

COMMUNICATION AND TIME MANAGEMENT OF OFFICE MANAGER IN REAL ESTATE COMPANIES IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

This work examined communication and time management of office manager in real estate companies in Port Harcourt. The objective of the study was to determine the influence of communication and time management of office manager in real estate companies in Port Harcourt. The study adopted the explanatory survey research design, sample size was drawn from the entire twenty (20) accessible real estate companies in Port Harcourt with 72 secretaries, receptionist administrative officer as respondents. After validation by the supervisor, 60 copies of structured questionnaire were administered while fifty-three (53) copies were retrieved. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha. Mean and standard deviation were used for the analyses of research questions while Spearman rank order correlation in SPSS Version 22.0 was used for the test of hypotheses. The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between communication and time management of office manager in real estate companies in Port Harcourt. The study concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between communication and time management of office manager in real estate companies. Application of digital literacy such as effective communication/collaboration, and digital citizenship will influence office managers time management. Consequently, the study recommended amongst others that management of the real estate companies should insure communication/collaboration to improve office manager's job performance as this is capable of fostering organizational goals.

Keywords: Communication, Collaboration, Time Management Office Managers

Introduction

Effective communication is key to success in the real estate industry, and digital literacy enhances the ability of real estate professionals to communicate with clients through multiple channels. From email to video conferencing and messaging apps, digital literacy ensures that real estate agents can stay connected with clients throughout the buying or renting process (Ibrahim, 2021). Additionally, digital tools like chatbots and automated email responses allow real estate firms to provide timely responses to inquiries, enhancing the client experience. This constant and responsive communication helps build trust, improve customer satisfaction, and increase the likelihood of successful transactions. As real estate firms handle sensitive client data, such as personal information and financial records, digital literacy also involves knowledge of data security practices. Real estate professionals must understand how to secure client information by using encryption, secure databases, and two-factor authentication (Adegbite, 2021). This not only ensures compliance with data protection regulations but also builds client trust, as customers are more likely to engage with companies that prioritize the safety and confidentiality of their data. Digital literacy in data security helps real estate firms prevent cyber threats and safeguard their reputation in a digital world where data breaches can have severe consequences. It enhances marketing strategies, improves operational efficiency through property management software, fosters better client communication, and ensures data security. Real estate firms that invest in developing digital literacy among their staff are better positioned to adapt to technological advancements, streamline their operations, and build stronger relationships with clients. As the real estate industry continues to evolve, the importance of digital literacy will only grow, making it a critical competency for long-term success.

The job performance of secretaries in real estate companies is a key determinant of organizational efficiency, particularly in rapidly developing urban centres like Port Harcourt. Secretaries serve as administrative support, coordinating various tasks to ensure smooth business operations. In this context, their performance can be influenced by several factors, including their ability to interact with technology. Managerial attitudes, time management, and the nature of job rewards play significant roles in shaping their productivity (Brown, 2020). Managers' perceptions can affect the level of autonomy secretaries have, influencing their motivation and the extent to which they contribute to business outcomes (Smith, 2021). Meanwhile, time management either fosters or stifles innovation, creating environments that are either conducive or challenging for job success (Adams, 2019). Finally, job content and reward systems are critical to ensuring secretaries feel recognized for their contributions, but concerns persist over whether these rewards sufficiently motivate the administrative workforce (Thompson, 2022).

Digital literacy is now a fundamental competency for secretaries in real estate firms, with creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, and digital citizenship serving as key dimensions. Creativity and innovation involve the secretary's capacity to use digital tools to streamline tasks and develop new ways of working. This dimension emphasizes problem-solving skills and the ability to think critically about how technology can enhance office operations (Gates, 2023). Secretaries with high creativity and innovation are better positioned to improve organizational workflows, but there is concern about the extent to which real estate firms invest in the necessary training (Wilson, 2022). Similarly, communication and collaboration focus on the secretary's use of digital platforms to interact with colleagues and external partners. Tools like email, video conferencing, and collaborative software are essential for managing real-time communication and coordinating projects (Garcia, 2021). While these tools can increase efficiency, concerns remain about potential miscommunications due to the overreliance on digital platforms (Nelson, 2023).

Communication and Collaboration

Communication and collaboration are critical components of success in any industry, and the real estate sector is no exception. In the context of real estate companies, communication refers to the exchange of information between various stakeholders' agents, buyers, sellers, property managers, and regulatory bodies while collaboration involves the coordinated efforts of teams working together toward a common goal. Effective communication and collaboration are essential for ensuring smooth transactions, building client relationships, and enhancing overall operational efficiency (Adewale, 2020). In the real estate industry, communication plays a pivotal role in establishing trust and transparency between agents and clients. Real estate agents act as intermediaries between buyers and sellers, and clear, timely communication is vital to ensure that both parties are informed throughout the transaction process. Whether it's providing property details, negotiating terms, or keeping clients updated on legal procedures, agents must communicate clearly and effectively to manage client expectations and build lasting relationships (Chukwu, 2021). Poor communication, on the other hand, can lead to misunderstandings, delayed transactions, and loss of clients, ultimately affecting the company's reputation and profitability.

Collaboration is equally important in the real estate industry, as the process of buying or selling a property typically involves multiple parties, including lawyers, surveyors, financial institutions, and regulatory authorities. Effective collaboration among these stakeholders is essential for ensuring that all aspects of the transaction are handled smoothly and efficiently. For instance, real estate firms need to work closely with banks and mortgage companies to facilitate financing for property buyers (Ibrahim, 2019). Additionally, real estate agents must collaborate with property inspectors and appraisers to ensure that the properties meet legal and safety standards before the sale is finalized. By fostering a culture of collaboration, real estate companies can streamline operations, reduce errors, and improve client satisfaction. The advent of digital tools has significantly transformed communication and collaboration in real estate companies. Platforms like email, instant messaging, video conferencing, and customer relationship management (CRM) systems enable

agents and teams to communicate with clients and colleagues in real time, regardless of geographic location. For example, a real estate agent in Lagos can use digital communication tools to provide virtual property tours to clients in Port Harcourt, facilitating long-distance transactions without the need for physical meetings (Okechukwu, 2021). Collaboration tools like shared cloud-based documents and project management platforms also allow team members to work together efficiently on property transactions, reducing delays and improving overall productivity. Effective communication and collaboration also extend to marketing efforts. Real estate companies must coordinate their marketing strategies across various channels, including social media, websites, and print media, to reach a broader audience. A cohesive marketing approach that involves collaboration between sales teams, graphic designers, and digital marketers can enhance brand visibility and attract more potential clients (Adegbite, 2021). By fostering collaboration across these teams, real estate companies can ensure consistency in their messaging and improve their market reach.

Time management

Time management is the process of planning, organizing, and controlling how much time is spent on specific tasks to increase efficiency and productivity. In the context of real estate companies, time management is crucial due to the fast-paced nature of the industry, where agents, property managers, and administrative staff must balance multiple tasks, clients, and transactions. Effective time management allows real estate professionals to meet deadlines, handle multiple properties, attend client meetings, and manage documentation, all while ensuring client satisfaction and operational efficiency (Ogunleye, 2021). In real estate, managing time effectively is necessary for both operational and client-facing activities. Property sales, negotiations, client meetings, and property viewings all require careful scheduling and time allocation. For example, real estate agents need to coordinate appointments with potential buyers, tenants, or investors, while also dealing with legal documentation and following up with clients. Efficient time management ensures that these tasks are handled promptly and without unnecessary delays, enhancing productivity and client relations (Adewumi, 2020). Poor time management, on the other hand, can result in missed opportunities, dissatisfied clients, and a negative impact on the company's reputation.

One of the primary components of time management in real estate is **prioritization**. Real estate professionals must determine which tasks are urgent and which can be delegated or scheduled for later. For instance, handling client inquiries and property viewings might take precedence over administrative tasks, as these directly impact revenue and customer satisfaction. Prioritizing important tasks enables real estate companies to operate more efficiently and ensure that key objectives, such as closing deals or securing new properties, are achieved on time (Adewale, 2019). Another critical aspect of time management in real estate is the use of **technology**. Modern real estate firms in Nigeria are increasingly adopting digital tools such as scheduling software, customer relationship management (CRM) systems, and property management platforms to help streamline processes and save time. These tools allow real estate professionals to automate routine tasks like scheduling appointments, sending reminders, and managing client data, leaving more time for strategic activities that contribute to business growth. As Ogunbiyi (2021) notes, the use of technology in real estate time management improves overall efficiency and ensures that agents can focus on delivering high-quality service to clients.

In addition, effective time management contributes to **work-life balance** for employees in real estate companies. The industry is known for its demanding schedules, including evenings and weekends. By managing time efficiently, real estate professionals can ensure they meet their professional obligations without compromising personal time. This balance not only enhances productivity but also reduces stress and burnout, contributing to long-term career satisfaction. Time management in real estate companies is vital for enhancing productivity, meeting deadlines, and ensuring client satisfaction. By prioritizing tasks and utilizing technology, real estate professionals can handle the complexities of the industry more effectively, leading to greater operational efficiency and success.

Communication/Collaboration and Time Management

Effective communication and collaboration are fundamental aspects that significantly influence time management and the job performance of secretaries in real estate companies. In a fast-paced environment like real estate, where daily tasks range from client communications to property listings, clear communication and teamwork are vital to optimizing time and ensuring efficiency. The way a secretary manages time is closely tied to how well they communicate with colleagues and clients and how effectively they collaborate with other departments to meet organizational goals (Adewale, 2021). In real estate companies, secretaries serve as the link between various stakeholders, including property managers, agents, clients, and legal teams. Effective communication ensures that they can promptly relay important information, schedule meetings, and follow up on client inquiries. Poor communication can lead to mismanagement of time, missed appointments, or overlooked tasks, all of which hinder a secretary's ability to perform efficiently (Chukwu, 2020). On the other hand, when communication is clear and precise, it enhances the secretary's ability to organize their tasks and prioritize work based on urgency, which significantly improves time management. Secretaries who communicate effectively are more likely to keep track of deadlines, update schedules, and prevent any delays in operations.

Collaboration also plays a crucial role in improving time management for secretaries. Real estate operations involve various interconnected tasks that require input from different departments. When secretaries collaborate with real estate agents, accountants, and legal personnel, they can distribute tasks more effectively and delegate responsibilities where necessary. This collaboration helps in avoiding bottlenecks and reduces the workload for secretaries, allowing them to focus on their core duties without unnecessary interruptions (Ibrahim, 2021). Additionally, when departments work together, secretaries are able to streamline processes such as contract preparation, client meetings, and property documentation, thereby improving the overall efficiency of time management. Moreover, effective collaboration promotes better resource allocation and coordination. In situations where multiple tasks need to be completed simultaneously, secretaries who collaborate well with their colleagues can ensure that tasks are appropriately divided and timelines are met without overwhelming themselves (Adewumi, 2020). This results in improved job performance, as secretaries are able to manage their time more efficiently while still maintaining high levels of productivity. The relationship between communication, collaboration, and time management ultimately leads to improved job performance for secretaries in real estate companies. When communication flows seamlessly and collaboration is well-coordinated, secretaries can better manage their schedules, prioritize tasks, and allocate time for urgent responsibilities. In turn, this reduces stress, increases job satisfaction, and enhances the overall performance of the secretary, contributing to the smooth operation of the real estate firm (Okechukwu, 2021).

Empirical Review

Tamunoseimiebi, Emmanuel and Kolawole (2022) examined digital Literacy and Job Performance of Librarians in Rivers State University Libraries, Nigeria. The study examined digital literacy skills and job performance of librarians in state-owned Universities in Rivers State. Five research questions and five hypotheses guided this study. A correlational survey design was adopted for the population of the study which comprised 26 librarians from Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) and a total enumeration sampling technique was used because the population was manageable. The questionnaire was validated by the two experts and the Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the reliability of the instrument which yielded 0.75 on Digital Literacy Skills and 0.82 on Job Performance 0.77. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significant levels. The test of hypotheses established that there is a significant relationship between digital literacy skills and the job performance of librarians in the study. Hence, if acquired by all the librarians it can positively influence their job performance and increase patronage of users in the library. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended

that librarians should be encouraged with incentives/support to acquire these skills by the management.

Martins (2023) examined computer skills and knowledge secretaries must possess of ABC Transport Company District Office Owerri, Imo State. Because of the smallest of the population sites the researcher used the entire population of 75 secretaries for the study. The researcher in order to get the needed result distributed questionnaire to some staff of ABC transport Company Owerri District Office and their response were converted. The researcher was able to found out that there are some effects of computer skills and knowledge secretaries must possess in an organization such as speed, and accuracy, neatness, easy edition, formatting and saving of document. Finally, it was as a result of these findings, the researcher suggested that every secretary should try hard to possess a computer skills and knowledge by training so as to secure gainful employment in a modern office.

Research Design

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. The population of the study consisted of sixty (60) secretaries, receptionist and administrative officers from 20 accessible real estate companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The decision for receptionists and administration officer's inclusion for the research population was the fact that receptionist and administrative officers also act in the place of secretary and to enable the researcher access the required respondents for the study. The above information was obtained from the Corporate Affairs Commission, Rivers State (2024). The twenty (20) Real Estate Companies currently operating in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, are listed overleaf:

Using the census sampling technique, the entire population became the sample. Therefore, the sample size of the study was sixty (60) secretaries, receptionist and administrative officers from 20 accessible real estate companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Structured questionnaire was used as the main instrument for the collection of primary data. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the research questions while the test of hypotheses was done using Spearman rank order correlation in SPSS Version 22.0. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was computed with the formula below:

$$R = \frac{6\sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Where;

n = number of pairs of data

d = different between the ranking in each set of data.

Σ = Summation

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between communication/collaboration and time management of real estate companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Table 4.6: Relationships Between Communication/Collaboration and Time Management

		Communication/ Collaboration	Time Management
Spearman's rho	Correlation	1.000	0.661**
	Communication/C ollaboration		
	Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	53	53
	Correlation	0.661**	1.000
Time Management	Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	53	53

**** . Relationship is Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Source: SPSS Output

Table 4.6 above shows r value of 0.661 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating communication/collaboration and time management. Since the significance value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) which states that there is no significant relationship between communication/collaboration and time management of real estate companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State was rejected. This implies that there is a strong positive relationship between communication/collaboration and time management of real estate companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Communication/Collaboration and Time Management

On the second hypothesis of the study, it was empirically revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between **communication/collaboration** and time management of real estate companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Adewale, (2021) found that the way a secretary manages time is closely tied to how well they communicate with colleagues and clients and how effectively they collaborate with other departments to meet organizational goals. This finding is in line with the findings of Chukwu (2020) that poor communication can lead to mismanagement of time, missed appointments, or overlooked tasks, all of which hinder a secretary's ability to perform efficiently. On the other hand, when communication is clear and precise, it enhances the secretary's ability to organize their tasks and prioritize work based on urgency, which significantly improves time management. Secretaries who communicate effectively are more likely to keep track of deadlines, update schedules, and prevent any delays in operations. In a fast-paced environment like real estate, where daily tasks range from client communications to property listings, clear communication and teamwork are vital to optimizing time and ensuring efficiency. In real estate companies, secretaries serve as the link between various stakeholders, including property managers, agents, clients, and legal teams. **Effective communication** ensures that they can promptly relay important information, schedule meetings, and follow up on client inquiries.

Collaboration also plays a crucial role in improving time management for secretaries. Real estate operations involve various interconnected tasks that require input from different departments. When secretaries collaborate with real estate agents, accountants, and legal personnel, they can distribute tasks more effectively and delegate responsibilities where necessary. This collaboration helps in avoiding bottlenecks and reduces the workload for secretaries, allowing them to focus on their core duties without unnecessary interruptions (Ibrahim, 2021). Additionally, when departments work together, secretaries are able to streamline processes such as contract preparation, client meetings, and property documentation, thereby improving the overall efficiency of time management. Moreover, effective collaboration promotes better resource allocation and coordination. In situations where multiple tasks need to be completed simultaneously, secretaries who collaborate well with their colleagues can ensure that tasks are appropriately divided and timelines are met without overwhelming themselves (Adewumi, 2020). This results in improved job performance, as secretaries are able to manage their time more efficiently while still maintaining high levels of productivity. The relationship between communication, collaboration, and time management ultimately leads to improved job performance for secretaries in real estate companies. When communication flows seamlessly and collaboration is well-coordinated, secretaries can better manage their schedules, prioritize tasks, and allocate time for urgent responsibilities. In turn, this reduces stress, increases job satisfaction, and enhances the overall performance of the secretary, contributing to the smooth operation of the real estate firm (Okechukwu, 2021).

Conclusion

The relationship between communication and time management of office manager in real estate companies in Port Harcourt. Office Manager with high communication and collaboration are better positioned to improve organizational workflows of real estate companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State through communication/collaboration. Therefore, this study concludes that the application of

various digital skills as discussed above increase the real estate company's efficiency through effective secretary's job performance.

Recommendation

Real estate companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State should foster collaboration among team members to improve time management. By encouraging collaboration, managers can ensure that tasks are delegated appropriately and workloads are balanced across the team as well implementing clear communication channels within the organization.

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