

*Secretarial
Work
Goals*



March 25, 1905

Mr. George F. Dick,

505 East Green Street,

Champaign, Illinois.

My dear Sir:

It is rather difficult to explain compactly the duties of a private secretary, because they are so many and so different. If I can give you, however, a list of the qualities which I ought to have and which I lack, I may be within striking distance of what you wish. The business of a private secretary, as I conceive it, is to facilitate so far as possible the work of his employer. How far he will succeed depends very largely upon intuition, upon traits incapable of analysis. One thing is clear, to be really successful, he must ~~be~~ is to be done before he is told. He must see little ways in which he can render assistance without being asked. Life is too short for any business man to be obliged to inform his secretary explicitly what he should do on many points that come up.

More definitely, however, there are three kinds of work which perhaps can be distinguished from one another. In the first place a secretary must handle the correspondence. Just what he shall do with it depends on the kind of man for whom he

March 28, 1903

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Handwritten notes in cursive script, possibly including the name "George F. Dick" and other illegible text.

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More definitely, however, there are three kinds of work which perhaps can be distinguished from one another. In the first place a secretary must handle the correspondence. Just what he shall do with it depends on the kind of man for whom he

is working. In some cases he may be given no discretion whatever. He may be limited practically to opening the mail and putting it in order for his superiors. If the correspondence is at all large, however, he must usually be prepared to answer certain letters himself and original ~~answers~~ should generally, always if it is possible, be laid before the employer, but once a matter of a given kind is decided and a line of conduct established, the employer ought to be able to depend henceforth on his secretary for answering similar communications without reference. Furthermore in this connection a secretary may very often be expected to draft a statement of points only roughly outlined by his employer. To be successful in this kind of work, he must study his employer's feelings, get his point of view and mental habits and learn to adapt himself to them. A really successful secretary ought to have few such drafts returned for change beyond slight verbal alterations. At least after he has been in his position long enough to find himself.

In the second place, the secretary acts as a kind of go-between between his employer and the general public. He should make it easy for persons having business which the employer wishes to take up to get at him. On the other hand, he should

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learn without offence, but nevertheless with effect to steer off persons who would only take his principal's time and annoy him with minor matters, in other words, a man in order to accomplish anything in this stage of the world must concentrate his attention on a few points which he deems important. He cannot hold a continuous office hour nor see all people at all times. Just here the secretary's efficiency is tested. If callers when they are turned away leave in anger or injured pride, he is unsuccessful. He is equally unsuccessful if he allows everybody to reach his chief.

In the third place, a private secretary must be able to carry forward and execute special tasks which are assigned to him. Sometimes this part of the work is the most difficult. It seems absolutely impossible to keep up with the routine correspondence which is often heavy, to take the thousand and one interruptions that are certain to occur and yet to accomplish anything constructive and positive in addition. Yet unless a man can do this, he falls short of the standard. He must learn to make time. He must meet everybody and yet he must cultivate keenness in getting at once to the heart of the matter, then abbreviate the conversation so that in short intervals, he will have time for the work that counts, the work on which he can make a definite report to his superior.

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If these suggestions prove of any help to you, I shall be glad I have written. For one thing I may know a little better myself what I am trying to do now that even in an imperfect way I have formulated it.

Yours very truly,

H. P. Chandler
Secretary to the President

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H. P. Chandler
Secretary to the President

MAILED
MAR 24 1905
Henry P. Chandler,
Secretary to the President.

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Champaign, Illinois,
March 21, 1905.

Private Secretary to the President of Chicago University,
Chicago, Illinois.

Dear Sir:

I am a student registered in the School of Commerce at the University of Illinois. In the Commercial Correspondence course, I have to write a term thesis on: "The Duties and Qualifications of a Private Secretary". I have taken the liberty of writing to you for material on this subject, and hope that it will not inconvenience you greatly.

What are the duties of a private secretary in your position? What work comes under his supervision? What qualifications must a private secretary have?

Thanking you in advance for this favor, I am
address. 505 E. Green St.
Champaign, Ill.

Yours truly
Geo. F. Dick Jr.

