USE OF THE MANSIS SYSTEM
IN THE CENTRAL REGION:
INTERVIEW STUDY

Background Study

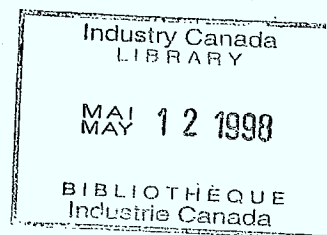1990

PROGRAM EVALUATION DIVISION

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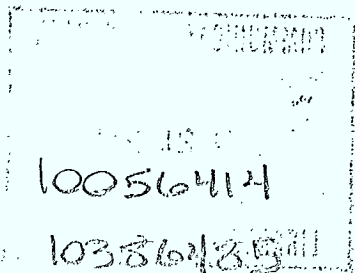
IN THE CENTRAL REGION:

INTERVIEW STUDY]

MAY, 1990

This is one of two Background Studies that form part of the evaluation of the use of the Mansis system in the Central Region.

La présente est une des deux études de fond portant sur l'évaluation de l'utilisation du système Mansis dans la Région du centre.

This study was conducted by the the Program Evaluation Division of the Department of Communications, Canada.

L'étude a été entreprise par la Division de l'évaluation des programmes du ministe`re des Communications.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mansis is a system designed to provide ongoing management of employees as well as to implement change in an organization. This system was implemented in the Central Region of the Department of Communications as a management tool beginning in June, 1988. As part of the evaluation of the use of this system in the Central Region, a series of group interviews were conducted. In total, sixty-eight employees were interviewed which represents 52.3% of all Central Region employees. The interviews focused on the following five issues: communication, management, individual and environmental factors, motivation, and the implementation of the system itself.

FINDINGS

1.   Communication

Overall, it appears that the quantity of communication occurring between employees and their immediate supervisors has increased as they now meet more regularly, creating more opportunities for communication. Some employees questioned whether their communication ended with their supervisor or was transmitted up one level as should occur under Mansis.

2.   Management

The majority of employees felt they are receiving more frequent feedback and clearer direction. Managers and supervisors also felt that it is now easier to deal with problems and difficult employees. A small number of employees felt there has been no change, primarily because feedback and direction were at good levels before Mansis was introduced.

3.   Individual and Environmental Factors

The interviews revealed that effects in this area were dependant on individual employees and specific working situations. Some employees felt more confident and others perceived greater participation in decisions. A small number felt somewhat negative about having to list their positive accomplishments and there were questions about the sincerity of some positive feedback.

4.   Motivation

Almost all employees felt motivation had not been directly influenced by the use of the Mansis system.

5.   Implementation

There was consensus that Mansis was a lot of work when first implemented. For a large number of employees, this work has tapered off now that they have customized and streamlined the system to suit their own needs.

Employees listed a significant number of benefits experienced as a result of using the Mansis system. These benefits ranged from more opportunities to communicate and being

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better able to deal with problems and conflict to ensuring that appraisals are more representative of a full year's work.

The most frequently mentioned negative aspects of Mansis involved the paperwork and the frequency of the meetings. There also were concerns about some artificiality of positive feedback and difficulties associated with having to list positive accomplishments.

More than half the employees interviewed would elect to keep using Mansis if they were given the choice. The majority of employees would recommend the system to other areas in the Department.

The two most common suggestions for improving the use of the Mansis system were to reconsider the frequency of the meetings between each employee and his or her immediate supervisor and to ensure greater consistency across the Region in terms of understanding what Mansis is supposed to do and how best to apply it.

CONCLUSION

This study found that Mansis appears to be working in the Central Region. The implementation of this system seems to have achieved many of its intended objectives. Identified problems centered on issues related to the mechanics of using the system and to its implementation, therefore they should not be difficult to resolve. As outlined above, considerable benefits have resulted from having the Mansis system in place throughout this Region.

RÉSUMÉ A L'INTENTION DE LA DIRECTION

Mansis est un système conçu pour assurer une gestion suivie du personnel et la mise en oeuvre de modifications apportées à un organisme. Cet outil de gestion a été mis en oeuvre au bureau régional du Centre du ministère des Communications en juin 1988. Une série d'entrevues de groupe ont été réalisées auprès de 68 employés (52,3 pour cent des employés) afin d'évaluer l'utilisation du système dans cette région. Les entrevues portaient sur les cinq questions suivantes : communication, gestion, facteurs individuels et environnementaux, motivation et mise en oeuvre du système.

RÉSULTATS DE L'ENQUETE

1. Communication

De façon générale, il semble y avoir une plus grande communication entre les employés et leur supérieur immédiat étant donné qu'ils se rencontrent plus souvent. Certains employés se demandent si la teneur de ces discussions est transmise à l'échelon supérieur comme le prévoit le système Mansis.

2. Gestion

La plupart des employés indiquent que la rétroaction est plus fréquente et qu'ils reçoivent des directives plus précises. Les gestionnaires et les surveillants estiment qu'il est plus facile de régler les problèmes et de prendre des mesures concernant les employés difficiles. Quelques employés considèrent qu'il n'y a pas eu de changement, essentiellement parce que la qualité de la rétroaction et des directives était déjà très bonne avant l'introduction de Mansis.

3. Facteurs individuels et environnementaux

L'incidence de Mansis à cet égard est fonction de l'employé et des conditions de travail. Certains employés disent avoir une plus grande confiance; d'autres ont l'impression de participer davantage aux décisions. Quelques-uns n'aiment pas tellement se voir obligés de noter leurs réalisations; d'autres mettent en doute la sincérité de certaines observations positives.

4. Motivation

Presque tous les employés indiquent que l'utilisation de Mansis n'a pas eu d'influence directe sur la motivation.

5. Mise en oeuvre

Tous conviennent que la mise en oeuvre de Mansis a demandé beaucoup de travail. Mais la plupart des employés estiment que le fardeau imposé par Mansis a diminué étant donné qu'ils ont maintenant adapté et simplifié le système en fonction de leurs besoins.

Les employés font état d'un grand nombre d'avantages découlant de l'utilisation de Mansis: occasions plus fréquentes de communiquer, meilleure résolution des problèmes et des conflits et évaluation annuelle plus juste.

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Les deux aspects négatifs les plus souvent cités sont la paperasse à remplir et la fréquence des réunions. On exprime également quelques réticences face à l'obligation de noter ses réalisations et on n'est pas nécessairement convaincu de la sincérité des observations positives de ses supérieurs.

Plus de la moitié des employés consultés maintiendraient le système Mansis s'ils avaient à prendre une décision à cet effet. La plupart des employés recommanderaient l'utilisation du système dans les autres services du Ministère.

Les deux principales suggestions concernant l'amélioration du système Mansis sont de réduire la fréquence des réunions entre les employés et leur supérieur immédiat et d'assurer, dans la région du Centre, une perception plus uniforme du rôle et du fonctionnement du système.

CONCLUSION

Les résultats de l'enquête indiquent que le système semble bien fonctionner dans la région du Centre. L'utilisation du système répond à beaucoup des objectifs initiaux. Les problèmes soulevés ont trait à l'aspect pratique de son utilisation et de sa mise en oeuvre et il ne devrait pas être difficile de les résoudre. La mise en oeuvre du système Mansis a procuré de nombreux avantages à l'ensemble de la région.

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INTRODUCTION

Mansis is a system designed to provide ongoing management of employees as well as to implement change in an organization. This system was implemented in the Central Region of the Department of Communications as a management tool beginning in June, 1988. An evaluation assessment was prepared in June, 1989 which outlined issues and questions to be addressed by an evaluation of the use of this system in the Central Region[1].

As part of this evaluation, a series of group interviews were conducted. The interviews were designed to supplement the information from a mail survey of Central Region employees about the use of Mansis by dealing with different issues as well as probing further into topics covered by the survey. Specifically, the interviews focused on the following issues:

1. Communication: Has the implementation of the Mansis system increased the quantity of communication between employees and their supervisors?

2. Management: Do employees feel they are receiving clearer direction and more frequent feedback?

3. Individual and Environmental Factors: Has there been any impact on factors such as self-esteem and self-confidence or on the level of trust between employees and supervisors?

4. Motivation: Has there been an impact on motivation to perform well?

5. Implementation: Is there a lot of work associated with using Mansis? What have been the benefits of having Mansis in the Region? What have been the less desirable impacts? Are employees committed to Mansis?

Methodology

The interviews took place between April 4 and April 12, 1990. In total, sixty-eight employees were interviewed in sixteen separate sessions lasting from one to two hours. This represents 52.3% of all Central Region employees. Employees from three district offices and 50% of employees at the Regional Office were asked to participate in the interviews. The Regional Office employees were randomly selected from the Departmental phone book in proportion to their representation in the following four groups: managers; supervisors; clerical staff; and technical and others (includes inspectors and communications and culture officers). The interviews were conducted separately for these four groups (except for the district office interviews for which the manager and supervisor groups were combined). As

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[1] For a complete description of the terms of reference for the evaluation, please see the Evaluation Assessment "Use of the Mansis System in the Central Region" (June, 1989) available from the Program Evaluation Division of the Department of Communications.

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well, two interviews were conducted with individuals who had not been randomly selected to participate but who wished to make their views known.

All interviews were conducted by the same interviewer (a member of the Program Evaluation Division). A general interview guide was used in which specific topics were outlined to ensure that all issues were covered in the different groups. Participants were assured that their comments would remain anonymous and were asked to keep the content of the sessions confidential. Extensive notes were taken by the interviewer during the sessions which were tape-recorded as well. The audio tapes were for the exclusive use of the interviewer to supplement the written notes.

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RESULTS

The interviews yielded very rich and extensive information. This report is intended to capture the broader themes that emerged rather than to focus on the specific concerns of individual employees. As there were some differences among the groups (clerical, technical and managerial), the results from the interviews will be presented separately for each group.

1. Communication

Employees were asked to describe whether the implementation of the Mansis system has had an impact on the quantity of communication between employees and their supervisors. The Mansis system emplhasizes regular meetings between an employee and his or her immediate supervisor, thus it was anticipated that opportunities for communication would have increased.

Clerical

The majority of employees in the clerical category who were interviewed felt that there definitely has been an improvement in the amount of communication in the Region (e.g. "If Mansis is used properly, you can't help but have communication"). They felt they now have many more opportunities to talk to their immediate supervisors. There is some doubt among the members of this group, however, about whether their communication does go up two levels as it is supposed to following the Mansis system.

Technical and Others

This group had mixed feelings about the effects of Mansis on communication. For some members of this group, communication has definitely increased as they now are guaranteed a structured time to talk with formalized follow-through (e.g. "It's easy to forget to talk -- Mansis forces you"). Others, however, feel that communication was good before, so that Mansis has not brought about any significant change. Finally, there are some employees who feel that Mansis has contributed to the creation of artificial or ineffective communication. This problem manifests itself in various ways: some employees felt there is now considerable nit-picking occurring (e.g. "...mostly just trying to think of things to put down"); others feel that too much information is now being sent around which leads to ineffective communication. Members of this group also expressed some doubt about whether their communication does go up two levels or whether it stops at their supervisor's desk.

Managers and Supervisors

Although there are some managers who felt there has been no change (typically because they feel communication was good before), most felt that communications have improved (e.g. "...it puts pressure on managers to recognize and listen to what the employee is saying"). Many felt the biggest change was that now they have to set aside time each month when they have to sit down with each of their employees and talk.

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This group felt that Mansis has raised the consciousness levels of employees. Employees are now learning to bring problems to their supervisor's attention, thus supervisors are now more aware of what really goes on in their units. At the same time, there is a perception that staff now expects dialogue and consultation on everything that happens in the Region (e.g. "...information used to be filtered, now we just send everything down (to employees) for fear of leaving something out").

Summary

Overall, it appears that the quantity of communication occurring between employees and their immediate supervisors has increased as they now meet more regularly. However, there are some doubts about whether the communication ends at the immediate supervisor's level or is transmitted up one level further as should occur under Mansis.

2. Management

The specific focus for this segment of the interviews was on whether employees feel they are receiving clearer direction and more frequent feedback as a result of having Mansis implemented in the Central Region.

Clerical

The clerical group felt that whether they received more frequent feedback now was really dependent on their individual supervisors. Some reported that they are definitely receiving more frequent feedback, especially positive feedback (e.g. "...nice to be recognized", "...get positive feedback now where we wouldn't have before"). This finding is somewhat qualified by one point which was raised fairly often concerning the sincerity of the positive feedback. Some employees felt that the positive feedback they were receiving has become artificial and that relatively minor things were being recognized and praised. As well, there were some members of this group who would like to receive even more feedback. One other advantage is that there are fewer "surprises at appraisal time" as feedback now occurs throughout the year.

Most of the employees in this group felt they were receiving clearer direction. A few employees expressed concern that Mansis was not being implemented completely by all managers and that this affects the extent to which they then give clear direction: if managers use the system, they will give clear direction; managers who don't use the system, however, will not give clear direction unless that has always been part of their management style. One other positive aspect was that if one is not receiving clear direction, the opportunity now exists to ask for clarification (e.g. "...feel free in asking questions now -- have the backing of Mansis").

Technical and Others

Many employees in this group felt they are now getting more regular feedback following the implementation of Mansis, although there are some who feel there has been no change. For many, this is because they feel they have always received regular feedback. Some

employees felt there is almost too much recognition given now which causes them to question the sincerity of the recognition. Employees felt if they are doing their regular day-to-day jobs then there shouldn't be recognition for having done something special. In fact, some people thought they have been recognized for relatively little things while larger projects go by unnoticed.

Around half this group felt they are receiving clearer direction. Many employees indicated there has been no change: for some, the direction received was always good and has stayed that way; for others it never was good and has not improved. As one employee put it: "If you don't have the ability, no system will turn you into a good manager."

Managers and Supervisors

Most managers and supervisors thought they are providing more frequent feedback now, although there were several who felt they haven't changed. Some members of this group stated they sometimes feel as if they are feeding the system ("It's time to give some positive feedback"). Managers and supervisors did feel that it is much easier to deal with problems and with difficult employees now (e.g. "...can plan out what you are going to say and not be angry...it forces you to be constructive and come up with something to do rather than just rant"). As well, even those who felt they are not giving more feedback now indicated that the feedback they give is much more useful. Finally, there was some acknowledgement that positive feedback is sometimes given to trivial matters (e.g. "...the key is to explain why something is exceptional so that employees don't feel that trivial matters are getting recognized").

The majority of employees in this group feel they have improved the direction they give (e.g. "it's easier to provide clearer direction now"). Mansis is credited with this change as "it forces managers to think about what they want done" and to think about whether they are communicating this clearly to their employees. Managers feel they are more responsible now and "are actually doing their job." On the other hand there were some managers and supervisors who feel there has been no change. This subgroup feels they have always given clear direction and still do so, but now, in addition, they have to complete forms for Mansis.

Summary

A significant proportion of employees felt they are receiving more frequent feedback and clearer direction. A smaller number of employees, however, felt there has been no change. For some, this is because it was at a good level before Mansis was introduced to the Region. One problem associated with this topic concerns positive feedback: some employees felt that too much recognition is occurring which brings the sincerity of the recognition into question and trivializes some of the positive feedback which occurs.

3. Individual and Environmental Factors

Of interest here was whether employees felt there has been any impact on factors such as self-esteem and self-confidence or on the level of trust between employees and supervisors.

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Clerical

It is difficult to summarize at a group level the responses to the questions on individual and environmental factors as reactions seemed entirely dependent on individual work situations. On the positive side, employees made comments indicating they felt more confident now (e.g. "knowing where you are at in terms of performance improves your confidence") and felt more encouraged by management.

There also were some negative comments. Some employees felt their managers did not trust them to do their jobs (e.g. "The meetings are intended to prove to your manager that you're doing your job. You feel as if they don't trust you to do your job"). Related to this is the sentiment that it becomes "depressing when you have to prove that you're doing your job" (e.g. "...always trying to find something just to satisfy Mansis, even minute details. It's demeaning --all of a sudden these little things are picked on"). Finally, there were several comments which have already been discussed concerning positive feedback (e.g. "sometimes feel that the 'good works' are insincere and just due to Mansis").

Technical and Others

Once again the findings from this group are difficult to summarize given the wide variety of responses. On the positive side, using the Mansis system has increased confidence in abilities and has led to perceptions of greater participation in decisions (e.g. "...helped to see that goals can be accomplished", "...have frequent meetings where employees are included...feel like we are being asked to participate"). The negative comments include statements that have already been made concerning how it feels to list positive accomplishments and the sincerity of positive feedback (e.g. "...want the stroking, but don't want to have to point it out", "...feels mechanical and artificial"). Finally, there was some consensus that Mansis has had no effect on trust between employees and their immediate supervisors (e.g. "trust needs to be earned").

Managers and Supervisors

Many managers and supervisors felt their confidence in themselves as managers and supervisors has increased. Mansis has forced this group of employees to think through their direction and communication to staff to ensure that nothing is left out. Some members of this group felt they are now able to communicate more easily to staff (e.g. "Mansis gives you the tools to make it easier, but it's up to the managers to use them to their advantage").

Summary

It appears as if some impacts of Mansis are dependent on individual employees and particular work situations. Some employees felt more confident and others perceived greater participation in decisions. Others felt negatively about having to list their positive accomplishments and some questioned the sincerity of positive feedback.

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4. Motivation

Has the implementation of Mansis had an impact on the motivation of employees to perform well?

Clerical

Almost all the employees interviewed in this group felt that Mansis has had no effect on their motivation at work (e.g. "You don't do your job because of Mansis"). One person did feel that getting recognition for the things accomplished on the job makes it feel more worthwhile to continue to get things done, thus Mansis is credited with increasing this person's motivation.

Technical and Others

Once again, almost no employees in this group felt that motivation had been influenced by the introduction of Mansis in the Central Region. One employee did state that reviewing your work every thirty days at the Mansis meeting did help to bring things back on track as this provides a regular reminder of priorities. For this employee, Mansis was seen as contributing to increased motivation at work.

Managers and Supervisors

A mixed message emerged concerning this group's perceptions of the impacts of Mansis on employee motivation. Some people felt that Mansis was very successful in motivating staff who prior to Mansis had been relatively unmotivated, whereas it was difficult to improve the motivation of an employee who has always been motivated. Others stated the opposite: that Mansis has been very successful in motivating staff who were always motivated to perform well, yet there has been no effect on those employees who have never been motivated.

Summary

A fair conclusion from the opinions stated on this issue is that employee motivation has not been directly influenced by the use of the Mansis system. At the same time, it is important to consider whether any management system could realistically be expected to significantly influence the motivation of employees. In this respect, this finding of no effect on motivation is neither surprising nor problematic.

5. Implementation

There were several questions related to the actual implementation of Mansis in the Central Region. For example, do employees feel there is a lot of work associated with using Mansis? Employees were also asked to describe what have been the best and worst things about having Mansis in the Central Region. As well, employee commitment to Mansis was assessed through a question about whether employees would continue to use Mansis if they no longer

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were obliged and whether they would recommend the system to other parts of the Department.

Is Mansis a lot of work?

Clerical

Only a few members of this group felt that using the Mansis system is a lot of work. Many people do it at the last minute so the time spent is minimal (although for some this makes it feel like it is a lot of work). Some employees felt that it was a lot of work to set up the system initially but that the amount of work has tapered off. Finally, a large number of employees in this group felt that it is a lot of work to come up with a list each month of positive work accomplishments (e.g. "...hard to blow our own horns", "Often you've worked your buns off, but you haven't done anything exceptional").

Technical and Others

This group was divided in half on the question of whether Mansis is a lot of work. Several employees mentioned that they have other reporting systems they have to satisfy and that adding Mansis created a lot of extra work. Some employees acknowledged that it was a lot of work at first, but that this has tapered off. In some instances the decrease in the amount of work has been due to customizing and streamlining the Mansis system to suit individual needs (e.g. "Started off doing everything --it didn't really mean much. Now I focus mostly on action plans --things which apply more to my day-to-day work").

Managers and Supervisors

The group yielded a wide range of responses to the question of whether this system is a lot of work to use. Some felt that it is not a lot of work at all (for example, one member of this group estimated spending around five hours a month on the system). Several employees indicated that it was a lot of work at first to set everything up, but that it isn't a lot of work any more (e.g. "First perceived as more work...a bit of a burden at first but now I see it as useful"). Finally, another subgroup felt that it is a lot of work, especially in understanding what Mansis is and telling employees what to do. There was some acknowledgement that this process, while being a lot of work, was beneficial in that it provided a chance for people to figure out what everyone expects from their job (e.g. "...more work than before because now you really have to manage"). Many managers and supervisors stated that if they had to do everything that was in the Mansis manuals then it would really be too much work to be manageable (e.g. "If you use everything that is in Mansis it becomes way too cumbersome: in a simplified form it is a positive tool").

Summary

There appears to be consensus that Mansis was a lot of work in the beginning. For a significant number of employees, this work has tapered off now that they have customized and streamlined the system to suit their own needs. As well, there is a group of managers who see Mansis as involving a lot of work, but who also view this extra work as beneficial.

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What have been the most noticable benefits?

During the interview sessions employees were asked what they felt were the best things about having Mansis implemented in the Central Region. The following summarizes the most frequently cited benefits.

Clerical

The positive aspect which came up most frequently in this group was better communication: employees in this group felt they now have more of an opportunity to talk to their supervisor and this has been the best thing about bringing Mansis into the Region. Employees also saw many benefits at appraisal time because Mansis ensures that you have a record of what you've done over the year, plus a record of your concerns and what has happened as a result of airing these concerns. For some employees, the best thing about having Mansis in place is that they now hear the words 'thank you' in the office. Finally, employees appreciated the opportunity to be able to express their concerns to their supervisors with the knowledge that the supervisor then has to act on these concerns.

Technical and Others

Employees in this group experienced somewhat similar benefits as did the clerical group. Employees especially liked the fact that Mansis provides a structure for dealing with conflict "freeing the employee from reprisal." It is now possible to identify problems in writing and have them acknowledged without it becoming "a big deal." As well, the monthly Mansis meetings were appreciated by employees as they "make both of you take the time to talk." This, in turn, contributes to another benefit which is the regular confirmation between an employee and his or her supervisor about what the employee's objectives are on the job. This is viewed as having benefits for the appraisal process as well (e.g. "Mansis is effective because it provides opportunities to record and discuss things throughout the year so that the appraisal at the end of the year is more representative of the whole year"). Finally, another positive aspect identified was getting recognition for things that were taken for granted before.

Managers and Supervisors

This group was very clear about three aspects of Mansis which they felt were most beneficial: the change of behaviour procedure, the action plans, and recognition. Managers and supervisors indicated that these three aspects of Mansis were extremely useful and valuable to them in doing their jobs. As well, this group felt that Mansis had greatly facilitated the appraisal process as they now had records of each employee's performance over an entire year. Another benefit was learning how to deal with problem employees: managers and supervisors felt that Mansis had given them the necessary tools and skills to deal with this management issue effectively (e.g. "...can put aside personal feelings and deal with poor performers"). Finally, several people indicated that Mansis has helped them give better direction to their staff which has, in turn, made their jobs easier (e.g. "...like being able to give direction and place the onus on employees to let me know how things are going").

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Summary

Clearly there is a large number of benefits experienced by employees as a result of using Mansis. These ranged from more opportunities to communicate and being better able to deal with problems and conflict to ensuring that appraisals are more representative of a full year's work.

What have been the less desirable impacts?

In an attempt to get a balanced picture of employees' views about the use of Mansis in the Central Region, employees were also asked in the interview sessions to describe any negative aspects about having Mansis in place.

Clerical

Many of the comments by this group concerning the negative aspects of Mansis have already been stated in other sections. For example, many employees felt the process of trying to find something to write down for a positive accomplishment "for the sake of Mansis" was not an efficient use of time. Others felt the artificial quality of some of the positive feedback and recognition they received was a negative aspect of Mansis. There also were some comments that the paperwork and the frequency of the meetings was somewhat burdensome. Finally, a few members of this group questioned the true importance of Mansis giving examples where they had done all the preparation for their Mansis meeting only to have the meeting indefinitely postponed.

Technical and Others

Once again the comments of this group closely resemble those of the clerical group. The primary concern was that the extra recognition that is being given to employees "can't be taken seriously" as it is being applied to relatively trivial tasks. The recognition needs to be more meaningful in order for it to be effective. The second cluster of negative comments about Mansis revolved around the work involved in Mansis: employees felt there was a lot of repetition between forms for Mansis and forms for other reporting systems. Mansis then becomes "just another program to be fed." People also indicated that the meetings were time-consuming (e.g. "...resent taking the extra time for Mansis; instead, could do an extra job").

Managers and Supervisors

Several members of this group felt the most negative aspect about Mansis was the paper burden, especially the large amount of work at the beginning. Some managers and supervisors did not like not having the flexibility to customize the system to suit their own purposes (e.g. "...too much emphasis on the mechanics"). Several employees in this group felt there was now an overflow of information circulating in the Region and that the focus on communication needed to be better defined. Finally, there were a few managers and supervisors who felt that it was not beneficial to make employees "blow their own horns" as they could see that some of their own employees were not comfortable doing this.

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Summary

The most commonly cited negative aspects revolved around the paperwork and the frequency of the meetings. There also were concerns about some artificiality of positive feedback and difficulties associated with having to list positive accomplishments.

Are employees committed to Mansis?

At the end of the interview sessions employees were asked whether they would continue to use the Mansis system if they had the option to drop it. As well, employees were asked whether they would recommend Mansis to other areas within the Department of Communications.

Clerical

This group was fairly evenly divided between wanting to keep the system, feeling neutral about it and wanting to drop Mansis immediately. Those who were neutral indicated that the system as it currently operates needs to be streamlined. As well, some employees felt that if they could have an open-door policy with their supervisor and get feedback on their performance without having to use the binders then they would choose to drop the system.

About two-thirds of this group would recommend implementing this system elsewhere in the Department although, with the exception of one office, people in this group were not overly enthusiastic about Mansis.

Technical and Others

The vast majority of employees in this group would keep Mansis even if they had the option of dropping it. Within this group there was a sense of grudging acceptance of the benefits Mansis had brought to their work environments. For example, some of the comments that accompanied this discussion included: "...something is better than nothing, it's still being improved", "hang on to it...it will die a natural death if that is what should happen", and "until something better comes along we should stick with this."

Approximately three-quarters of this group would recommend Mansis to other groups within the Department. Several employees who endorsed more widespread implementation of Mansis felt that it should only be put in place in areas where there currently are problems with communication and management.

Managers and Supervisors

Slightly more than half this group would choose to keep Mansis if they had the choice. There was a stronger sense of commitment to Mansis in this group than was felt in other groups (e.g. "If you follow the process, it will work", "...a lot of good tools, don't even need to use them all"). Those managers and supervisors who would not continue to use Mansis offered these comments: "Mansis is good but it needs to be pared down", "too much paperwork", and "...not sure it's worth it unless you have a problem employee."

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Almost all the employees in this group would recommend the implementation of Mansis elsewhere in the Department (although one person would only recommend it to areas where a problem currently exists). There was widespread acknowledgement that Mansis should be passed on in its simplified form, that it needs to be fully, consistently and uniformly implemented and that it is essential to have full senior management backing and support.

Summary

Overall, more than half the employees interviewed would elect to keep using Mansis if they were given the choice. The majority of employees would recommend the system to other areas in the Department.

6.   Suggestions for Improvement

During the interview sessions employees were asked whether they have any suggestions for how the use of the Mansis system in the Central Region could be improved. The following is a summary of the most frequently offered suggestions.

Clerical

The most popular suggestion was to have the Mansis meetings less frequently (suggested three or four times a year). It was also suggested that the system should be simplified, perhaps to the point where only one page is used which lists both accomplishments and problem areas rather than the forms which currently exist. Related to this is a suggestion that little things should not be listed as valid accomplishments as this trivializes the process. Finally, another frequent comment concerned the necessity of uniform implementation of Mansis (e.g. "will not get all the benefits if people are not all being treated similarly").

Technical and Others

Again, the most popular suggestion was to have fewer meetings (suggested bimonthly or quarterly). As well, it was suggested that the number of forms should be reduced to make the system as simple and straightforward as possible. Several employees suggested that more emphasis needs to be placed on keeping the materials up-to-date. Finally, the last common suggestion from this group parallels that from the clerical group. It was suggested that management needs to determine whether everyone in the Central Region is on the same track or if, in fact, Mansis is being implemented differently from office to office and from supervisor to supervisor (e.g. "...need to do more work with supervisors to get them all on-line: they might all have different perceptions of what Mansis is supposed to do", "can go to two or three different managers and get two or three different stories about what Mansis means"). Perhaps the previous finding of doubts about the two-level transmission of communication is related to differences in the implementation of the system.

Managers and Supervisors

Finally, the most frequently offered suggestion from this group was to have meetings less frequently (suggested bimonthly or quarterly). There was a feeling that Mansis needs to

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have more flexibility and that people should get away from the canned package approach. It was suggested that it should be up to each manager to use or not use whatever they like about the system or want to use. In addition, some managers felt that it doesn't make sense to focus on the forms. It was thought that whether a manager is implementing Mansis should not be evaluated on the basis of whether the Mansis binders are full and current, but rather on whether the principles of good management behind Mansis are being used.

Summary

The two most common suggestions were as follows: meetings should be held less frequently than monthly; and, there needs to be more consistency in terms of understanding what Mansis is supposed to do and how best to apply it.

CONCLUSIONS

This interview study revealed that Mansis appears to be working in the Central Region. The majority of employees interviewed have found that using Mansis has brought at least some benefits to their working environments. For example, it appears that the quantity of communication between employees and their immediate supervisors has increased. As well, a significant proportion of employees felt they are receiving more frequent feedback and clearer direction. When asked to describe the best things about having Mansis in the Region, employees listed a variety of benefits including being better able to deal with problems, being recognized for doing good work, having a clear idea of work objectives and an easier annual appraisal process. It appears, however, that an acceptance of Mansis has not completely filtered through to all levels in the Central Region as managers and supervisors were most positive about Mansis while clerical staff were least likely to see benefits.

There were a number of employees who indicated that Mansis has not brought about any change in their work situations. Some of this group were dissatisfied with the way in which they were managed, both before and after the implementation of Mansis. A larger proportion of this group, however, felt that conditions in their work environment were good before and have stayed at this level thus they do not see Mansis as having led to significant improvement.

Some problem areas were brought up as part of the discussions. For the most part, these problems deal with the mechanics of using the Mansis system and should be simple to rectify. For example, employees had some complaints about the amount of paperwork and the frequency of the meetings. There also were concerns about some perceived artificiality of positive feedback and difficulties associated with having to list positive accomplishments.

In addition, there were some problems with issues at a broader level. One of the propositions behind Mansis is that what an employee communicates to his or her immediate supervisor during the Mansis meeting will also be reviewed by the person one level further up. However, there are some doubts about whether this actually occurs or whether the communication ends at the immediate supervisor's level. As well, there were a number of employees who felt that Mansis is not being implemented in a consistent manner from office to office and from supervisor to supervisor and that this detracts from the benefits of the system. Although somewhat broader than the concerns with the mechanics of Mansis, these problems are related to the implementation of the system and should not be difficult to overcome.

One issue under consideration was whether using the Mansis system is a lot of work. There does appear to be consensus that Mansis was a lot of work in the beginning. For a significant number of employees, this work has tapered off now that they have customized and streamlined the system to suit their own needs. As well, there is a group of managers who see Mansis as involving a lot of work, but who also view this extra work as beneficial. Thus, the interviews indicate that this was not a major concern for most respondents.

Finally, the most direct analysis of whether Mansis is perceived as useful and beneficial by the employees who use it comes from their responses to two last questions: would you keep

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using Mansis if you did not have to, and would you recommend Mansis to others? Overall, more than half the employees interviewed would elect to keep using Mansis if they were given the choice. The majority of employees would also recommend the system to other areas in the Department.

The implementation of the Mansis system in the Central Region has achieved many of the intended objectives. After being in place for eighteen months, it seems that it is now time for a correction phase to eliminate some of the identified problems such as too-frequent meetings and to allow for streamlining and customizing of the materials. As well, it is important to ensure that employees at all levels have a clear and consistent vision of what Mansis has been brought in to do and how it should best be applied.

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