

*As shown in Table 17, the previous employer is the major source of information once again. Testing and checking the application blank for neatness are also widely used.

Table 18. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant will show interest in his work*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Check with previous employer	55.6%	67.5%	32.4%
Ask why they wish to work here	22.2	12.5	21.6
Ask why they wish to work	11.1	12.5	10.8
Observe interest in job over money	11.1	12.5	2.7
Look for good personality	11.1	12.5	2.7
Observe responses	11.1	12.5	2.7
Look for enthusiasm	11.1	--	16.2
Check type of experience	11.1	--	5.4
Ask to describe other jobs	11.1	--	5.4
Check for job hopping	--	12.5	2.7
Ask why worked at previous job	--	12.5	2.7
Ask if they enjoy current work	--	12.5	2.7
Look for knowledge of work	--	--	8.1
Give trial period	--	--	2.7
Ask if they are willing to learn	--	--	2.7
Ask if they understand duties	--	--	2.7
Look for pride in work	--	--	2.7
Observe questions they ask	--	--	2.7
Ask about outside interests	--	--	2.7

*Employers of typists and stenographers rely on the opinions of previous employers in locating an applicant who will show interest in his work. Secretarial employers use this method also, but they do not use it to such a great extent. Asking the applicant's reason for wishing to work for a particular firm seems to be quite frequently used.

Table 19. Methods used by employers to determine whether an applicant will display creativity*

Method	Typist	Stenographer	Secretary
Check with previous employer	50.0%	33.3%	35.3%
Give situation questions	25.0	66.7	17.6
Check type of experience	25.0	33.3	17.6
Ask about outside interests	25.0	--	23.5
Get general feeling	25.0	--	11.8
Give trial period	25.0	--	5.9
Give tests	--	--	23.5
Check personal references	--	--	5.9

*Many methods appear to be used to determine creativity, but the previous employer is still consulted quite often. Situation questions are asked quite frequently, and the type of experience the applicant has had is also considered.

After the 16 characteristics were discussed, the employer was asked if there were any additional traits that he desired but were not included in this list. Some of the items the employers mentioned were already on the list, such as ability to make decisions, willing to work, initiative, personality, and able to get along with people.

Also mentioned were methods used by other employers for determining one or more of the traits; for example, opinions of references, telephone manners, good health, enthusiasm, attitude toward job, and school activities.

Several references to the interview were made by the employers. They would like an applicant to apply in person, come alone, be punctual, and be prepared for the interview.

Longevity was listed most frequently. Many employers are seeking someone who will stay with them for a long period of time, or they feel it would not be worth the time and money to train them as a typist, stenographer, or secretary. Family situation was mentioned almost as often as longevity. This could coordinate with longevity; the employer may wish to know of any family responsibilities that could shorten an employee's length of time on the job.

More than one employer listed each of the following: experience, maturity, honesty, attractiveness, ability to hold confidences, ability to communicate, educational background, and work record. Several employers also wished to know if the previous employer would hire the applicant again. Many of the employers would not hire anyone who drinks or smokes.

As a brief sampling, here are some of the other traits employers may check when hiring office workers: conscientiousness, patience, flexibility, familiarity with materials, leadership potential, pride in work, credit rating, good mannerisms, stability and poise, ability to handle

pressure, ability to take criticism, loyalty to employer, good personal habits (neat and clean).

Conditions peculiar to a particular job were cited, such as legible writing, willing to move, and political affiliation.

Some informative comments were also made. They are as follows: if a person has no experience, it is just a personal assessment; meaning with shorthand is much better than with a dictaphone; if a person is good in shorthand, they are good in everything; references are not too valid.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

It has been the purpose of this study to determine exactly what personal characteristics are necessary for typists, stenographers, and secretaries and how these characteristics are assessed by the selected employers of Cache County, Utah.

The employers were selected by the Employment Security Office in Logan as being representative of business offices in Cache County. Some of the employers were eliminated because they were unavailable, they were ill, or they did not have workers of the type being studied. A total of 60 interviews were conducted. Of these interviews, 58 are included in the reported data.

After the interviews were conducted, data was grouped by characteristic. As shown in Chapter IV, each characteristic was listed and the percentage of employers seeking that characteristic was reported. Each quality was then taken separately, and the methods used to determine that characteristic were reported by percentage of use.

Of the 16 characteristics, the only one that was not deemed necessary by the majority of employers interviewed was creativity. Adjusting easily and handling administrative details also ranked low; the reason stated by the employers was that they had no way of telling if these qualities existed or not.

Few employers made any differentiation in the way they checked on characteristics in different types of workers. The only time comparisons between typists, stenographers, and secretaries could be discussed would be to compare numbers of employers who looked for a given trait in each of these workers.

It will also be noted that more methods are used to locate the given qualities in secretaries than in either typists or stenographers. The writer assumes that the variety arose from talking to a larger number of employers of secretaries (56, as opposed to 13 and 10).

Consulting the previous employer appears to be the major source of information about a job applicant. This method was most frequently used to determine 8 of the 16 qualities.

Observing the applicant during the interview for various traits or mannerisms was used most commonly in 6 of the 16 categories.

Tests were used most often to determine intelligence, and employers indicated that they got a general feeling about whether the applicant would or would not get along with people. The latter method might also be called an observation technique.

Employers seemed to use quite a variety of methods to determine the given characteristics.

Conclusions

From the above findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

Creativity is not one of the characteristics that would be necessary for a typist, stenographer, or secretary.

If an employer plans to check a certain characteristic in an applicant, he will use the same procedure regardless of the job for which the person is applying.

The previous employer is a major source of information and is checked quite often by the prospective employer.

Observation of the applicant during the interview is another major source of information for the prospective employer.

Many of the characteristics desired by employers offer no easy method of determination.

Recommendations

Since it was the writer's intention that the findings of this study be made applicable to curriculum, the following recommendations are made for the use of educators:

In preparing for the world of work, students should discuss the characteristics that are sought by employers and why those characteristics may be desirable.

Students should be made aware that personal qualities are as necessary to their success in the office as their skills.

The importance of doing one's best in any job situation should be brought forth to the student, because the former employer is contacted quite often when one is applying for a new job.

Since the previous employer is contacted 50 percent of the time, according to this study, it might be advisable to provide the student with a previous employer through a cooperative work experience program. This would give the student an advantage over the applicant with no experience.

Courses in school should prepare the student for an interview. Students should know of the many qualities that an employer may try to determine during that brief period and how he may try to make this determination. The interview may be most easily demonstrated through simulation.

All of the methods of determining personal characteristics, as stated in Chapter IV, should be discussed with students so that they will be informed of the various areas in which they may be questioned or investigated.

Recommendations for Further Study

Since no definitions were given to the employers, their frame of reference may not have been the same on these characteristics. The same employers could be contacted again to determine their definitions of each of the 16 characteristics used in this study.

This study has determined which characteristics are sought by the selected employers of Cache County, Utah, and how they determine these characteristics. Possibly, a course of study could be developed to describe methods of teaching those qualities to the students.

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APPENDIX

PARTICIPATING FIRMS

Stan Allen Insurance	150 E. 4 N.	Logan
Anderson Lumber Company	258 South Main	Logan
Axtell Chevrolet Co., Inc.	1475 North Main	Logan
Bernina Fabric Center	138 North Main	Logan
Budge Clinic	245 E. 4 N.	Logan
Bullen's	1427 North Main	Logan
Cache County Assessor	179 North Main	Logan
Cache County Clerk	160 North Main	Logan
Cache County Department of Health	160 North Main	Logan
Cache County Division of Family Services	129 N. 1 W.	Logan
Cache County Extension Service	179 North Main	Logan
Cache County Treasurer	179 North Main	Logan
Cache Valley Dairy Association		Amalga
Clearfield Cheese Company	169 E. 3 N.	Wellsville
Colburn Travel Service	60 East Center	Logan
Credit Bureau of Logan and Cache County	150 South Main	Logan
Del Monte Corporation	521 South Main	Smithfield
Edwards Furniture, Inc.	26 South Main	Logan
Employment Security Office	446 N. 1 W.	Logan
Everton Publishers	526 North Main	Logan
First Federal Savings and Loan	58 West Center	Logan
First National Bank	99 North Main	Logan
First Security Bank	5 South Main	Logan

Fullmer's Mill and Builder's Supply Company	290 W. 4 S.	Logan
Hancey, Jones, and Waters	203 Walker Bank Building	Logan
Hatch Insurance Agency	14 West Center	Logan
Hesston of Utah, Inc.	205 Henninger Lane	Nibley
Hi Land Dairy	63 S. 5 W.	Richmond
Hillyard and Gunnell	140 E. 2 N.	Logan
LeGrand Johnson Construction Company	1000 South Main	Logan
K V N U Radio	1393 North Main	Logan
Keith O'Brien of Logan	29 South Main	Logan
LDS Hospital	218 N. 3 E.	Logan
LDS Institute of Religion	600 Darwin Avenue	Logan
Lewiston State Bank	17 East Center	Lewiston
Logan City Corporation	61 W. 1 N.	Logan
Logan City Board of Education	101 West Center	Logan
Logan Public Library	90 N. 1 E.	Logan
Logan Savings and Loan	360 North Main	Logan
Lundstrom Furniture and Carpet Company	45 West Center	Logan
E. A. Miller & Sons Packing Company, Inc.	2 W. 4 N.	Hyrum
Moore Business Forms	630 W. 10 N.	Logan
Olson, Hogan, & Sorenson	56 West Center	Logan
Palmer's Inc.	1220 North Main	Logan
J. C. Penney Company	59 North Main	Logan
Pioneer National Bank	460 North Main	Logan
Sears Roebuck and Company	261 North Main	Logan
Smithfield, City of	69 North Main	Smithfield

The Herald Journal	75 W. 3 N.	Logan
Tri-Miller Packing Company	510 W. 4 N.	Hyrum
Utah Mortgage Loan Corporation	15 South Main	Logan
Utah State University		Logan
Admissions and Records Office		
Athletic Department		
Graduate Office		
Personnel Office		
Placement Office		
Walker Bank and Trust Company	102 North Main	Logan
Keith W. Watkins & Sons Printing, Inc.	5 South Main	Providence
Wilson Motor Company	328 North Main	Logan
Wurlitzer Company	1301 N. 6 W.	Logan