FEATURE

The Culture of Sucessful Administrative Professionals in a Faith-Based Setting: An Ethnographic Case Study

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Abstract. *Behind every successful executive is an efficient, competent administrative professional. The administrative professionals are the unsung heroes in the workplace. Their effort is oftentimes hardly seen, but these unassuming management support greatly contribute to the success of their organizations. Literature in this field is scarce even in developed countries (Lloyd, 2010) and no study that determines the culture and profile of successful administrative professionals in the Philippines has been located. Using the descriptive quantitative and qualitative—ethnography—design, this study sought to determine the antecedents of successful administrative professionals working in different institutions of a faith-based organization in the Philippines. Selection of participants employed the purposive maximum variation sampling, and the 15 best-rated participants were identified based on the selection criteria. Conclusions based upon the findings of the study include that the administrative professionals are successful because they have the character (qualities), the competence (skills), and the connection (active learning and excellent relationship with God and with men). They have high core self-evaluation and are satisfied and happy with their jobs. It is recommended that institutions provide opportunity for continuing professional development and training in related field to stay current on the job and to meet the demands of their changing role.*

Keywords: culture, successful, administrative professionals
secretaries, ethnography, maximum variation sampling, faith-based organization, Philippines

Introduction

"Behind a successful man [woman] is a strong woman [man]" is a truism applicable not only to husband and wife but also to executive-administrative professional relationship. My former professor once said, "A man [woman] can live without a wife [husband], but a successful executive cannot survive without an efficient, competent administrative professional behind him [her]." Administrative professionals (a.k.a. secretaries) are the unsung heroes and heroines in the workplace. Although their effort is oftentimes invisible, these unassuming management support staffs contribute greatly to their organizations. Their roles extend far beyond typing letters and answering the telephone. The administrative professional is an extension of the executive.

Administrative professionals (APs) "impact every segment of every industry at every level of the world's economy," (Goodall, 2014, para. 3). They are "one of the engines of business, particularly in a complex economy," the "heart and pulse of a business" (Latham, n.d., para. 8, 18). They also act as "the voice and face of the company to visitors and customers" (Porter, n.d., para. 3). In small companies, APs are "often the backbone of the entire business, wearing many hats throughout a typical day" (Sankey, 2010, para. 6). The role they play could not be underestimated.

The APs perform many duties that are necessary to run an organization efficiently. Their work usually includes managing records, handling incoming and outgoing mail, communicating orally and in writing, organizing time and work, greeting clients and guests, scheduling appointments, setting up meetings and conferences, organizing events, participating in meetings, preparing reports, and handling incoming and outgoing telephone calls. They are often described as highly-trained professionals who possess good computer skills, communication skills, and interpersonal skills (Porter, n.d.). Because of the role the APs play in an organization, the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP, 2013) defines administrative professional as "an individual who possesses a mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, exercises initiative and judgment, and makes decisions within the scope of assigned authority" (p. 1).

Technology is certainly making changes in people's lives and work, and these changes affect the duties of administrative professionals. However, many secretarial and administrative duties are of personal, interactive nature and cannot be automated; hence, administrative professionals will continue to play a significant role in business (Stulz, Shumack, & Fulton-Calkins, 2013).

Literature in this field is scarce even in developed countries (Lloyd, 2010). This scarcity of literature about office professionals was confirmed by Plattner and Mberengwa (2010). No study that determines the culture and profile of successful administrative professionals in the Philippines and in the Seventh-day

Adventist Church in particular has been identified or located at the time of this study. Thus, this study sought to determine the theoretical antecedents of successful administrative professionals.

Theoretical Framework

Success is a word that everyone probably likes to be attached to. It can be a source of strong motivation for hard work among people. Success may mean something different to each individual. To some, success is associated with wealth, fame, and power. To others, it may mean being the best at what they do. Success requires sacrifice and determination. According to Daniel Kim's (2001) Theory of Success, success is manifested by a) quality of relationship, b) quality of result, c) quality of action, and d) quality of thinking. Success is also attributed to the high core-self evaluation (CSE) of the individual. Judge (2009) posits that individuals with high levels of CSE perform better on the jobs, are more successful in their careers, are more satisfied with their jobs and lives, report lower stress and conflict, cope more effectively with setbacks, and capitalize better on advantages and opportunities. In the context of this study, the APs were considered successful because of their high scores in performance evaluation, CSE, skills, and qualities self and executives assessments.

Attributes of the Ideal Administrative Professionals

The role of administrative professionals is different has evolved over time. As a result of globalization, office activity is increasingly demanding because of the expanded job responsibilities of administrative professionals. In order to exhibit quality of relationship, action, thinking, and results, administrative professionals need to develop and possess the necessary attributes to be successful in a globalized environment. De Vera (2004, pp. 12-15) presents a list of these important personality traits for APs to possess in order to function as expected and to set them apart from others. These traits can help determine their culture. They are as follows:

Ability to build goodwill. This is a way for APs to be good public relations persons for their immediate superior as well as the company, always making their bosses look good to their subordinates, fellow executives, and other people especially to clients and customers.

Tactfulness. This is about doing and saying the right thing at the right time and in the right place.

Sense of anticipation. This refers to knowing in advance what will be needed and being prepared for it when the need arises.

Ability to follow through. APs are making sure every job is carried through to its completion.

Loyalty. This means sticking to someone or to the company not only in times of plenty but also in times of crisis until it can recover and in due time bounce back to prosperity. It could be understanding their executive's weaknesses and not revealing them to others and believing in the company as a whole in its objectives and its management. It also means giving an honest work for a day's pay.

Dependability. To be dependable is to be reliable in any activity, always punctual in reporting to work and standing by in any emergency, and willing to make personal sacrifices for the call of duty.

Ability to reflect company objectives and policies. This is understood as being part of the management team in interpreting the management's point of view to her co-workers, clients, and customers; a model in her attitude and work habits.

Ability to keep confidential information. Administrative professionals know what is happening in the company better than anyone else in the organization and they are often used by bosses as sounding boards when they want to talk about confidential matters. An office professional who knows how to keep confidential information is well trusted by her superiors and her co-workers.

Emotional stability. APs need to have a thorough knowledge of the job and self-control no matter what happens in the office. Personal emotions like anger, hatred, irritations, envy, sadness, and the like must be controlled so that everyone will keep the work moving.

Ability to communicate ideas effectively. This refers to clearly putting ideas into words to communicate.

Cost-consciousness. This is about being economical, budgeting time and carefully organizing her work so that no time, money, or effort will be wasted and avoiding waste in everything she does.

Ability to develop a variety of interests. APs are keeping themselves up-to-date in outside affairs because being interested in the world happenings is a sign of a healthy mind. It also means getting involved in civic, community, and social matters.

Independent mind. This refers to APs having a mind of her own, promptly and tactfully speaking her ideas, not afraid to say no tactfully whenever she is not in agreement with the other person's point of view.

Sense of moral value. This means being ethical, not easily overcome by temptations, doing everything well even without an observer because she knows it is her duty and she values highly every job assigned to her.

Sense of responsibility. The administrative professional accepts and does her job with seriousness and tries all means to finish any task assigned to her in due time and with satisfactory results.

In addition to the qualities mentioned above, basic competencies in certain areas are a must among administrative professionals because of the shift and the nature of their work at present. Oliverio, Pasewark, and White (2013), identified four major groups of activities that reflect the overall nature of office work. They are (a) word processing and desktop publishing, (b) data processing, (c) information management and transmission, and (d) general managing and communicating.

Based on the above framework in which this study was conducted, the following questions guided this research:

1. What are the attributes of successful administrative professionals according to:

   a) self,   b) executives,   c) others—clients, colleagues?

2. How is the work of administrative professionals valued in the organization?

Methodology

The study utilized a mixed method research design. In this interactive mixed method, a direct interaction existed between quantitative and qualitative elements of the research (*Choosing a Mixed Methods Design*, n.d.). Descriptive statistics were used to tally the averages and to get the frequency distribution based on demographic variables. The qualitative part, when conducted effectively, "has the potential to gain an in-depth understanding of attributes, opinions, and behaviors and the reasons behind them" (Walker, 2012, p. 43). It also involves processing and linking actions and interactions to bring about emerging categories, patterns and themes from the data source (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Hence, the qualitative data helped to give depth to the findings.

Research Design

This study aimed to identify, describe, analyze, and interpret the cultural profile of successful administrative professionals. The ethnographic approach was used. Culture is the most important of all ethnographic concepts (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Such method is concerned with "quality relationships, activities, situations, or materials" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007, p. 430). It is also a useful tool for understanding how other people see their experience (Spradley, 1979). Being one of the oldest and most venerable of all qualitative research methods (Shank, 2002), ethnography is considered as the most complex of all the research methods yet it has a unique value because "it can reveal nuances and subtleties that other methodologies miss" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007, p. 512). In addition, ethnographic research is useful in getting a new perspective of what is common but unnoticed as well as the people's own culture made strange to them

through "continued redescription of our world, which ethnographic research can achieve" (Baker, 2008, p. 34). Ethnographers have the task to document the culture, the perspectives, and practices of the people (Reeves, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008), and they tell a good story (Richardson, as cited in Creswell, 2013) by providing a thick description of their experience. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), "Ethnographers describe what they have seen and heard . . . in great detail, frequently using extensive quotations from the participants in their study" (p. 510). The quantitative data were used to enhance the qualitative findings as well as to select the participants.

Selection of Participants

There were 130 sets of questionnaire distributed in the initial survey with a return rate of 81.5%. Using the purposive maximum variation sampling, as is usually expected in ethnographic studies (Fraenkel et al., 2012), the 15-best rated participants were identified based on the selection criteria. Maximum variation sampling "enhances the ability to capture the uniqueness of the participants in rich narrative description while highlighting common themes" (Patton, 1990, p. 54). This approach determines in advance the criteria that differentiate the sites or participants (Creswell, 2013). This type of sampling uses heterogeneous sample of purposely selected individuals from diverse settings with extensive experience related to the topic of interest (Maykut & Morehouse, 2000). Sample participants included professionals from various administrative strata of the studied faith-based institution comprising the division, union, and local conference/mission offices, educational, and medical institutions.

Ethical Considerations

Since this study included humans as subjects, I first sought clearance from the Ethics Review Board of my university by providing them all the necessary documents and clarifications. After I was given permission, I sent a formal written request to the respective employers asking permission to distribute the questionnaires to their administrative professionals. The survey questionnaires and a consent form were distributed to the participants in the initial survey. A statement of assurance on confidentiality of information gathered was included in the document. The administrative professionals were encouraged to participate, however, to insure their physical and psychological safety, their participation was voluntary and they had the right to discontinue participation at any time. The final participants were verbally informed that the interview would be audio taped. The participants were not comfortable about being videotaped during observations as their actions may no longer be natural, however, they agreed that still pictures can be taken from time to time during the observation process. Codes were used to identify these participants and to observe confidentiality.

Participants Selection Criteria

The participants of this study were chosen based on the following criteria:

1. The CSE score should be 41 and above (high and very high) (Score range:12-60).

2. The qualities and skills self-assessment should be above 3.0 (on the scale of 1-4).

3. The qualities and skills assessment by the executive should be above 3.5 (scale of 1-4).

4. The performance evaluation by the executive should be above 3.5 (scale of 1-4).

5. The participants should have a minimum work experience of five years.

6. The different types of institutions in this faith-based organization should have representations.

Data Collection Instruments

The gathering of data was conducted using the following instruments.

1. Efficiency Rating Evaluation by Sotes (2010). This was filled out by the executives and used as basis for selection.

2. Core -Self Evaluation by Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen (2003). This open-source instrument measures the four major core traits of a person: general efficacy, self-esteem, locus of control, and neuroticism. Answered by the administrative professionals; used as basis for selection.

3. Qualities and skills assessment instruments. This validated, pilot-tested researcher-constructed instrument was based on the list of qualities and skills provided by Fulton-Calkins & Stulz (2004) for administrative professionals to possess. This was filled out by both the administrative professionals and their executives and used as basis for selection.

4. Growth states interview. A semi-structured interview designed to categorize people as omnivores, active consumers, passive consumers, reticent, or withdrawn (Joyce & McKibbin, as cited in Gaikwad, 1991). Questions were researcher formulated and validated by a group of experts and some practitioners.

5. Professional qualities interview. A semi-structured interview was used to elicit responses how the successful administrative professionals respond

to workplace situations. Questions were formulated by the researcher and validated by a group of experts and some practitioners.

6. Observations. This is the actual workplace observations of the selected participants.

Data Analysis

Information obtained through multiple procedures—survey questionnaires, interviews, and observations—were used for triangulation to increase the trustworthiness of the data. The collected data from the questionnaires, interview transcriptions and observations were properly identified, coded, categorized, and described (Speziale & Carpenter, 2003) to match the participant's answers to the research questions. Data generated from the survey questionnaires were tabulated and used for descriptive statistics and basis for participant selection. The data from interviews, documents and observation were analyzed using themes or categories. The task of discovering themes is fundamental in qualitative data analysis because "without thematic categories, researchers have nothing to describe, nothing to compare, and nothing to explain" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 86). According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), "Themes or categories are a classification of more discrete concepts. This classification is discovered when concepts are compared one against another and appear to pertain to a similar phenomenon. Thus, the concepts are grouped together under a higher order, more abstract concept called a category" (p. 61). After identifying the major themes which emerged from this study, I tried to paint a picture of the culture of successful administrative professionals by "frequently using extensive quotations from the participants in the study . . . to make it 'come alive' for those who read the report" (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 510).

Discussion and Findings

The result generated three major themes that best represent the culture of successful administrative professionals employed in eight different institutions of this faith-based organization in the Philippines. These are the Three Cs—Character, Competence, and Connection.

Character

Character refers to the qualities that make a person different from others. Successful individuals have great habits that work to help them stay successful (Cassidy, n.d.). The successful administrative professionals have the strength of character because they are/have excellent characteristics as listed below:

Ethical. In business, as in personal life, to be ethical means "doing what is right, not merely what is profitable" (Fulton-Calkins & Hanks, 2000, p. 84).

Individuals within an organization, collectively and singularly, are "socially responsible for their conduct" according to Fulton-Calkins and Stulz (2004, p. 52). Following are statements affirming the ethical behavior of administrative professionals.

She can be trusted to tackle the day-to-day responsibilities of the office. Without her, I will not be able to concentrate on my priorities. (EX7:QE: p. 14)

My secretary is transparent and consultative. She adheres to ethical and procedural processes. (EX1:QE: p. 1)

It really bothers me seeing people come to the office late. I always suggest to my co-workers especially the neophytes to be on time because we are accountable to our institution and to God. (AP8:IN: p. 28)

She is observant of ethics, diligent, and respectful to colleagues and students. (EX5:QE: p. 10)

Healthy lifestyle and practices. Successful people know they need energy to get ahead and they recognize that to have it is to eat and drink right, exercise and get proper rest. In addition, they maintain a positive outlook by always smiling and thinking positively.

I take care of myself by not getting affected by the pressure. (AP5:IN:18)

I try to sleep early so in the morning I still have the energy, not sloppy. I undergo spa treatment, pedicure, hair relax, hair spa because we have to look beautiful in front of people. (AP2:IN: p. 6)

I eat more vegetables, seldom eat junk foods and drinks. I can say proudly that I am pretty much living a healthy life. (AP14:IN: p. 49)

I maintain a balanced, healthy lifestyle by doing exercise, eating the right kind of food, drinking plenty of water and fruit/vegetable juices, and getting enough sleep. (AP15:IN: p. 54)

Living up to expectations. Workers in the faith-based institutions under study, especially those working in the regional offices of the organization are very visible and others therefore attract much high expectation from others. As such, they become conscious of how they live because they are supposedly standing on a pedestal and can be seen very easily.

I have the responsibility to represent my workplace and my institution well. So I choose what I wear and what I do because people look up at me. (AP12:IN: p. 41)

Working in this institution is kind of complicated because you set your standards. (AP7:IN: p. 24)

Improved personality. The nature of the work and responsibilities of administrative professionals give them the opportunity to develop the character

traits needed in their work. Whatever state they may be in before, their present position has made a significant transformation in them.

My work has helped me to improve my personality and the way I deal with other workers. I also learned to stay humble. (AP1:IN: p. 1)

I developed my courage and confidence to take whatever challenge my work brings because I was the only person who was willing to take up the challenge even though I was not the first choice nor the second choice in this department. (AP7:IN: p. 27)

Excellent interpersonal skills. Interpersonal relation refers to how people relate with each other. APs need good interpersonal skills as most often, workers leave their jobs because they cannot get along well with others. APs exhibit their excellent interpersonal relations with their executives, colleagues, and others. They extend help and give support to their colleagues whenever needed; they are flexible in their schedules—they do the work that is urgently needed even though it is beyond work hours asking no extra pay; accommodate the needs of people who come for help. Below are some things the participants said in this regard:

I have to deal with two different bosses, different types of character. It's very difficult because they have different temperaments, one is July and the other is October. It is very challenging but it helped me to develop my patience. The respect is always there even if I don't like it. (AP2:IN: p. 7)

I have a philosophy in life which guides me that even though I am inconvenienced, I always makes sure that I make things easy for my boss. (AP12:IN: p. 42)

I accept criticism. It is also important to have a good relationship with the Lord." (AP11:IN:p. 40)

She is a person who can always work with anybody. (EX9:QE: p. 18)

High core-self evaluation and job satisfaction. Professionals are successful in their careers and are highly satisfied with their jobs. According to Stump, Much, Hülsheger, Judge, and Maier (2010),

Individuals with high CSE have a positive self-appraisal (self-esteem), believe in their own performance capacity (high self-efficacy), have a positive view of the world as well as a low tendency to focus on negative aspects of the self (low neuroticism), and believe they have control over events in their life (high internal locus of control). (p. 674)

The overall job satisfaction of these successful administrative professionals showed a mean of 8.33 on a scale of 1-10 while their CSE has a mean of 45.6 based on a score range of 12 to 60. The responses of these professionals also confirm such feeling.

I like my work because my boss is a great boss. He trusts me to do things and he allows me to do things on his behalf. And the nicest thing is that he always backs me up. He would not blame me for anything. I was given a chance to grow and mature in my profession and the chance to learn from the best. (AP12:QA: p. 41)

I am able to work happily and peacefully, and I can say I have accomplished something at the end of the day. (AP8:QA: p. 29)

I am proud for what I am doing and I am happy to have this privilege to be an assistant to the Executive Secretary to assist him in his professional function. (AP11:IN: p. 39)

Service-oriented. Administrative professionals are not only confined to the four walls of their workplace. They take time to go for community service. They do this in the form of visiting churches during Church-related activities like weekly worship sessions, random missionary activities or taking leadership or membership roles in the community. This trait is verbally expressed as well in salary matters.

I am service-oriented. I do not mind the salary—whether high or low. If I find that the company is just starting, I don't mind. (AP2:IN: p. 7)

My work has allowed me to reach out to other people. Every time I take a vacation leave, I see to it that I do community service among the natives in my place. I conduct branch Sabbath School and it has become my passion. (AP7:IN: p. 24)

I always encourage my fellow secretaries to do extra mile. (AP8:IN: p. 28)

My work requires me to extend my work times beyond office hours although there is no overtime pay. I have to do my work without complain. (AP13:IN: p. 45)

Resilient. Resilience is the person's "ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change" (Resilience, 2015, para. 2). The work of administrative professionals is very challenging. They have to deal with occupational factors such as work overload, low salary rate, discrimination and disrespect.

Handling two departments actually demands more of my time and requires me to work more than eight hours of duty a day, so I have to extend my work hours. (AP5:IN: p. 20)

My workload is too much but I cannot just leave the other department because I have a burden. I just pray that God will give me the strength to do the work I am doing. (AP7:IN: p. 26)

Many people here look at us as having a lowly or low-level status and they think of themselves highly. Because of that they demand on us or they harass us. And for several years now, we have not attended seminars related to our profession. I

have observed that secretaries are not part of those taking professional development courses. They are treating the faculty well but it is different with the non-academic staff. We also need to sharpen our saw. (AP14:IN:p. 50)

The salary rate is disturbing. The rate is frustrating. Before it was okay, but not now. This is the cry of secretaries now. (AP11:IN: p. 40)

According to Duncan (as cited in Korkki, 2012), administrative professionals are not given the recognition and appropriate compensation for the level of talent they bring with regards to the role they play in the workplace. These feelings of discrimination was also seen in the result of the survey in Keele University that only 46.8% of the secretarial and clerical staff received the same respect showed to other academics (Newman, 2008). Despite these experiences, the successful professionals in this study have displayed resilience by dealing with their challenges positively.

Competence

Competence refers to "a cluster of related abilities, commitments, knowledge, and skills that enable a person (or an organization) to act effectively in a job or situation" (Competence, 2014, para. 1). One executive said about his secretary, "She is competent. She seeks increased responsibilities and looks for ways to improve office systems" (EX5:QE: p. 10). Other attributes showing the competence of successful administrative professionals are listed below.

Preferred level of education. These professionals possess a bachelor's degree as minimum degree. Some are pursuing higher degrees.

Efficient. Efficient workers are productive workers. Efficiency means "producing a desired result with a minimum of effort, expense and waste" (Alegre, Gomez, Mapa, & Lopez, 2005, p. 33). Here are the ways and expressions affirming efficiency:

She does not procrastinate. (EX3:QE: p. 5)

I try to be efficient the first time I do my work so that I don't keep on repeating. I also talk to my colleagues and discuss how we can improve and make our work easy because efficiency is important to us. (AP12:IN: p. 42)

She accomplishes her job immediately. She is an efficient secretary; she knows her work. (EX2:QE: p. 4)

Ability to multi-task. Majority of the participants support two or more executives along with other responsibilities. Thus the workload is doubled or even tripled, depending on the situation. Participants juggle their time and schedule to accomplish what they need to achieve by multi-tasking. It is basically the way to cope with the demands when manpower is limited. The administrative professional today "needs to be the ultimate multi-tasker, able to be the go-to

person for the harried execs and bustling departments they support" (Lebovits, as cited in Business Wire, 2005, para. 2).

I support four executives. I am also in-charge of the guesthouse. So you see how I juggle my work and schedule. Oftentimes I have to do multi-tasking to cope with the demands of my work. (AP1:IN: p. 1)

The nature of her work requires multi-tasking. She acts as receptionist, liaison officer, facilitator, supply officer, data encoder, etc. (EX13: QE: p. 26)

Professionalism. Professionalism is "the skill, good judgment, and polite behavior that is expected from a person who is trained to do a job well" (Professionalism, 2015, para. 1**).** Aside from having earned a degree that in their own right entitled them to be considered professionals, they also exhibit professionalism in the way they conduct their affairs in the office.

My secretary acts professionally in all her dealings. (EX5:QE: p. 5)

When I come to the office I do what I need to do. I try to remain professional in what I do. (AP6:IN: p. 22)

Connection

Connection can be simply described as having ties with another—with executives, colleagues, clients or the public, family and friends, professional organizations, and the Heavenly Being. This connection can be personal or professional in nature. Connection allows an individual to progress, to grow and to survive. These successful administrative professionals are connected.

They have close connection with and trust in God. Challenges can be overwhelming. However, these successful professionals have prayer and faith as their weapons and God as their stronghold.

In any business, you would succeed if you give your customers or clients your very best but you would not be able to give what you don't have. So it is very important to have a very good relationship with the Lord. Prayer is very important. (AP12:IN: p. 43)

I have to admit that one of my bosses before scolded me. It was really difficult. I can't really remember what happened. But we had misunderstanding and of course I cried and I really felt hurt. So I just prayed that I can forget about the incident and I just talked to my boss nicely. I can see that I have to deal with it and prayed that I can forget it instantly because I don't want to dwell with the hatred. I was able to deal with that by the grace of God. (AP7:IN: p. 26).

Work-life balance. Successful people are careful to strike a good work-life balance, working hard but also making sure to prioritize spending time with the family (Jaccarino, n.d.). Fulton-Calkins, Rankin, and Shumack (2010) give this advice: "the more order you put into your private life, the more energy you will

have to focus on your employer's business. The more order you put into your professional life, the less it will interfere with life at home" (p. 48). The successful professionals in this study recognize the importance of maintaining good relationship not only at work but with family and friends.

I've always separated my work from my personal life. I don't let my personal life affect my work. (AP12:IN: p. 41)

I do everything I want to do during work time so it does not interfere with my personal life. (AP11:IN: p. 38)

I do not bring my work at home so I can have time with my children. I prioritize my work in the office and finish what I intend to do during the day. (AP8:IN: p. 28)

I go hiking with my family during weekends whenever we can. We play together, visit churches together, travel and visit places whenever there is an opportunity. (AP1:IN: p. 1)

Technological. The professionals employed various media to connect with the outside world. These professionals are provided with technology such as telephones, cell phones, computers, Internet connections, printers, fax machines, photocopiers, and other relevant technologies. Having these gadgets help them to be efficient and productive, to be connected with the outside world and organizations, and have access to outside source of knowledge. The work performed by office workers in the past has changed due to new technology. Because of the changing role of administrative professionals (APs), the expectation, according to Lebovits (as cited in Business Wire, 2005), president of Ajilon Office which is a leading specialty staffing and recruiting services firm, is that "today's administrative professional has to be tech-savvy and organized to stay on top of unprecedented information flow" (para. 2). The comments below affirm the presence of technology in the APs workplaces.

Technology is available. We have fax machine, telephone and Internet. (AP6:IN: p. 22)

The institution provides me with technology, equipment, and materials needed. (AP1:IN: p. 3)

The environment is like heaven. All the nice things are here. I am given fast computer and fast internet, so it makes my work fast, easy, and convenient. (AP2:IN: p. 7)

Actively learning. Lifelong learning is the way to keep abreast with the trend and technology changes. This is true because today's administrative professionals are taking on roles similar to a management level employee (Geller, 2014). Education is continuous and "lifelong learning is necessary for all individuals who expect to remain productive in the job" (Fulton-Calkins, 2003, p. 10). These

are the ways professionals respond to this challenge: they read, travel, attend concerts, socialize with colleagues, shop or window shop, and attend conventions and conferences on their own, and many other activities. To grow professionally, they initiate and engage in formal and informal professional development activities that allow them to acquire new skills and/or enhance qualities and skills already possessed to grow on the job.

As an administrative professional, I don't think I will ever stop learning. I see to it that every day, every week, I learn to be effective (AP6:IN: p. 21).

I always have a thirst for knowledge and I teach myself. I Google how to be a good secretary and I like to discover and learn new things. I also read at least one book every month. (AP12:IN: p. 35).

If the organization does not initiate professional development for secretaries, I apply for a vacation in order to attend conventions. (AP10:QA: p. 26).

Administrative professionals can continue to grow personally and professionally by doing skills assessment, self-evaluation, and identification of areas of growth (Stulz et al., 2013). The IAAP (2014) emphasizes that "the winners will be those professionals who master technology, effectively use their interpersonal and communication skills, have the ability to track and organize and be creative in solving problems, and most importantly, have the willingness to learn and grow, and accept the challenges. For these administrative professionals, there is a world of opportunity waiting for them" (para. 7).

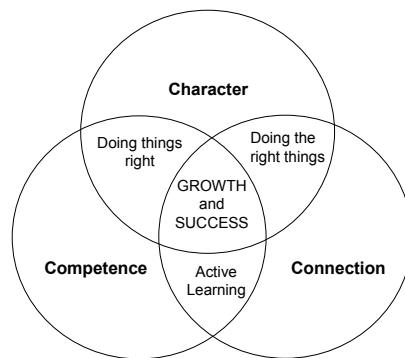Culture Factors Model Based on the Findings of the Study—the Three Cs

Figure 1: The Three Cs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The culture of successful administrative professionals in this study is exhibited through their competence, character, and connection. When these successful administrative professionals are doing the right things, they also do things right, which in turn motivate them to actively learn. When they are actively learning, they grow intellectually, socially, and spiritually. They are happy and satisfied in their work and lives. They are successful with God's help. God is part of their success. Although professionals in this study engage or participate in informal professional development activities, it would greatly benefit them if their employing institutions can provide regular financial support toward formal professional development activities for the growth of APs because personally-initiated professional development activities may also be least beneficial of all training sources as experienced by the IAAP participants in the study of Dierkes (2007). APs can initiate identifying training opportunities, and future researchers can also do a replication of this study among non-sectarian industrial/organizational and other settings to find similarities and differences to the outcomes of this study, thus, generating a profile and culture of successful APs in a broader perspective.

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