Examples of good practice relating to developing forward-looking strategies

---

Belgium, Flanders – Helping HRM business partners to align employee engagement studies with HR strategy

Context

Foresight plays an essential role in responding to future needs, risks and challenges at the organisational level. A growing role of HRM is to develop foresight in various aspects of its field, developing a long-term view reshaping organisational culture. In Flanders, foresight has been applied to employee surveys, enabling HR professionals to analyse properly the data collected, and how to use it to design future-proof policies.

Good example

The Flemish Public Service organises an (non-mandatory) employee engagement survey every two years. Up until the 2014 edition of the survey participating entities received an (offline) entity-report and a global report on Flemish Public Service results. In the 2016 edition entities and global HR policy makers also have access to an experimental online reporting tool to make their own reports and additional analyses. Workshops for HR business partners, HR specialists and global HR policy makers are provided by the project team, assisting them to interpret the results, align the outcomes of the study with the HR strategy, and engage both employees and management in converting the outcomes into actions.

The workshop consists of four different parts. The first focuses on a few important issues concerning the interpretation of the reporting. Following this, participants are shown how to make their own reports and additional analyses with the experimental online reporting tool, with a specific focus on the important issues identified in the first part.

The third part focuses on getting the management summary right: what do the numbers and graphs "say", independently of the strategy. The focus is on benchmarking employee engagement on different levels: benchmarking is provided by age groups, gender, organisational entity and by a general mean of all participating entities. Also a benchmark is provided over time, so the evolution on different items becomes apparent. These benchmarks are supported by statistical methods e.g. confidence intervals and box plot methods.

Consequently, focus shifts to HR strategy to deduct which items in the engagement study are most important for a particular organisation and set targets for those items. The project team advises HR professionals to add more metrics from other surveys in the organisation and analyse hard data to enrich the numbers. In that way a pattern can become clear, and the metrics can provide real insights in the organisation. A template is made available for plotting targets against obtained results.

In the last part methods are discussed for engaging both employees and managers for converting numbers into actions. This includes discussion of different roles and the importance of a broad communication and follow-up. Overall, the importance of a long term perspective is stressed throughout the workshop: integrating employee engagement studies in defining HR and

organisational targets, using them in benchmarking the evolution and further organisational development. This also assists in meaningful communication and avoiding a one-shot approach that may be more harmful then helpful.

The workshops and the use of the experimental online reporting tool will be evaluated thoroughly to ensure that the approach helps HR professionals in the Flemish government to take up their role of HR business partners even better. The Flemish HR agency believes the workshops will contribute to the goal of linking HR data with business challenges to build evidence on what benefits are connected to leveraging employee engagement studies. The agency aims to integrate this perception-data, adding more meaningful variables if necessary, with hard HR and organisation data (e.g. illness levels, exit rates) in the next edition (2018).

Find out more

OECD (2016), Engaging Public Employees for a High-Performing Civil Service, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264267190-en.

Canada – The Canadian Central Innovation Hub

Context

Some government labs are tackling this challenge by creating stronger linkages with the executive. The Canadian Central Innovation Hub for example has experienced a shift from project support to positioning in the delivery and results function at the centre of government, providing a stronger case for using different tools as part of civil servants' mainstream thinking when developing policies and services and delivering results for citizens

Good example

The Central Innovation Hub has been running for about a year and a half and is located in the Privy Council Office, which is the department for the Prime Minister and serves as the main policy space for the Prime Minister's Office. The Hub was established to enhance the knowledge of innovative policy approaches and instruments and directly support the development and implementation of innovative programmes and services throughout government. The Hub will soon move to the results and delivery function within the Privy Council Office, allowing its work to be more closely connected with the top priority areas of government and importantly helping emphasise that innovation and using different tools should be part of civil servants' mainstream thinking when delivering results for citizens.

The Hub's objectives are closely aligned with several of the Government's commitments and can serve as a key tool for advancing this agenda. For example, the Government has emphasised the importance of improving implementation through better linkages between policy advice, programme design and delivery; more open and transparent policy-making; innovative policy tools and financing instruments; programme experimentation; and evidence-based policy development.

The Hub currently has three core areas of practice: behavioural insights, data and design. Cutting across these core areas is "Policy development to spark innovation" where the Hub works to provide the policy rationale and create space for the government to pursue more innovative approaches in policy development and implementation.

Through these areas of practice, the Hub has oriented its work to incorporate three horizontal objectives to act as:

- a resource – providing easy access to information on best practices and new tools, approaches, and techniques
- a connector – establishing networks and partnerships between project leads and resources to accelerate departmental work
- an innovation catalyst – working with department to identify and support projects with potential for large scale impact and assess and document results in order to draw system-wide benefits from lessons learned.

In concrete terms the Hub works with agencies on specific projects – whether they are general activities (such as two-hour informational workshops on applying a tool in participants' work) to nine-month projects working with a department. The Hub team has six full-time staff with two to three rotating on a project basis.

After its first year in operation, the Hub produced an evaluation report which focused on early innovation results and efforts made (see below). While the Hub intends to develop more specific metrics to evaluate its impact, the visualisation of early indicators of success can prove a useful communication tool to use across government. Early indicators of success

Find out more

OECD (2017), Innovation Skills in the Public Sector: Building Capabilities in Chile, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing. Paris. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273283-en

Germany – The lifecycle oriented HRM policy of the German Employment Agency

Context

Lifecycle approaches in HRM that include gender and diversity issues (i.e. age), lifelong learning, knowledge management, well-being and motivation may be increasingly required to deliver services to employees and leaders effectively and efficiently. One practical example of an HR strategy in a public agency that brings many of these themes together is Germany's BA, which in 2010 and 2011 received awards from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) for its demographic-sensitive HRM strategy and practices that focus on the ageing workforce. Employee engagement is embedded in this approach to promote staff members' workability (competence, health, and engagement).

Good practice

The lifecycle oriented HR policy of Germany's BA is an intergenerational approach that seeks to enhance the workability of its staff and that focuses on competencies, health and engagement to promote lifelong learning and well-being in the workplace. Requirements to promote lifelong learning also support all measures of fostering sustainable change and innovation. The policy is embedded in an overall strategy to deliver customer-oriented services effectively and efficiently. With this policy, BA pursues a strategy that has high flexibility and the best possible reconciliation of work and private life in comparison with employer interests. The promotion of equal opportunity and gender mainstreaming are also included.

As a result, 61% of employees rated their personal reconciliation of work and private life in an internal survey as good or very good. For almost 80% of staff, equal opportunity policies are very important. Services and tools in BA's intergenerational management approach deliberately target employees at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of their professional careers, and beyond. BA considers this policy, which includes corporate health management and knowledge management, as providing significant leverage to enhancing engagement and motivation, which is known to have a high correlation with customer satisfaction and individual and organisational performance.

Specific measures to bring organisational and individual needs together include: flexible working arrangements, such as part-time, mobile working, and teleworking; a family service to support employees in organising child care and care of relatives; on-the-job training; and a job-re-entry programme after long periods of absence following parental leave.

Find out more

OECD (2016), Engaging Public Employees for a High-Performing Civil Service, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267190-en

Netherlands – Developing the civil service vision

Context

In the Netherlands, the HR Strategy 2020 for Central Public Administration was developed in an interactive process between October 2011 and March 2013. This development not only included senior level public servants, but all willing civil servants. The highlights were included in the reform agenda of the new Minister of Housing and Central Public Administration in May 2013.

Good practice

The process of development started with an in-depth analysis of internal trends and forecasts of personnel development, and external economic, social and technological trends. These included labour market, labour relations and labour conditions, as well as trends that would influence the policy areas and operational management of central public administration.

The Directors of HR and Organisational Development of all ministries, chaired by the director of the central department for civil service of the Ministry of Interior, were responsible for the development of the Strategy 2020. This group met monthly during the first half of 2012 to discuss various areas related to the strategy. Each meeting was prepared by the programme leader from the Ministry of Interior, together with members of this group and external experts. One of the meetings was with the strategic advisors on policy areas of the ministries. The secretaries-general of the ministries and their directors for operational management were asked in individual interviews for their image of the future, and were involved in steering boards for their agreement during several phases of the process.

The strategy began to take shape as a PowerPoint presentation with a lot of background analyses and information, and focused on the main challenges and basic assumptions for future HR-policy development for specific areas. In summer 2012, groups of experts from the ministries and agencies further developed each area to come up with shared ideas and to identify the policies in each area and the inter-connections across areas that needed to be successful.

The evolving presentation was adjusted and expanded in order to be used internally by each ministry. In September 2012, a group of young people from outside the public administration was asked to critically reflect on the draft HR-strategy 2020. In October 2012, the final draft interactive presentation of the HR Strategy 2020 was approved by the directors of HR from all ministries, their directors of operational management and the secretaries-general.

A draft policy paper on the HR Strategy 2020 was developed and posted on the internal website of central public administration in order to engage all civil servants in discussions on the strategy. Individual civil servants, as well as groups or departments from all over the central public administration, works councils and unions, sent their responses and suggestions. Finally, the (political) highlights became part of the reform agenda in May 2013. A flyer and a video were made to inform all civil servants. The HR Strategy 2020 continues to provide the framework for policy development in specific HR areas or topics, and after several years a process to update the strategy will be launched.

Find out more

OECD (2017), Skills for a High Performing Civil Service, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264280724-en