

DEALING WITH PAPERWORK

Officers regularly complain about the volume of paperwork and the fact that some of it is unnecessary. Secretaries can be invaluable in screening paperwork in the first place and helping to organize more effectively what the officers have to handle.

A) INCOMING MAIL:

The secretary's role:

- * Screen the mail - redirect where appropriate - draft replies.
- * Divide paperwork into A, B, C, categories in folders. Officers should look at and deal with "A" first.
- * Help officers get off mailing lists and internal circulation routes. Discuss together what is useful. Throw out junk mail.
- * Scan journals etc. to flag just those articles which are of interest. Collect materials into a "reading pile" to be looked at when there is time, or, for example, when going on a trip.

Officer's role:

- * Only have two trays on their desks: "In" and "Out"
- * Pick up a piece of paper only if you are prepared to deal with it. This is much easier if the secretary has pre-sorted it.

B) OUTGOING MAIL:

Some of the following suggestions save officer's time, and speed up the work flow.

- * Write directly on incoming correspondence and redirect. A photocopy can be taken for the record, if really needed.
- * Use round trip memos - if your writing is poor, print!
- * Have your secretary develop prepared forms and form letters, clip complimentary slips or business cards to enclosures etc.
- * Sort mail into three action piles: items to be discussed with others; personal action; messages to send.
- * Draft correspondence and reports in note form first, then write them out in full but being as brief as possible.
- * Use the phone instead of writing as much as you can.
- * Limit the amount of drafts and redrafts you do. Even though it is now much more efficient to use word processing, it becomes less than efficient when so much time - and, therefore, money - is spent on redrafts, rereading, etc.
- * Use a dictaphone whenever possible. If you are not practised at this, learn! This saves not just a secretary's time, but the manager's too, which, after all, is more costly!