



Government of Canada
Department of Communications

Gouvernement du Canada
Ministère des Communications

ENHANCING HUMAN RESOURCES WITHIN
THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

Background Study

Étude préalable

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**DOC
PROGRAM EVALUATION SERIES**

This is one of two Background Studies that form part of the evaluation of Human Resources.

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

The views expressed herein are the views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Department of Communications.

La présente est une des deux études préalables fond portant sur l'évaluation des ressources humaines.

L'étude a été entreprise par Pacific Partners pour le compte de la Division de l'évaluation des programmes du ministère des Communications.

Les recommandations concernant les politiques et les programmes ou les points de vue exprimés, ici, sont ceux de l'auteur et ne reflètent pas nécessairement ceux du ministère des Communications ou les politiques du ministère.

BACKGROUND:

This report, based on the results of the survey and discussions with department officials, provides a general assessment of issues within the department and presents considerations and suggestions for initiating a participative management process to effectively deal with human resource issues.

Please note that the report does not deal with the "Action Plan", as it was agreed during discussions with the officials of the department that the action plan, as presented, represented considerations, ideas and suggestions rather than an articulated plan with specific goals, responsibilities and established time frames.

It was also agreed in the meetings, that prior to formulating a specific action plan it will be necessary to further the understanding, commitment and ownership for the process within the ranks of management.

This is point is critical for success. Management must be knowledgeable and feel comfortable with the process, be confident to direct it and to experiment and change it as necessary.

It is hoped that individuals reading this report will have the opportunity to reflect upon the issues raised and ask the questions necessary for establishing a viable human resource component within the Department of Communications.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to:

- A. provide some background information on the nature of Organizational Change
- B. focus on the human resource issues within the Department of Communications by identifying and describing the process known as Participative Management
- C. provide critical questions and general recommendations surrounding specific areas of concern
- D. suggest specific recommendations to begin the process of enhancing the department's Action Plan.

A. The Nature of Organizational Change

All organizations, in order to reach their potential, must change. Change is required to find ways to make work productive, keep employees motivated, and ensure that the organization's objectives are accomplished.

Change however, can also generate resistance, especially change that isn't well planned and communicated to those that it effects the most. To remain effective, organizations must possess mechanisms to implement and manage change. To implement and manage change, management must have an accurate picture of the organization's current state and take into account several considerations that impact upon the department's ability to perform at an optimal level.

Management must take into consideration not only the economic costs, but also the psychological and social costs associated with any planned change. It is worth implementing the change when the net benefits exceed the associated costs.

The formula below looks at the degree of the organization's readiness and capacity for change. Readiness means "attitudinal or motivational energy concerning the change", capacity refers to "the physical, financial, or organizational capacity to make the change,"

$$C = (ABD) > X$$

C = change

A = level of dissatisfaction

B = clear desired state

D = practical first steps toward the desired state

X = cost of change

Change is likely to succeed when there is enough dissatisfaction with the current state of the organization amongst employees and when they understand where the organization is trying to go and how it plans to get there.

The human resource goals which management tries to reach ought to be consistent with the organization's culture, otherwise, it will face great barriers.

Successful organizations have strong cultures which provide direction and clear standards to guide employees. Building a strong, positive culture is a difficult task, especially when an organization has either a negative work norm that limits employees' productivity or a fragmented culture that does not have a unified value or belief.

Resistance to change from all levels is to be expected. It can take the form of logical, psychological and sociological resistance. Logical resistance is based on employees' rational reasoning and science, such as concerns about the time required to implement changes, adjust to changes or extra effort to learn new processes.

Psychological resistance is the kind of resistance that mainly comes from worker's emotions such as fear of the unknown, dislike of management or other change agents.

Sociological resistance is the employees response based on group interests and values such as the desire to retain existing friendships, and political coalitions.

Management's task is to understand these effects on their employees and know how to use this knowledge as a basis for advising, guiding and encouraging their staff to work to shared goals and objectives.

Leadership is, therefore, very important in directing the behaviour toward the accomplishment of objectives. Research undisputedly demonstrates that the participative management style works the best to accomplish the goals of individuals, management and the organization.

To establish a participative management approach, it is best to generate support from the very beginning. By involving individuals and groups through surveys and small task groups, other individuals will feel that their interests will be best served by getting involved also.

B. Participative Management: What it is

Participative Management is a process by which all members of the organization, through appropriate channels of decision making and communication have some say about their jobs, the organization and the work environment.

In such a responsive organizational climate, suggestions, and criticism that might lead to improvement of any kind are encouraged and welcomed.

Management encouragement of such thinking and feeling of involvement often leads to ideas and actions for improving operational effectiveness and efficiency as well as environmental enhancement. Increased productivity is a natural byproduct.

Participative Management is a process rather than a set of specific steps. Each organization evolves in its own manner based on the culture, needs, and "change readiness" in that particular organization.

Participative Management requires that goals must be thought of as more than just the increase in output divided by the hours of work needed to get a task completed. Heightened management effectiveness and efficiency must also be a goal. It calls for a change in the philosophy and behaviour of many managers and officials to the way human resources are valued and utilized.

Some conditions for success include:

- o Management must be committed to an open, nondefensive style of operation that includes sharing appropriate information with employees and inviting their input regarding problems, opportunities, and implementation of improvement plans.
- o Employees must be given opportunities for advancement in organizational or career terms.
- o Supervisors must be trained to function effectively in a less directive, more collaborative style.
- o Traditional status barriers must give way to permit the establishment of an atmosphere of trust and open communications.

- o Employees should receive feedback on results achieved and recognition for superior performance.

- o Personnel should be selected who can be motivated to strive for excellence in job performance.

- o Both positive and negative outcomes should be analyzed and evaluated, and these results used to work toward continual improvement of the system.

It should be noted here that managers still continue to be responsible for achieving goals. However, by inviting consultation and tapping the collective wisdom of their subordinates, it will help them achieve goals and in the process become better managers.

The following are principles provided as a useful basis to examine the department's current human resource philosophy and policies.

1. THERE IS AN OVERALL DEPARTMENTAL PURPOSE AND THE HUMAN RESOURCE DIMENSIONS OF THAT PURPOSE ARE EVIDENT.
2. A PROCESS OF DEVELOPING STRATEGY WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION EXISTS AND IS UNDERSTOOD, AND THAT THERE IS EXPLICIT CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN RESOURCE DIMENSIONS.
3. EFFECTIVE LINKAGES EXIST ON A CONTINUING BASIS TO ENSURE THE INTEGRATION OF HUMAN RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS WITH THE ORGANIZATIONAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.
4. THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (DEPUTY MINISTER) PROVIDES THE CLIMATE FOR INTEGRATING HUMAN RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS WITH THE ORGANIZATIONAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES.

5. THE ORGANIZATION AT ALL LEVELS ESTABLISHES RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.
6. INITIATIVES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES ARE RELEVANT TO THE NEEDS OF THE ORGANIZATION.
7. IT INCLUDES THE RESPONSIBILITY TO IDENTIFY AND INTERACT IN THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTS IN WHICH THE ORGANIZATION IS AND WILL BE FUNCTIONING.

C. Critical Questions and General Recommendations

DOC's Value System

In order for the department to achieve success, it must have a sound set of beliefs on which it premises all its policies and actions. This comes from senior personnel that formulates, articulates and disseminates these values.

Organizations, to be successful with their people and their clients, must demonstrate a continuing adherence to those beliefs regardless of the vagaries they experience.

These values must be stated in mostly qualitative rather than quantitative terms.

Note that organizational values are distinct from organizational objectives, or mandate or goals. These latter items will likely change from time to time depending upon the philosophical and political orientation of the Minister or Administration. However, organizational values are so fundamental, they will not change - they are the foundation upon which each employee can rely with assurance to be virtually immutable. These give the security all employees require as the speed and scope of change increase around them.

Dominant beliefs of excellent organizations include the following values:

1. A belief in being the "best they can be".
2. The importance of the details of doing a job well.
3. The importance of people as individuals.
4. A belief in superior quality and service.
5. A belief in innovation at all levels and supporting failure.
6. The importance of informality to enhance communications.

To develop the department's value system, it is important to set and demand standards of excellence. By setting challenging but attainable goals gives employees a way to increase their own value in relation to the department.

CRITICAL QUESTION:

Does the DOC have a well articulated set of values (Mission statement and objectives) that guide all aspects of the department?

LEADERSHIP

The senior personnel must have the responsibility and willingness to manage the values of the department.

They must be able to engender excitement and a sense of purpose in staff. Thus the essential functions of the executive beyond establishing the values that steer the department include:

1. Providing a system of communications.
2. Securing the essential efforts required to accomplish tasks.
3. Formulating and defining purpose within the organization.

CRITICAL QUESTION:

Is there a commitment by the leadership to introduce measures that empower individuals to achieve a first-rate organization?

CARE AND NURTURING OF STAFF

A sense of belonging must prevail yet individual effort must be singled out and separated from the overall effort.

Excellent organizations require and demand extra-ordinary performance from the average worker. They do this by establishing challenging but attainable goals and with that an expectation of success that is conveyed to employees.

To increase productivity, attention to employees and not to working conditions per se is what must be the dominant positive focus.

Concerning staff planning functions, it is clear that those who implement a plan must be the ones that make the plan.

Use of non-monetary incentives including social activities, sporting events etc, will enhance the human resource elements within the DOC.

I.B.M. spends fifteen days on formal training for everyone, every year regardless of seniority. Recognizing that the DOC does not have the budget to match IBM, it is useful, nevertheless, to contrast the difference and reflect upon the importance of training in the two organizations.

CRITICAL QUESTION:

Is there commitment to ensure that human resources are given prominence in the planning and delivery of programs?

STRUCTURE:

Organizational cultures that favour sorting issues into pre-existing categories - e.g. the array of boxes on the organizational chart - and stress precedent and procedures are not likely to encourage anyone to look beyond what already exists to find a novel solution.

Specialist biases and political conflict are more likely to inhibit innovation in a segmentalist organization.

Segmentalism is what keeps an organization steady, on course, changing as little as possible, making only minimal adjustments. For those activities which should be repeated - the areas of high certainty where routine, habitual action is efficient and desirable - segmentalism works.

When people in a segmented organization do use an integrative mode to carry out important innovations, segmentalism makes it harder for the organization to incorporate and use these innovations.

Oversegmenting aspects of work life results in assigning people to fragments rather than larger pieces; emphasizing uncrossable boundaries between functions, between hierarchical levels, between central staffs and field operations, and even between kinds of people. The structural barriers to communication, to exchange of ideas, to joint effort to solve problems are matched by attitudes that confine people to the category in which they have been placed, that assume they are defined by the category, and that fail to allow them to show what they can contribute beyond it.

Contrary to most theory out of business schools in the past two decades, it is now accepted that smallness is the secret to success even in big organizations.

The important thing is to break the organization up into small units but to ensure an overall integrated team approach to the big issues.

In Japan, the essential building block of the organization is "The section" which is from four to ten people in size.

Use of "project teams" or mini task forces should be used with a fixed time limit imposed for producing solutions. Membership should be voluntary with those involved having some authority to act independently.

CRITICAL QUESTION:

Is the DOC executive willing to consider re-structuring the department around their strategic plan and human resource needs?

MANAGEMENT:

Management at all levels must be willing to make a long-term commitment to the success of the Mission and Role statements and the participative management approach.

Ensure that there is senior management understanding, and more important, commitment for the Mission and Role statements and the Participative Management approach. Bring this group together (three days) to learn about and discuss these corner stones of the department and how they relate to the day-to-day, and long term operation.

What is required is a learning, team-building and accountability process designed to create a cohesive senior management team that work together cooperatively and share common agreed-upon goals.

Have each of the senior management team ensure that those employees he or she is responsible for also receive the appropriate information and involvement relating not only to the department's overall objectives but also to their respective area and level in the department. Best results are gained if senior management themselves lead sessions similar to what they experienced seeking input from their people.

Note: Successful participative management approaches (i.e. those which have demonstrated improved employee attitudes and organizational performance) have not represented a departure from sound, accepted and basic management functions (i.e., planning, organizing, controlling, two-way communicating, delegating and follow-up). Rather they have improved the relationships between supervisors and employees producing an environment in which the "basic" functions can be applied more effectively.

Ensure through the Deputy Minister's office that there is a climate being established for integrating participative management at every opportunity throughout the department. Directors meetings are a good start on this, however, greater cross-sectional involvement is also necessary, e.g. first line supervisors making presentations to the Directors (with assistance from staff).

Ensure that managers and supervisors responsibilities include accountability for human resource development and management and for delivering results for such plans.

The needs of the department include the management of human resources and this is the responsibility of every manager in the organization. When a major plan is submitted there must be a human resource element consideration the same way that capital investments or marketing decisions are considered.

Ensure that the departmental budget reflects appropriate monies for necessary training and development in participative management techniques and human resource development. This does not mean hiring consultants to put on "canned" courses or sending personnel to seminars; it does require knowing what training is needed and doing as much as possible with the in-house skills to achieve a "best-fit". Some outside guidance will be required initially to assist with the process.

When carrying out strategic planning, ensure that human resource planning is closely tied to it.

In order to initiate specific participative management activities, make sure that there is proper planning in place, including limits, i.e., collective bargaining process, personality issues, etc.

This would include the determination of procedures and approaches to be utilized and their timing (e.g., Quality Circles, team building, performance feedback, task teams, autonomous work groups, etc.) The most appropriate approaches as well as realistic timing objectives may not become clear until after the initial process has begun.

Identify likely pilot locations and participants for specific activities.

Select the methods and procedures by which the activities will be measured and evaluated.

A post-measure of relevant employee attitudes should be included as well as appropriate performance measures.

When establishing budgets for the branches, ensure that the branches have adequate input. If there are cuts to be made, consult with those responsible for carrying out programs and try to keep some discretionary powers in their hands. Make decision-making a more collegial process wherever possible within the parameters of those who will be most affected by those decisions.

At the appropriate time implement recognition systems for employees who demonstrate excellence in service, quality of work, or some other value that the department wishes to promote. There are many ways of achieving recognition without using money but still having high positive effects. Example, Employee-of-the-Month awards, or Top Employee Award - employees are chosen every quarter and receive certificate and lunch with Minister and/or Deputy Minister. Photos and story printed in newsletter, etc.

Push decision-making to absolute lowest level of expertise possible. Give employees the opportunity to manage more of their own jobs and to make well-informed decisions effecting them.

Note: Performance Appraisals. With a participative management approach the emphasis is on constant feedback with less reliance on forms per se. Therefore, the basic needs can be captured on the form but the responsibility is on the manager or supervisor and to a lesser extent on the employee to ensure that performance appraisals are ongoing.

CRITICAL QUESTION:

Is management in the position - structurally, politically and psychologically - to introduce significant changes based on the results of the survey and other indicators of needs and issues?

PERSONNEL BRANCH

The Personnel Branch should be staffed to the level that they can carry out their present responsibilities to the standard expected of them.

Require the staff to take training in participative management techniques and human resources training in order to assist the department with inculcating the participative management process. In order to be effective they should also be involved in some Team Building exercises in their own branch.

Enhance the profile of the Human Resource group by having them more involved with the planning and decision-making carried out at the Deputy Minister's level concerning employee issues.

The Personnel group should be active and important players in helping direct this approach into the department. By understanding their role and having the responsibility for helping to achieve greater participation they will enhance their image in the department, outside the department and in their own eyes.

Areas for involvement include: Career Development and Career Planning; Job Enrichment Opportunities; Bridging Position; Women's Programs, Establishing vehicles for employee opportunities such as Mentoring, Twinning, Rotating employees through jobs, Developing manager candidates, creating assessment centres, etc.

Establish a training and development coordination function within the Human Resource area of responsibility.

An assessment of training needs for the entire department should be carried out, but not until the managers have greater facility with the participative management approach so that they can make better judgments given added new information about the needs of the department and the employees.

Wherever possible reduce the amount of forms and paperwork that Personnel (Human Resources) are dealing with. This may take several different approaches; reviewing and deleting unnecessary forms, having a clerk do the paperwork for them, computerizing the process wherever possible, etc.

CRITICAL QUESTION:

Is Personnel in a position to provide significant knowledge and skills to help senior management address the issues raised in the survey and to achieve human resource goals that would be formulated?

D. Specific Recommendations

The Mission Statement:

The mission statement, while it says all the right things and demonstrates a lot of effort and thought, doesn't have the vitality and succinct clarity that employees can embrace and relate to. It is a good cornerstone for management and employees to refer to and help guide their actions, however, an effective mission statement must be packaged and sold in a phrase or two. Employees and the public need something that is identifiable and easy to remember. (For Macdonalds' restaurants, it is "convenience", for IBM it is "service").

Recommendations:

Distill the essence from what there is now and produce a "short working version" for employees and the public. Use several different communication vehicles such as logos, pins, and articles in the Express to get the message out.

Create specific activities around the Operating Principles. Assess where gaps are now in the department's ability to carry out these principles and build action plans around each.

The Employee Survey:

The Employee Survey has been very effective in detailing many of the problems being experienced by the department.

It also points out, in an oblique way, the lack of a unifying vision and direction for the department that employees can readily understand and embrace.

The survey demonstrates what appears to be a lack of challenging goals that people understand and can respond to. I sense as well that there is no effective measurement system that provides immediate feedback for projects and individual efforts.

Productive efficiencies depend upon people and their behaviour through well integrated action plans that must get at the core of how the department and employees are managed. An area for further exploration is the DOC's process for developing and disseminating action plans that are understood and accepted by each employee.

This requires attention from the highest possible authority, followed through the department with responsibility of managers to provide direction in administration matters.

Recommendation:

Use the survey as a management tool to require each manager to build into their yearly work plan and budgets the human resource components necessary to enhance the human resource process.

Management commitment

Commitment must be evident, and evident in a structured manner.

In order for management to embrace a participative management approach they must have the opportunity to address issues and needs, including their own. They need to have data that demonstrates where this approach has been effective and where some of the opportunities are for easy integration. They need a process that allows sufficient time to implement change and to shift management styles and methods.

Recommendation:

Establish a three day retreat for senior and middle management which will provide them with the opportunity to learn more about the process and how it relates it to their needs, the employees and the department's.

Structure:

Evident from the survey and the discussions is the segmented nature of the department which has fostered isolationism, created a lack of shared effort, inadequate communications and uncertain responses to directions.

Establishing an integrated participative management process does not require several more layers of people; in fact the process will allow for fewer individuals. The process, in its initial stage, does, however, require someone who will be responsible for facilitating and responding to the questions, needs and special situations that arise and to help integrate the various divisions.

Responsibility for success must be shared throughout the organization, especially within management and, therefore, the individual selected as the facilitator must not be thought of as the only person responsible for the process. The individual selected must have some prominence and stature in the department, preferably at the ADM level and have a reputation as a "comer".

Recommendation:

Ensure that the same high standards and abilities that are applied to policy making decisions by the Assistant Deputy Ministers be applied to administration and staff matters.

Appoint a "facilitator" (reporting to the Deputy) for the participative management process, preferably from the ranks of the ADMs or director level.

Human Resources section

In order for the participative management process to take hold, it is important to have trained individuals to help management guide the process and be directly involved.

This requires that the focus of personnel be directed from the traditional personnel functions to a more innovative and proactive facilitation of the process.

The Human Resource section can greatly advance the process by helping to implement and guide task teams and quality circles and develop more advanced programs in career planning, mentoring, job exchange programs and so on.

This group can also help streamline the work load by working with employees to eliminate unnecessary and obsolete internal rules and procedures.

Recommendation:

Train the personnel group in participative management techniques and increase their involvement with managers in helping to develop and implement human resource plans for their areas of endeavor.

CONCLUSION:

The Department of Communications is to be commended for its initiatives to enhance the use of its human resources.

The Employee Survey has provided a wealth of valuable information and the sharing of the results with the employees has provided the credibility that is necessary for employees to start to "buy-in" to the process.

The next stage is critical to ensure success. This is the planning and sharing of responsibility for the process and the various activities.

By learning more about the process and examining how it can fit into the established work environment, management will feel comfortable with continuing along with the initiatives already begun.

