KPA 3: Human Resources Management

Human Resources Management is primarily concerned with how people are managed within organisations, focusing on the plans, policies and systems which maximise performance to achieve strategic objectives. The quality of HRM has a significant influence on the overall performance of an organisation and its ability to deliver services. A major portion of departmental budgets is spent on human resources and effective planning for workforce needs as well aligning skills, roles and responsibilities to departmental objectives is essential to ensure value for the investment.

Compliance in with respect to KPA 3: HRM is monitored through 11 standards clustered in four key areas: HR strategy and planning, HR resource practices and administration, performance management, and employee relations. These standards are strongly interrelated and one impacts on another. The good practice cases in this KPA focus on three specific standards:

1. Organisational development - Departments comply with the requirements for consultation, approval and funding of their organisation structure
2. Recruitment and retention - Departments have recruitment practices that adhere to regulatory requirements and retention strategies are in line with generally acceptable management standards
3. Discipline Management - Departments manage disciplinary cases within the prescribed policies and ensure implementation of recommendations

Departments were chosen on the basis that their management practices showed significant improvement in the standard identified. The following departments were good practice cases:

- Organisational Design: The Northern Cape Department of Social Development *'Positioning to Deliver for the War on Poverty'*
- Organisational Design: National Department of Energy *'Rome Wasn't Built in a Day'*
- Recruitment and Retention: National Department of GCIS *'Going Beyond the Call of Duty'*
- Recruitment and Retention: Northern Cape Department of Roads and Public Works *'On the Road to Improvement'*
- Discipline Management: KwaZulu Natal Department of Economic Development and Tourism *'The Cunning Fox: Picking a path through the mountain of challenges'*
- Discipline Management: National Department of Mineral Resources *'Building responsible managers: Leave 10111, I can do this myself'*

People performing well are behind the service delivery targets that Departments are meeting. People – individuals, teams, leaders – are what make organisations tick; without people, an organisation is an empty shell. People enable an organisation to achieve its purpose: it is in this light that HRM becomes central. While some departments recognise this and have experienced the benefits, the spectrum of leadership support ranged from being merely cooperative to a very assertive backing of HR function. More needs to be done to bring HRM onto the strategic agenda across the Public Service.

However, gaps still remain. High-performing departments require greater flexibility within the policy frameworks to ensure continual improvement in their performance. Generally, internal and external engagement needs to be recognised earlier in planning and implementation processes. Finally, while departments will only benefit from the formalisation of good practice guidelines and tools if they are adapted to their specific context, there needs to be far greater knowledge-sharing and learning in HRM across the public service to build a system-wide culture of high performance in the management of the government's most valuable resource: its people.

Policy and Planning

A comprehensive national policy framework drives compliance: Every aspect of HRM is highly regulated, requiring strict compliance to well-established legislation. These policies provide a solid framework within which HRM operates. Some even outline the steps to reach the set targets, such DPSA's comprehensive 'Guidelines and Toolkit in Organisational Design', which incorporates all elements of policy compliance within the manual's operational steps. The fact that such policies exist has been an important factor, often a catalyst, in mobilising Departments to improve their management practice, through recognition that compliance is essential. In some instances, this has triggered processes that went beyond compliance because the policy also provided expected standards – such as the completion of disciplinary cases within 90 days - building the causal link between compliance and performance.

National policy provides the foundation for contextual adaptation: External policy guidelines provide the foundation from which Departments can leverage to meet their needs. Adapting these policies to the nuances of each Department's unique operating context is an important aspect of ensuring their relevance to meeting Department-specific objectives. A common thread within high-performing Departments was their focus on evidence-based HR planning and implementation. For example, this approach has driven the GCIS to set ambitious recruitment turn-around targets of just two months, compared to the DPSA four-month standard, and to develop a highly progressive maternity policy specific to its young staff demographic. However, some Departments felt constrained in their ability to adequately adapt policies to their context, due to inflexibilities in the existing national policy framework.

Has HR arrived on the strategic agenda? Departments that recognised the true value of people in the delivery of their services have positioned HR as a key pillar of the strategic agenda. They have ensured that their HR approach supports and develops its staff, and provides the tools and operating environment to perform. Such Departments have been able to make strong links between the management of people and the meeting of organisational objectives. It can be difficult to demonstrate the causal link between HR and service delivery, but if people fulfil the department's purpose, then it is evident that HRM is the key to unlocking people's potential to do this.

Processes and resources

Tools are essential in meeting organisational targets: Departments require people to perform in order to meet the country's many service delivery needs. HR units have developed a raft of tools to ensure people deliver on their targets. Most are internally-developed and informal, but provide the crucial backbone to people's work. Such tools can: a) provide people with the necessary steps to meet targets and improve quality; b) ensure consistent documentation of processes; and c) track and monitor performance against set time-frames, enabling pro-active responses to be taken before deadlines are missed.

Streamlining speeds up delivery: Promoting the use of parallel processes has helped some Departments to significantly cut target turnaround times – such as capturing candidate profiles onto the system as applications are received, or submitting profiles for verification at the time of interviewing. Other effective efforts to cut red tape have including shortening time frames, the use of the open-door policy for immediate sign-off on documents, and up-skilling staff through specialised training to reduce the amount of external input required in HR processes.

Lack of resources is not necessarily a constraint: HR processes are often carried out by small teams with few resources. However, the main resource a Department possesses is its people, who if skilled and driven, can achieve remarkable results with few financial resources. Departments that demonstrated resource innovation, used multiple responsibilities as an opportunity to integrate their work, or trusted internal capacity over outsourcing, reaped the benefits later.

Leadership and consistency of purpose

A high performance culture requires 'top down' engagement: Effective HRM requires the proactive involvement and support of senior leadership. HR units that engaged senior leadership both conceptually and at an operational level managed to ensure leadership's comprehensive understanding of HRM in context. With leadership support in: integrating HRM into strategic planning, providing the tools to deliver, tracking performance and the enforcement of corrective actions for non-performance, Departments create an expectation that people are expected to perform at the top of their game. Such expectation can build a sense of purpose around service delivery to citizens and each individual's contribution to achieving this.

Team spirit at the heart of HR units' successes: while leadership can support, only the HR team can get the work done. HR units that have inspiring, supportive leaders and strong team players who work closely together and are able to engage with people across the organisation are able to optimise their performance. The importance of a 'team' or a 'family' culture in the workplace was not only highlighted by Departments themselves, but was felt by the interview team. The way in which people interact in their work affects the entire HR team's passion, work satisfaction and ability to deliver.

Understanding what drives us: When individuals take full responsibility for delivery, then action follows, particularly when there are consequences for non-delivery and rewards for success. But individuals are also driven by their own work ethics, such as responsibility,

self-respect, perfectionism, humility, and improving the delivery of services. A Department which understands and nurtures what drives people allows them to thrive.

Staff and stakeholder engagement

Invest in competent people: Departments which ensured that HR unit was staffed by competent people and prioritised their up-skilling where necessary, were able to trust in the unit, rather than outsourcing HR matters to consultants. For example, the KZN DEDT HR Unit ensured that its Labour Relations team had a system-wide understanding of HR, and a specialized knowledge of LR to ensure maximum effectiveness in the Department. Maintaining internally-driven HRM processes, such as for organisational design, was highlighted as crucial for people's buy-in and support of HR initiatives.

HRM requires extensive engagement: Management processes for HR can only be implemented effectively if there is a hand-in-hand approach with staff and stakeholders both internally and externally. Consultation and engagement is paramount during HR planning and implementation stages and throughout change management initiatives. Successful HR units take the time to bring everyone on board. Many learn the hard way by initially omitting to consult, but several Departments experienced that it pays off to take the time to go back and rectify this. In particular, where Labour Unions were engaged from the outset, HR units were able to manage relationships, avoid bottlenecks and work more successfully together.

Guiding people to address Service Delivery: HR management requires supporting a culture in which each individual recognises their role in contributing to meeting the objective of quality service delivery. HR can do this by ensuring its own organisational design reflects the needs of communities benefiting from the Departments services, by engaging with the Labour Unions and ensuring staff are afforded the best possible support in carrying out its work, and by promoting the principles and codes that guide the Public Service.

ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT

NORTHERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: POSITIONING TO DELIVER FOR THE WAR ON POVERTY[1]

It is truly remarkable what a team of two people can achieve with the right approach, the right tools and the right leadership support. The Department of Social Development (DSD) of the Northern Cape has completed a thorough organizational re-design that has placed it squarely in a position to deliver essential services to communities across the province and ultimately to take up the fight in the war on poverty.

The department began with introspection, recognizing that their organizational Design (OD) structure impeded the effective fulfilment of the organisation's objectives. It was creative in its approach, while remaining true to every step in the DPSA's indispensable Guidelines and Toolkit in Organisational Design. The team took OD beyond its typical internal boundaries and out into communities, asking households directly about their biggest needs, ensuring that this analysis directly informed the design and nuances of the structure itself. This cemented a direct link between the department's objectives, its organizational framework, and the recipients of the department's services. Critically, the process enjoyed the support of dedicated, inspirational senior leaders throughout the four (check) years it took to complete. The OD team saw consultation as a top priority, testing out their designs, presenting their drafts and progress regularly to key decision-makers and formulating the need for specific changes with concrete, well-researched facts and analysis. This process took time, and while the team has exploited this to develop a long-term approach, it has simultaneously maintained a dynamic determination that has ensured its effective completion. Their experience teaches us that:

- If structure follows strategy, one must create a direct and explicit link between OD and meeting the needs of communities
- Leadership support is crucial in change management processes
- Following the DPSA toolkit is essential, allowing the flexibility to be innovative within a clear framework
- Continual consultation to solicit input and to justify decisions based on empirical evidence, ensures organisation-wide buy-in throughout the process

DSD believes there is still room for improvement. It would like to see a leaner top and fatter bottom to its structure, which can be done through regular OD review. It would also like to see greater staff capacity to carry out the OD function in the Department.

Context and background

Back in 2008, the President at the time announced that a War on Poverty campaign would be initiated and run from the office of the Deputy President. The National War Room would bring together government departments and would "work with NGOs and business to identify the interventions required in specific households and implement them as a

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[1] This case study was drafted for by Bridget Steffen and Dinesh Budhram from the Wits School of Governance at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. The series is edited by Professor Anne Mc Lennan.

matter of urgency."[2] At the provincial level, the Northern Cape Department of Social Development has used the War on Poverty campaign as a foundation on which all its work is based. The Premier for the Northern Cape confirms that:

> *"Our Social Development Department is tasked with the responsibility to tackle the daily challenges afflicting the most poor and vulnerable in our society. Clearly the war against-poverty campaign is part of government's overall attempt to improve the livelihood of our people in general."* [3]

The DSD's purpose is to ensure the provision of integrated developmental social services.[4] It is driven by a mission to ensure the provision of social protection services against vulnerability and poverty and to create an enabling environment for sustainable development. In the spirit of Ubuntu, DSD's values relate to non-discrimination, partnering with stakeholders, transparency, accountability and in sharing knowledge and expertise. Rounding these values off is a focus on delivery a quality service to the citizens of South Africa in line with the Constitution.

In the 2012/13 financial year the department had a total budget of just below R532 million.[5] With 1257 staff spread across a head office in Kimberley and district offices in the Northern Cape Province, DSD focuses on four policy priorities: protecting the poor, youth development, crime prevention and building cohesive, caring and sustainable communities. The department's Balepa War on Poverty campaign is an award-winning programme that determined the basket of services required at the individual household level. The number of beneficiaries participating in socio-economic initiatives grew from 92 to 182 between 2010 and 2012. The number of income generating opportunities created through sustainable livelihoods initiatives grew to 1169 in 2012 from 478 in 2009.[6]

The Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) of the South African government revealed that the department performed well in the area of organization design. The department's MPAT score improved from 3 in the previous year to 4 in the current analysis. This achievement shows that beyond implementing an approved organization structure that is in line with the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, the department has also ensured that the structure is based on an assessment of functions and that it has been reviewed periodically.

The need for change - 'Our structure was unable to deliver'

Following the elections in 2009, President Jacob Zuma made a speech in which he outlined his service delivery plan. The government's Medium Term Strategic Framework translated the election manifesto into 12 outcomes for "An efficient, effective and development oriented Public Service and an empowered, fair and inclusive citizenship". The Delivery Agreement, which combines commitments made by key government departments to improve on service delivery, includes Human Resource Management and Development as one of its key strategic areas in meeting this objective.

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[2] State of the Union Address, Thabo Mbeki, February 2008
[3] State of the Province Address by the Premier, 21 February 2014
[4] Annual Report DSD: Northern Cape, 2012/13
[5] ibid
[6] ibid

In addition, the new Outcome to Health initiative was launched, which required a clean-up of the PERSAL system. For the Northern Cape's DSD, it was these key policy developments, alongside the War on Poverty campaign that began the process of change in the design of their organizational structure, which in its previous form, was unable to deliver on these outcomes.

The MEC at the time solicited recommendations from the department; he wanted to find creative solutions that would ensure compliance. This led to the creation of 480 new posts. Later in 2010 (check), a new MEC inherited these posts, which had remained vacant. Thereafter, at a major strategic planning workshop in which HR featured prominently on the agenda, he questioned the viability of the posts. Following a vacancies study by the OD team, a resolution was passed to abolish them and to begin a formal OD process of decentralisation.
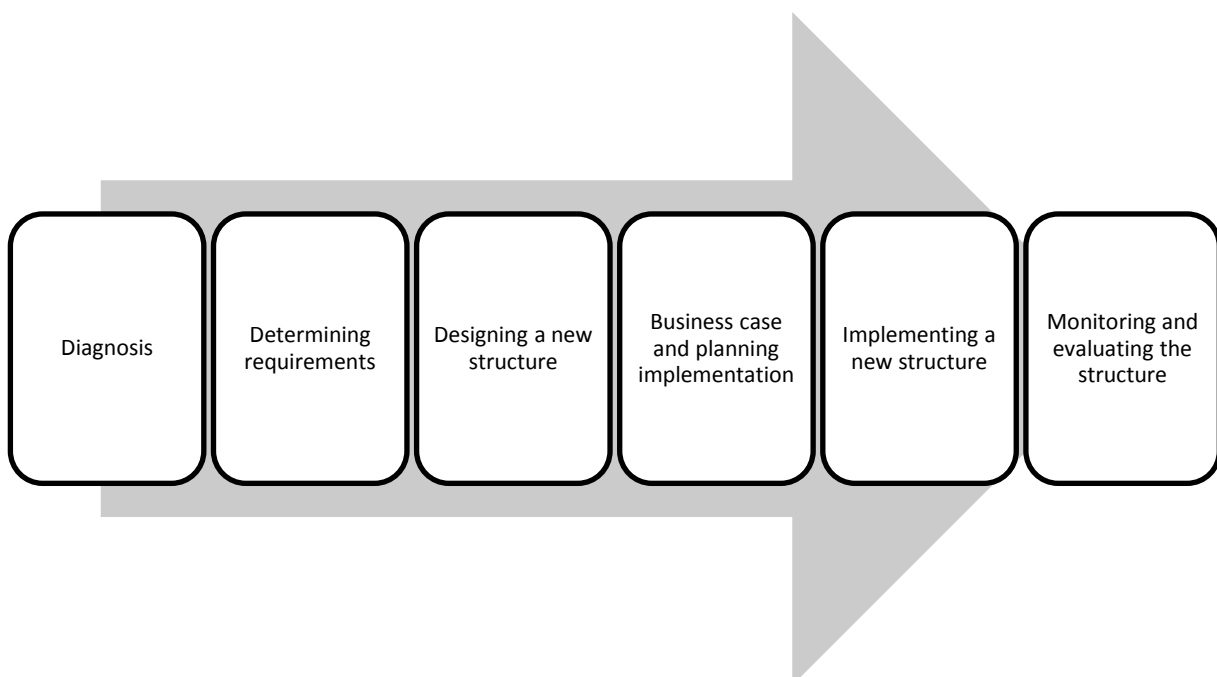
> *"The new MEC held a two-day strategic planning for the next five years. He wanted everything to be presented, it was a great moment for the department; it was the best strategic planning the department has ever done."*

Understanding the practice

Policy Compliance through the use of effective tools

OD policy is effectively guided by the DPSA's 'Guide and Toolkit on Organisational Design', which outlines six major phases in the OD process, underpinned by good project management and change management processes.

The major steps in an effective organisational design process

Diagnosis	Determining requirements	Designing a new structure	Business case and planning implementation	Implementing a new structure	Monitoring and evaluating the structure

In addition, the Framework for Managing Joint Programmes provides the principles and mechanisms for managing joint/crosscutting programmes, and several directives and circulars stipulate that the DPSA must be consulted during OD processes, and must approve any new OD structure before implementation.

The Northern Cape's DSD OD planning process ensured policy compliance by following the DPSA's Guide and Toolkit to the letter. They found this useful in guiding their planning processes and in ensuring consultation at every stage. In addition, the OD team used a new nationally-developed generic Social Welfare OD structure as a starting point. However, they were acutely aware of the need to adapt this to their specific context in order to ensure effective service delivery.

One step at a time – A planning process directly linked to service delivery needs

From the outset, the Northern Cape DSD explicitly aimed to build an organizational structure that would be in the best possible position to deliver services to its citizens province-wide. This service delivery focus informed the entire analysis, planning and decision-making process in determining what the new DSD structure would look like.

> **Northern Cape in the Context of Social Development**
>
> Northern Cape is the largest province in South Africa, requiring social welfare teams to cover vast distances to diagnose and meet the diverse and often critical needs of often sparse populations. The now dwindling diamond industry, which was the economic backbone of the province, has left widespread poverty and inequality in its wake. One town, De Aar, has one of the highest rates of

Employing this user-centred method required an unusually hands-on, externally-focused approach for a team that is typically viewed as desk-bound and internal in focus. As one OD team member recalls,

> *"We needed to look at the issues to develop the structure, to work out what should really influence our HR numbers. Our structure was developed to address specific issues in the different areas of the province. We spent a few months assessing and analysing the situation. Those from the communities were in the best position to give us the information we needed, including their challenges, which influenced our organisational structure."*

The OD team visited communities across the province and conducted surveys to get a comprehensive understanding of the needs. With the facts gathered and the subsequent analysis of the organisation's HR needs, the OD team was able to present a strong case for every aspect of the new design of the structure.

The design focused on decentralization and strengthening the capacity of the districts, increasing the number of social workers at the coal face and developing a leaner provincial management. Each step was presented to the MEC for sign-off, ensuring he was informed throughout the process.

At a second strategic planning session in which their plans were presented, the OD team initially met with resistance. Crucially, **the MEC made a speech that justified, with the facts and analysis, what the Department was planning to do**.

Recognising internal capacity and the importance of consultation

The department made a conscious decision that the entire OD process would be handled internally because they possessed the requisite capacity and no consultants were

brought in. While the team was small, they were experienced, and their responsibilities and experience beyond OD ensured an integrated approach.

The OD team was proactive in ensuring involvement from the whole department. It consulted senior management, particularly the MEC, throughout the process. It held one-on-one sessions with senior management and the executive to analyse needs, plans and implications. Junior and middle management were also an integral part of the fact-finding process. The OD team went to each district to identify and test managers' needs.

> *"We spent several days in each district to know exactly the functions and duties of each post. We did boardroom meetings where we plotted manager's needs and made unscheduled visits to employee's workstations to get a sense of how they were utilized, to get employees views as well. We also tested OD efficiency and effectiveness through looking at resources, customer care, ergonomics etc."*

Towards the end of the process, the team conducted briefings and consultations with unit-based teams and once the structure was drafted, the OD team briefed all managers, justifying the decisions that had been made. The team realized that where resistance to the process existed, it was often because managers feared that they would lose their jobs. The Head of Department (HOD) assigned management teams to take responsibility for being change agents to influence those within their domain, and the consultation sessions were used to address these fears and misconceptions directly.

> *"Manager's fears were dealt with in those sessions. You have to be a change agent in those discussions, you don't just want to change the structure, you want managers to own the structure."*

Once the structure was drafted, the department consulted the labour unions and presented its proposals. It was able to base its presentation on the extensive fact-finding and analysis, which ensured the unions' support.

Engaging leadership and strengthening accountability

The department has a strong philosophy of working closely as a team and going beyond the call of duty. One official described the Northern Cape's DSD as a family. This approach, with its open door policy was important for the OD process, ensuring leadership was approachable, but also willing to immediately resolve any issues directly with those involved. The OD team nurtured this relationship further by inviting senior management engagement at a very practical level. Senior managers took part in conducting surveys at community level to understand people's needs on the ground, which forced them to consider its implications for their department.

Ultimately, the MEC was instrumental conceptually and in terms of implementation. As one HR official commented,

> *"The guidance given by the MEC has allowed the department to really safely come to a situation of implementation. In my role, I often see the negligence to discuss support roles at strategic planning because the strategic direction takes precedent... What was important was we had senior management support, we weren't fighting against them. That's how we could succeed."*

Giving OD a place at the strategic table had implications not just for OD but for the coherence of the department as a whole. It ensured that the OD plan was developed with clear links to the overall strategic plan as well as the budget, which ensured its feasibility and made it indispensable in the implementation of the department's objectives.

> *"There was a good link between the budget, the HR strategy and the strategic direction of the department."*

Concrete Results

OD progress was closely monitored by the senior leadership by affording it high strategic priority and through its own pro-active engagement with the process. OD was given a fixed agenda item in monthly senior management meetings, where the team was expected to report on progress against every stage of the process. On an annual basis, the team was also required to present their progress to the Executive Committee against the resolutions made as part of the 5-year strategic plan.

Now, the results are beginning to be felt both internally and externally. Internally, managers are actively consulting the structure for their HR management. As one manager explained,

> *"When I arrived here, everything was already completed. Now we needed to implement. The approach is to consult the structure before doing the advert and appointing. Whatever we do, it must be in line with this structure now".*

Externally, there are more social workers at the coal face able to respond to the needs of communities. De Aar has seen a 30% reduction in FAS between 2010 and 2012 through a Northern Cape DSD pilot programme. It is always difficult to attribute specific results directly to OD. However, increasing coal-face staff, task-shifting to up-skill community volunteers, and the establishment of a 24-hour service will certainly have contributed to a new working approach in De Aar. A new approach across the Northern Cape has put the DSD in a better position to fight its war on poverty.

Lessons learned

The practices exemplified by the DSD in Northern Cape have much to teach other departments embarking on an OD process. The department was able to ensure full policy compliance by following each step in the DPSA 'Guide and Toolkit in Organisational Design'. However, this was only possible because the toolkit was in itself such a useful tool in guiding them through the process. While it provided the appropriate framework, it also allowed the team the flexibility and creativity that they required in their approach to ensure that they maintained a direct link between their design process and the delivery of social services to communities across the province. The OD team demonstrated that creating this explicit link between OD and service delivery is operationally essential, and strategically logical, when one considers that structure must follow strategy. By further making the links between OD, departmental strategy and budgets, it helped to ensure that OD implementation would be fully inculcated into the organization, both strategically and practically.

Creating such links was only possible because of **the sustained engagement of senior leadership, which afforded OD a seat at the strategic table**. Organizational reporting processes ensured that regular feedback on progress was solicited at every stage and that the process remained on track. **Leadership provided the engagement and backing that the team needed to engage every level of the department in a process of change management**.

Consultation within and particularly beyond the department sets the OD team apart as going beyond the call of duty in its approach to building an organization that can position itself effectively in the war against poverty. By speaking directly to people about their specific needs in communities across the province, as well as speaking to managers and staff within the organization, **the team built a comprehensive foundation of evidence on** which to base its organizational design. It ensured that the structure reflected functions and not people's wishes or political pressure: Having such concrete facts helped in justifying choices during ongoing consultations and enhanced manager's engagement in the change management process.

> *"What makes our department different is that we have a team of officials that go beyond the call of duty who wouldn't mind sacrificing their own to serve others. In terms of OD, the brief was to design the structure, but the officials went beyond that because they wanted to know the specific elements to inform the final structure to improve efficiency in dpt. They didn't just look at the numbers. It wasn't just a desktop study to put numbers and blocks in an organogram; we looked at the details that would influence those numbers".*

However, challenges remain in the department. The OD team is small and it had no extra resources to carry out the OD process. Greater staff capacity would help in the ongoing implementation of the OD function in the department. Interestingly, the team also saw the minimal resources as an opportunity. According to one team member,

> *"Resources were spread thin, but this was also an opportunity. The head of OD was also responsible for performance management. Usually this would lead to a dilution of efforts but in this case it also afforded the OD team a wider perspective, which facilitated integration."*

Organisational design requires constant review and the team would like to see an even leaner top and fatter bottom to the structure going forward. Furthermore, they felt that they could have done more to address people's fears about redundancy from the very beginning of the process.

ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT

NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY: ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY

The Department of Energy (DoE) learnt the hard way that Rome wasn't built in a day when it split from the Department of Mineral Resources and created its own Ministry. The department leapt forward too hastily in its Organisational Design (OD), only to stumble and fall. It had to begin all over again. By the second attempt, it had learnt that OD requires processes to be followed thoroughly. This time round, the team's meticulous attention to compliance with each step in the process, and its perseverance in tackling the challenges it faced along the way, eventually produced an effective structure directly linked to organizational objectives.

The DE's experience teaches us not only the importance of fully exploiting effective tools to ensure compliance with the regulations and standards, but that if one jumps any stage in the OD process, it will fail because it needs to be done thoroughly. This process also took time because of frequent unseen delays often as a result of insufficient initial consultation. It required dedication from a small two-person team with limited resources but abundant passion and a keen streak for innovation. It enjoyed conceptual and hands-on engagement from senior leadership, who also scrutinized it through regular monitoring mechanisms.

The DoE's practice could have been improved by developing a clear approach from the outset that laid out how it would consult with stakeholders within and beyond the organization. This may have led to earlier buy-in by staff in the Department and would have enhanced its change management processes. The Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA) Guidelines and Toolkit in Organisational Design, which the team used to design and implement its OD plan, could also be improved by incorporating the concept of change management into the process from the start, rather than as a chapter at the end.

Context and background

In May 2009, President Jacob Zuma announced that two new units, namely the Department of Mineral Resources and the Department of Energy (DE), would replace the Department of Minerals and Energy. The Department of Energy's creation was followed in November of that year by the signing into law of the Energy Act. The act has a focus on ensuring that diverse energy resources are available in support of economic growth and poverty alleviation.[7] In the words of the Minister of the Department of Energy:

> *"The Department of Energy has the responsibility of ensuring security of energy supply, in various forms, to benefit all South Africans. Energy security is not only about uninterrupted availability of energy at affordable prices, it is also about funding future investments today."* [8]

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[7] www.energy.gov.za accessed: 9th May 2014
[8] DE Annual Report 2012/13

The DE is mandated to ensure secure and sustainable provision of energy for socio-economic development.[9] It is driven by a mission to regulate and transform the sector to provide secure, sustainable and affordable energy. With a spirit of *Batho Pele* and Ubuntu, the DE unites around the common values of ethics, honesty, integrity, accountability and professionalism. Rounding these values off is a focus on delivery a quality service to the citizens of South Africa in line with the Constitution.

In the 2012/13 financial year the department had a total budget of just below R6.8 billion.[10] With about 560 staff spread across a head office in Pretoria and branches in all nine provinces, the DE focuses on six primary programmes: administration, energy policy and planning, energy regulation, electrification, nuclear energy and clean energy.[11] The department had notable achievements beginning with unqualified audit reports over the past two years. The Director General (DG) for Energy confirms further achievements as having managed to:

> *"Develop policies and programmes designed to meet government's objectives, including ensuring energy security in the liquid fuels and electricity sectors. We have also developed energy efficiency and demand side management programmes to reduce energy wastage and greenhouse gas emissions."* [12]

The Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) of the South African government revealed that the department performed well in the area of Organizational Design (OD). The department's MPAT score improved from 2 in the previous year to 4 in the current analysis. This achievement shows that beyond implementing an approved organization structure that is in line with the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, the department has also ensured that the structure is based on an assessment of functions and that it has been reviewed periodically.

Understanding the practice

Teething Problems

Until 2009, Energy was a branch within the Department of Minerals and Energy. When it split to become a Ministry in its own right, the development of an entirely new structure, with its own organizational culture, was required. The department was officially opened in 2010 with a structure that was finalized rapidly as a result of political pressures, without properly consulting the DPSA. It reflected a product-focused structure, while the department was trying to break down its silos and embrace an integrated approach to better respond to the changing environment of the energy sector. Thus, the structure was not ideally matched to the needs of a more process-focused department, nor did it have the blessing of the DPSA. The department was required to go back to the drawing board and start again, which eventually enabled a much more in-depth process to determine the final structure.

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[9] DE Revised Strategic Plan 2011/12 to 2015/16
[10] DE Annual Report 2012/13
[11] DE Annual Performance Plan 2013/14
[12] DE Annual Report 2012/13

Policy and planning adhering strictly to DPSA guidelines

The policies and regulations governing OD are clearly established. The DPSA has developed a comprehensive Guide and Toolkit in Organisational Design, which when followed, ensures compliance with all relevant policy. Particularly important are the DPSA Directives regarding consultation, which require the department to consult with DPSA at key stages of the process. Failing this, the DPSA will not authorize organizational changes in departmental structures. There are also Public Service Regulations that guide the shifting of funds etc, which are relevant to the OD implementation process. The DE found the toolkit essential in ensuring all DPSA requirements were met. As one OD team member explained,

> *"We went by the book from A to Z. Compliance was the name of the game."*

The toolkit also ensured that there was concurrence between the OD strategy and the Ministry's overall strategy. OD was in the department's strategic plan from the outset and remains there still, alongside the Annual Performance Plan.

The planning process was divided into two stages: initially, the team developed the high-level macro-structure with its line functions. Four years after the department was established, the support structure is still in the final stages of completion.

Organising processes and resources

The department was confident that the requisite OD skills existed within the organization, even if it would be a new experience for most of the team. Thus, the department decided that the entire OD process would be internal. No consultants were used at any stage, which allowed the team to grow and the department to fully own the process. As one OD team member explained,

> *"The skills were there in the team, though certain things were learning curves. For some of us it was the first time we were involved in a massive restructuring and matching and placing of staff. But we had the skills and following the guidelines made it easier."*

In the initial plans, the process was set to take x years. In reality, it is still ongoing five years later. Key steps in the DE's OD process included:
1. Diagnosis (DPSA sign-off to conduct OD): 6 months
2. Determining requirements (Consultation and communication strategy): xx months?
3. Designing a new structure (meetings with senior management, branches, labour unions and drafting of final proposal): 12 months
4. Business case and planning implementation (defining grading structures, Job Descriptions, planning the matching and placing process): xx months?
5. Implementing a new structure (Migration of employees to new line structure): 14 months
6. M&E – ongoing review

These steps were facilitated by mechanisms that enabled adequate consultation, communication and monitoring at all levels of the organization.

Resources were scarce during all steps in the process. However, this led to a critical innovation within the department when the OD team turned their limited funding into an opportunity. Rather than waiting for Treasury, the DE established it is own mechanism, the Departmental Organizational Development Committee (DODC) to improve the planning and use of limited resources. The DODC, which meets quarterly, helps to streamline tight budgets, enables savings and prioritizes surpluses to fund new posts within the structure. It is attended by members of the senior leadership including the HR Director and Chief Director, and chaired by the DDG of Cooperate Services, which ensures their support and decision-making in prioritizing OD implementation.

> *"Between 2013 and 2014, we have managed to fund 91 posts through the DODC mechanism, which is a lot considering the history. Once savings are identified, they are directed into funding new posts. We moved from 500 to almost 900 posts in the last…(GET FIGURES). It's not a requirement by DPSA or any legislation, it's a Departmental initiative. DODC also helps to streamline functions. If inadequate funding, we look at how to streamline the funding we have."*

Leadership and consistency of purpose

OD is a priority area that remains at the forefront of the organisation's strategic objectives. This is as a result of strong buy-in from key people within the department's leadership, particularly the DDG of Corporate Services as well as DGs and CDs both conceptually and in terms of their support with OD implementation. The DOCD mechanism, as well as OD presentations at EXCO and MANCO meetings ensures that they are brought around the table to engage regularly with, and fully understand, the ongoing process.

> *"Leadership has supported the process from the outset. The OD team is a strategic partner to the department. This means you need the branch head to understand OD issues to bring in other line function heads. We are fortunate that our head (up to the Director) understands the OD functions. If leadership doesn't understand what you do, OD would not go anywhere."*

While senior leadership has been supportive, the operational implementation has to come from a highly competent team. It is the passion, competence and transparent approach of the six-person team, and the trust placed in it by the department that allows the plan to be effectively executed. The OD Director describes the team as a community:

> *"There is a strong team spirit amongst us. We don't let anyone drown alone. With our projects I'm hands on, we help each other. I get their inputs for proposals and they do the same with me. I ensure consolidation and I give direction, but in our working arrangement there is no boss and subordinates. We are a team."*

The team has developed good working relationships across the organization, ensuring that they can engage easily with people at every level of the structure.

Capacity and involvement of staff and stakeholders

Initially the OD communication process was rushed and staff was not fully informed that changes would be taking place. However, the team soon realized that a communication strategy was crucial to OD's success. From this point, the team made communication a key priority throughout the process in order to develop ownership for organisational changes. The unit undertook a culture survey across the Department and started presenting at

quarterly DG meetings, to MANCO and to EXCO. Their strategy used various techniques such as meetings where they made announcements regarding plans and how to feedback into the process, workshops and focus group sessions. They frequently used the intranet to communicate internally.

Externally, the department engaged the labour unions only in the second phase of the process, which created major challenges and took time. The department approached the unions at the beginning of 2012 once the macro structure had been agreed by EXCO and as the subordinate structure was under development.

> *"We had a lengthy meeting with the Labour unions, sitting the whole day and by late afternoon we had still not reached agreement. In the second phase when we consulted with them, they had problems with the phase one framework. We had to understand one another and we had to get them to accept phase one. We learnt we should have involved them from the start of the journey and it would have been smoother. It was a marathon of meetings to get the buy-in we needed."*

By recognizing the need for greater consultation with the unions and all the branches and by following this through, Labour allowed the department to proceed with the process.

Service and citizen focus

It can be a challenge to see a clear link between OD and the direct impact on services to citizens. However, the way the structure has been designed, with the organizational strategy at its core, has ensured certain coherence between the department's design and its ultimate goal.

The OD process has developed a structure in which the line functions are represented clearly in terms of the country's current energy demands. The support functions, in a separate pillar of the structure, have a clear understanding that they are there to ensure effective delivery by the other departments. This structure is simple and clear and ensures that the department as a whole remains relevant to tackling the country's energy challenges.

Results

Various mechanisms exist within the department to monitor compliance and progress and to hold people accountable. The efforts of the OD team have been regularly scrutinized in meetings such as with the Management Committee and Executive committee, as well as through their own regular team meetings. As one OD team highlighted,

> *"MANCO and EXCO meetings are platforms for performance reporting against objectives. This is where red lights flash early enough to rectify what is needed. If we didn't have that platform, you would only realize too late in the last month of the quarter that achievements were not met and that blockages could have been avoided."*

The implementation process is still ongoing through the matching and placement of staff and the team believes it is too early to measure the full impact of their work. However, initial indications from the innovative DODC mechanism suggest that the department's proactive stance to OD implementation has led to the rapid filling of dozens of new positions without the need for external resources (numbers placed in past year, number

still to be placed?). In addition, according to the OD team, the process has developed a more direct link between compliance and performance in the way the organization is structured:

> *"How we operated before, the lines of accountability were not clear in terms of departmental targets. The new structure tries to define lines between branches in terms of responsibility, responding directly to performance."*

Lessons learned

The DE has highlighted the dangers of running ahead of oneself in undertaking organizational design. Building the right foundation is essential. As the head of OD put it,

> *"The first steps in the process are crucial. If you don't get them right you will have challenges going forward. The OD process depends on the previous steps."*

The department's OD process took longer than they had originally anticipated and they experienced challenges particularly where corners were cut in consultation processes. During the first OD process, not consulting the DPSA required an entire re-start, and in the second process, their lack of an effective communication strategy from the outset caused some initial internal resistance from staff, as well as drawn-out negotiations with the labour unions. The department was fully aware that OD is the organisation's prerogative because the department is ultimately responsible for ensuring it is in an effective position to deliver its services. With this approach in the first stage, unions were not consulted. The department learnt that such an attitude with external stakeholders was not conducive, adopting instead an approach of mutual engagement and transparency to build their support.

Out of these experiences, the department made communications and inclusivity a top priority, consulting and communicating at every possible opportunity. Thus, by recognizing mistakes through regular review and conscious self-reflection, the department was able to address the challenges, rectify issues from re-occurring and continually improve its approach.

Another key lesson that the department has brought to light is the need to see scarce resources as opportunities for innovation, rather than constraints to one's work. By establishing the DODC to streamline budgets, the OD team was able to engage leadership at an operational level in the OD process and speed up the implementation stage with the funding of new posts through the prioritisation of surpluses.

The leadership demonstrated that trust in one's own staff to undertake OD without external consultants pays off. They dared to take risks with a highly competent but arguably inexperienced team and the DPSA toolkit proved to be a highly effective tool in plugging the gaps in experience. By methodically following the toolkit to the letter, the OD team was able to create an entirely new structure and comply with all relevant policy in spite of any limitations in their professional experience. Through this process, the department cultivated the effectiveness of its internal capacity and ensured organizational ownership of the final plans.

At a policy level, the Department has demonstrated exemplary compliance through the creation of its current structure. The OD team was proud to say,

> *"We have challenges, but in terms of performance the department has been doing well. As administrators you are always fighting to comply and there will always be challenges. These always need managing, but in terms of compliance with government policy we have been doing well."*

However, the question remains to be answered whether such policy compliance - even when it goes beyond the expectation of policy as was the case with the DODC - leads directly to performance or an improvement in results.

Finally, a recognition that thorough organizational design takes time is crucial not only for the OD team to understand, but for senior leadership as well. OD must remain a strategic objective for the full duration of the process in order to be effectively implemented throughout the department. After all, in the case of the DE an entirely new Ministry was under construction, and it is well known that Rome was not built in a day.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

NORTHERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF ROADS AND PUBLIC WORKS: ON THE ROAD TO IMPROVEMENT[13]

The Department of Roads and Public Works (DRPW) recruits large numbers of people to carry out its strategic objectives. The DRPW has experienced major challenges due to the centralized nature of HR management within the department, as well as in the recruitment of people with scarce skills. It has developed various tools to try to improve its ability to recruit and select staff effectively and to retain existing staff in the organisation, such as Standard Operating Procedures of its policies, and it's Recruitment Planning Tracking Tool which enables the HR team to track exactly where each application is within the Recruitment and Selection process. In addition, the department has demonstrated a drive to improve and to adhere to compliance at the policy level. This is reflected in the clean audit that it has received over the past three years.

However, there is still much room for improvement in order to build a robust culture of performance excellence. The submission of appropriate documentation to MPAT has resulted in a score that improved from 2-4 in comparison to the previous MPAT cycle. The content of these submissions reveals the evident need for further improvement, and that submission of documents does not, in itself, demonstrate performance.

This also highlights the need for a continual review of the MPAT framework and the need for more quality-based indicators to ensure that compliance is more than a paper trail and shows marked improvements in the management practice of the organization on the ground.

Context and background

The provincial MEC describes the department's role as:

> "the coordinating agent with regards to Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in the province and remains an important vehicle in our objectives to provide much needed jobs to our people." [14]

DRPW is driven by a vision to be "the trendsetters through excellence in service delivery."[15] With a mission to provide and maintain all provincial land, building and road infrastructure in an integrated sustainable manner, the department is driven by values of Ubuntu, honesty and integrity, accountability, equity, commitment and loyalty, punctuality, communication, human resource development, transparency, work ethic and client focus.

In the 2012/13 financial year the department had a total budget of just above R1 billion.[16] With about 1008 staff the department has a focus on building government-driven

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[13] This case study was drafted by Bridget Steffen and Dinesh Budhram from the Wits School of Governance at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. The series is edited by Professor Anne Mc Lennan.
[14] Provincial budget speech by MEC, March 2014
[15] Northern Cape Government website: accessed on 12th May 2014
[16] Treasury.gov.za. Accessed on 12th May 2014

infrastructure such as public roads and state buildings to ensure for proper service delivery.

The Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) of the South African government revealed that the department performed well in the area of recruitment and retention. The department's MPAT score improved from 2 in the previous year to 4 in the current analysis. The achievements shows that beyond implementing a recruitment system with clear roles and responsibilities, the department has also gathered regular exit interview data. Further, DRPW has assessed its working environment regarding recruitment and retention.

The need for change

In 2010, following an internal review of the DRPW's organizational structure, the leadership highlighted that the organisation required decentralization.

> *"The Department was highly centralized, to the extent that toilet paper needed in springbok had to be bought in Kimberly! This wasn't just in supply chain management, but in HR as well. The district structures are led by a director and there is the capacity to do HR functions if you take them through a process of induction, training and oversight, to do it themselves. We wanted to empower them to decentralise not just operational functions but the support functions as well."*

This was followed by the need for a recruitment drive, as well as a review of the Recruitment and Selection (R&S) Policy in light of a new DPSA Directive with a new strict timeline for filling vacant posts. The review highlighted the need for a more streamlined management processes in order to deliver to the prescribed targets.

Policy and planning

Comprehensive legal and policy frameworks govern Human Resources Management, which require strict adherence. From the Constitution, which sets out the principles and values for Public Administration, to government policies in various White Papers, employment legislation, Ministerial Directives, and codes of practice, HRM is a highly regulated field. In 2009 the DPSA issued a Directive that required the entire Public Service to reduce recruitment turn-around time to six months (four months after advertising the post) and to keep vacancy rates below 10%.

The DRPW developed its own Recruitment and Selection Policy, within the DPSA framework, and with consultation from within the organization. It has set its own R&S target at five months from the point of advertising. The Department has a draft retention policy, which is still under review.

Organising processes and resources

In light of the need to decentralize support functions and the need to speed up its R&S processes, the HRM unit developed several tools to enable the roll-out of more efficient R&S:

- A **spreadsheet to capture applications** ensures conformity and consistent processing of data captured

- A **step-by-step guide to capturing application data** has been particularly important, especially when the Department sources extra temporary capacity such as data capturers during recruitment drives, as it helps to streamline the briefing process
- A **Recruitment Planning Tracking Tool** captures where each candidate is in the R&S process, such as when the person was shortlisted, when called for interview etc. Updated weekly, it allows a snapshot of the state R&S within the department
- **Standard Operating Procedures** for the composition of interview panels and the interview process is useful because the panels may be composed of people who do not have a strong HR background
- A **Standard TOR** for shortlisting and interviewing candidates

However, the need for external verification by SAQA was highlighted as a major constraint in meeting the five-month target because the HR team explained that this was outside of the department's control.

In terms of retention, the department has implemented a recognition programme of 'Long Service Awards', for which staff are nominated. As the HR Director explained,

> *"Recently we have had about 60 retiring road workers. We decided to start rewarding best service employees using a nomination tool we sent through the department. Each district had to nominate someone – this boosted morale because staff participated in the process and those people were recognised."*

The department also conducts exit interviews with leaving employees and recently enlisted an independent service provide to carry out an environment scan of the organization.

Staff is engaged and kept informed

The HR team uses various communication methods to inform staff of R&S issues and to support the decentralization process in terms of change management. It uses RIACHA, the internal newsletter to communicate regularly with staff, with a focal point in each office to print and display communications for employees such as road workers who do not have access to online fora. In 2013 the unit rolled out a roadshow that helped to highlight key recruitment issues. As one HR staff recalled,

> *"We had a roadshow on recruitment issues within the whole department last year. We picked up weaknesses in district understanding of recruitment processes."*

Leadership and consistency of purpose

The MEC has demonstrated strong political will for the decentralization process and supports HR's efforts to improve R&S in the department. R&S is a standing agenda item at Management Committee meetings, where progress is regularly monitored. As the HR Director explained,

> *"Support from above is important for performance. If they understand the nitty gritty operational requirements of recruitment, then you are in business. HR was never seen as a strategic partner, it was seen as routine work. Now there is an understanding that to plan operations, you need HR to provide the most important resource: your people.*

Leaders have to give the go-ahead to operate, they have to make it part of high level meeting agendas."

HR has been instrumental in ensuring that Deputy Directors as well as Senior Management attend change management workshops to build their buy-in for the decentralization process, thus increasing responsibility for HRM at the district level.

Results and service to citizens

The HR unit sees MPAT as an important tool for monitoring it annual progress, as well as various reporting platforms in the organisation. However, the department continues to struggle to carry out its R&S processes within its internally-determined timeframe of five months, and vacancy rates remain high. This affects its ability to carry out the strategic mission of the organization and requires further work to build an organizational culture that fully recognizes its people. The HR Director describes this challenge:

"I always tell the recruitment team how important their role is. If you advertise the simple role of a road worker and it takes 12 months, what is the implication for the road user? We need to cascade that message to our staff, so they don't just come to work to get a salary. If people are a bit slow, we need to show them the importance of their role and its implication on the community at the end of the day."

Learning to improve

The DRPW faces many challenges that make the work of the HR team difficult and sometimes frustrating. The team is making every effort to improve through the development of tools that enable the right people to take responsibility for R&S at all levels of the organization. There is, however, much that can be done to achieve this.

- **Proactive use of existing information**: The exit interviews and environment scan are valuable sources of information. They revealed key trends and challenges highlighted by employees themselves that are vital particularly in addressing issues of retention within the organization. Such reports need to be comprehensively analysed and translated into concrete action plans for improvement, as well as circulated within the organization to increase transparency and accountability in implementing planned changes.
- **Managing external bottlenecks:** External bottlenecks can be managed laterally with the support of senior leadership and alternative strategies such as in-house training of R&S staff to limit the amount of information that is required to be sent for external verification, and establishing fast-tracking arrangements with SAQA.
- **More than compliance**: The experience of DRPW reveals that submitting the right documentation to MPAT and receiving a high score may indicate compliance, but it does not necessarily signify management performance. There is still much more that the department needs to do in terms of developing a high-performance culture, consequences for non-performance and ambitious targets which are measurable at the individual and the organizational level, in order to embed such performance across the organisation.

In spite of these challenges, and with the incorporation of such lessons into its approach, the department is heading up the right road to be in a position to meet the targets it has set and to build such a culture of performance. As one Director reflected,

> *"We are the implementers of infrastructure projects on behalf of client departments. Previously, we lost client departments' trust and they were requesting other departments to implement. The MEC challenged us that the mandate of our organisation is being taken away from us. But now we are proud, because our mandate is being brought back to us. Client departments are seeing what we can do. We have turned around our image and I think it's our image that speaks for itself. They have come back to us and said we will be their implementing partner. We are trying to do our best to reclaim back our function."*

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GCIS): GOING BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

The Department of Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) has taken a radical approach to compliance in the field of recruitment and retention. It has developed systematic ways to go beyond the call of duty in relation to the standards set by the Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA) in order to establish and maintain exceptional performance in the department's approach to its staff.

The Human Resources (HR) unit is on the pulse of what is needed in the organization: they know that they hold the keys to getting good people into the department as quickly as possible and keeping them there. The team has established its own strict targets in line with, but far higher than, those set by the DPSA. For example, it aims for a maximum recruitment cycle of under two months, monitors progress closely, and has concrete repercussions for non-performance. To meet its ambitious targets, the unit identified some key enablers that help make their approach possible:

- Flexibility and innovation within the perimeters of maintaining compliance
- Eliminating red tape internally and externally
- Flat, engaged leadership that drives the initiative from the unit Director all the way to the CEO
- An organisational culture that does not tolerate laziness and expects high standards, where non-performance is disciplined
- Championing equality and promoting opportunities internally to retain good people

The GCIS teaches us that it is possible to eliminate red tape in the public service! However, it requires the backing of a highly driven organizational culture that aims beyond compliance and pro-actively disciplines non-performance. It also requires the use of effective tracking tools and a progress monitoring approach that creates a sense of urgency to speed things up and so that issues can be addressed as they arise.

GCIS' experience highlights that while the DPSA provided a strong policy framework, the department needed to adapt this framework to suit its own nuances and in doing so, has made it more relevant in a way that achieves greater results.

To improve the effectiveness of its work, GCIS would like to see greater flexibility by the DPSA in relation to high performing departments in order to be able to streamline its processes further, and that DPSA consider the advice of such departments when reviewing its policies and directives.

Context and background

In 1995 the then Deputy President appointed a task team to investigate the state of government communications. By May 1998, the team's recommendations resulted in the launch of GCIS. As a strategic unit located in the Presidency, the mandate of the

department is to coordinate, guide and advise on government communication. The Deputy Minister in the Office of the President described GCIS's role as:

> *"It is to see to it that all South Africans receive comment and information that enable them to make rational choices about their lives. It is to see to it that they themselves can pass on information and views about their activities as they change their lives for the better. They have got the right to know, and to be heard."* [17]

GCIS is driven by a vision to be "the pulse of communication excellence in government." [18] In setting the bar for adherence to standards for effective government communications, the mission is to provide professional services and to drive coherent communication with the public about government policies, plans, programmes and achievements. The values that drive the organizational culture are professionalism, diversity, openness and transparency, innovation, honesty and integrity.

In the 2012/13 financial year the department had a total budget of about R461 million. [19] With 483 staff, the department has a focus on four programmes: administration, content processing and dissemination, intergovernmental coordination and stakeholder management and communication service agency. [20] In the 2012/13 financial year GCIS implemented 304 public participation programme events. Just over 1.5 million government communication materials were distributed to provincial and local communities. Support was provided to departments and clusters on over 50 types of content including messages, fact sheets, questions and answers, briefing statements, speech notes and leaflets. [21]

The Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) of the South African government revealed that the department performed well in the area of recruitment and retention. The department's MPAT score improved from 3 in the previous year to 4 in the current analysis. The achievements shows that beyond implementing a recruitment system with clear roles and responsibilities, the department has also ensure that actions have been taken following analysis on exit interview data. Further, GCIS has assessed its working environment regarding recruitment and retention and improvements have been implemented.

Perform as you would expect others to perform

When the Director of HR was recruited in 2010, she was astonished at the rapidity of GCIS' recruitment and selection process.

> *"Many view the public service as a slow machine. Even I was surprised when I was hired how quickly I got a call after the application closing date! Three days after the interview they were already pestering me to follow up on my referees to complete the reference check form. My entire recruitment took just 4 weeks."*

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[17] www.gcis.gov.za accessed: 12th May 2014
[18] GCIS Strategic Plan 2012/13 to 2016/17
[19] GCIS Annual Performance Plan 2013/14
[20] GCIS Strategic Plan 2012/13 to 2016/17
[21] GCIS Annual Report to Citizens 2012/13

The new Director soon discovered that what she had experienced herself was a systematic approach, which she was expected to uphold and champion. The Chief Director of HR recalls that appointment well:

> *"The first thing I said when I appointed the Director was 'you saw how quickly we appointed you - that is what we are expecting from you'. The targets are all written in her Performance Agreement, such as when a person resigns, the advert must be placed within seven days to run for 2 weeks. After application closure, we have clear targets for each stage."*

The organisational approach within Corporate Services at GCIS was not always this proactive. In the past, posts often took many months to fill and there was a prevailing culture of simply doing one's job. In fact, high vacancy rates and slow recruitment was a pervasive problem across the public service. This was raised in Parliament and a new Directive was passed in 2012/2013 that all posts must be filled within six months.

The Director of Corporate Services sat with the HR Director and his team and drove a vigorous strategy development process to fast-track appointments in the department. This created a shift in the leadership's expectations and in the unit's approach to performance. The current environment is one of extremely high performance, where red tape is eliminated, processes are streamlined, deadlines are met and where everyone plays their part to excel, together.

Policies adapted to meet departmental needs

A comprehensive legal and policy framework governs Human Resources Management (HRM), which requires strict adherence. From the Constitution, which sets out the principles and values for public administration, to government policies in various White Papers, employment legislation, Ministerial Directives, and codes of practice, HRM is a highly regulated field. In 2011/2012 the DPSA issued a Directive that required the entire public service to reduce recruitment turn-around time to six months (four months after being advertised) and to keep vacancy rates below 10%.
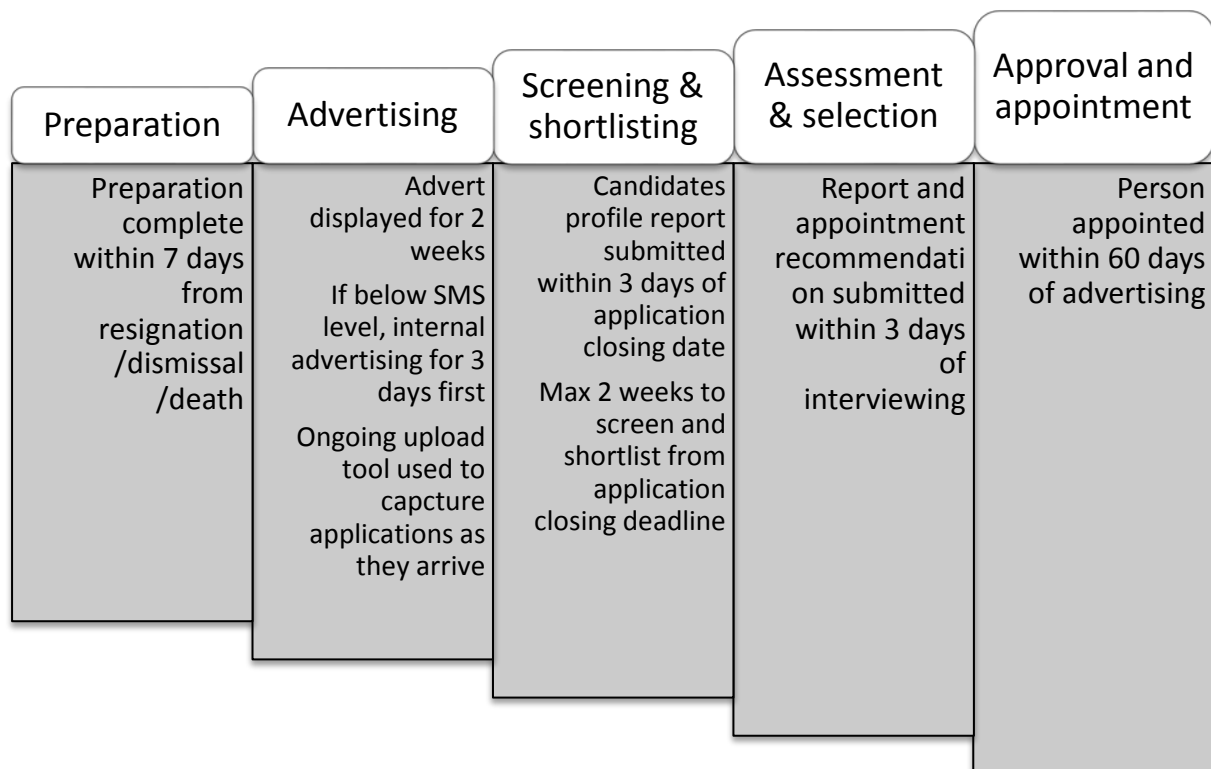
The GCIS sees these requirements as providing the framework within which to operate; however, it creates flexibility within these limits to ensure relevance to its specific environment. Thus, GCIS has developed **comprehensive internal policies for recruitment and selection as well as for staff retention within the Department, based on national policy, but reducing the targets still further**. GCIS' Recruitment and Selection (R&S) Policy stipulates that posts must be filled within two months after advertising and the retention policy has an 8% maximum vacancy target, which is being met within the department.

These internal policies, which also provide comprehensive guidelines for implementation, were developed with consultation and inputs from across the Department and are reviewed annually to ensure that they are still relevant and effective in meeting Departmental objectives.

A recruitment and selection process on steroids

The HR unit has established a framework and developed various tools to ensure that it is able to quickly recruit quality people. This was imperative because within the communications environment, things move fast, so vacancies and slow appointments were affecting GCIS's strategy deliverables. Far more ambitious than the DPSA's Directive, their **timeline allows just two months to appoint after the advert is placed**.

GCIS recruitment and selection timeline targets

Preparation	Advertising	Screening & shortlisting	Assessment & selection	Approval and appointment
Preparation complete within 7 days from resignation /dismissal /death	Advert displayed for 2 weeks If below SMS level, internal advertising for 3 days first Ongoing upload tool used to capcture applications as they arrive	Candidates profile report submitted within 3 days of application closing date Max 2 weeks to screen and shortlist from application closing deadline	Report and appointment recommendation submitted within 3 days of interviewing	Person appointed within 60 days of advertising

Each stage is streamlined with templates, tools and strategies to enable rapidity. A resignation, dismissal or death triggers such a rapid chain of events within the HR Unit that it has led to instances where a new person was appointed even before the previous person had left: the adverts are in the paper almost before the resignation letter ink has dried. As one HR official commented,

> *"The sad part is when someone passes away: when someone dies, even before the burial, the advert is placed; you could almost find the obituary next to advert!"*

The normal duration of a public service recruitment advert is four weeks, but GCIS decided to **run its adverts for just two weeks**, justifying this to DPSA by arguing that people looking for work would be checking the papers regularly.

While the applications are coming in, the team uses an **ongoing upload tool** to document candidate profiles as they are received so that **a full report is submitted within three days** of the application closing deadline, detailing all candidates and their shortlisting status (categorized into 'ideal', 'meet some requirements' and 'do not meet the

requirements'). This allows the manager responsible for the position to immediately review candidates once applications close and select for interview.

Interviews are held by a panel, as stipulated in GCIS' R&S Policy and the **interview report** with recommendations for appointment must be submitted **within 3 days of interviewing**. This report uses a **standard reporting format** to ensure consistency across all interview panels. The department initially decided to use a private service provider to verify applications, but following an audit they were required to use South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and National Intelligence Agency (NIA) as stipulated by the DPSA. After this shift, the team saw a slow-down in its recruitment turnaround time from a spectacular 1-2 months, so it explored other options within these constraints to speed it up. The HR unit decided to reduce the amount of data that it was required to submit to SAQA by undergoing **special training** to be able to analyse some of the data its. The team conducts this analysis as a **parallel process** before or alongside the interviews rather than afterwards, which has improved the time frame. In addition, the HR Director took his entire team to discuss the issue with the SAQA CEO, where they agreed that **SAQA would automatically fast-track** all DCIS verifications through their premium service so that appointments could be made almost immediately after interviewing.

Performance Agreements have been used as a tool to effectively ensure that all HR targets are met. The CEO instituted a policy that every employee in the department must sign a pledge that they will meet all deadlines relating to their KPIs.

> *"Last year, the CEO said that in every employee's PA there has to be a pledge that says 'I will meet all deadlines'. We started with SMS members, now everyone has it. When we assess people, we hold them accountable."*

Furthermore, the Chief Director also instructed that for himself and his whole team, all PAs must include recruitment and retention targets as concrete measurements of individual and team performance.

Engaging and retaining staff by recognizing their needs

Staff retention has been highlighted across the public service as a major issue, and GCIS has been no exception. Even with a rapid recruitment turnaround, if many people are leaving the organization this recruitment is not sustainable. GCIS has a relatively young staff base. It was seeing a trend that people in their 20's and 30's were leaving the department because they could more easily find promotions outside the organization. As one HR team member explained,

> *"When we asked them why they were leaving, they would say 'I like GCIS very much, but I've reached a ceiling so I need to go elsewhere'. We discussed how to effectively retain such people and out of that we developed a comprehensive Retention Policy."*

The **retention policy** stipulates that every post below Director that becomes vacant will first be advertised internally for three days. With SMS, by law it must be advertised externally, but if there is a difference of five points or less between internal and external candidates after interviewing, the internal candidate is appointed. Recognising the young nature of the organization, the HR team also developed a **maternity policy** that helps returning mothers to re-adjust by working half days for their first two weeks back at work.

In addition, GCIS took a decision to recognise exceptional performance beyond the 'one notch' increment typical in the Public Service to two notches, translating into a larger bonus.

By using a systematic approach that recognizes people's needs, gives maximum opportunities for people's advancement internally, and rewards excellence, this has helped to keep vacancy rates below 8% for the last 2 years.

Leadership and consistency of purpose

The CEO in particular, as well as the Director of Corporate Services, Chief Director and Director of HR have all been driving forces in building the department's high HR performance. From the outset, **management drives the induction programme, sending a clear message to new employees that the department values its people and means business**.

> *"Management of the department took a decision to have induction driven by management. The induction programme is opened by the CEO who welcomes new employees and explains where the department is going in terms of its vision and mission. The other presenters are Chief Directors. It demonstrates how employees are addressed in this organisation and shows you this is the culture of our organisation."*

There is a performance ethic within the department driven by leadership, which supports, and expects, every employee to give their best. Leadership is approachable and has an open door policy; one Chief Director described being invited to join a WhatsApp group by his team and using this to keep on top of issues when the team was not in the office. Leadership has also ensured that **people have the resources they require** to perform at the expected level: The HR team was provided with cells phones, 3G cards and laptops even though this would normally only be reserved for management.

However, with this support also come **serious consequences for non-performance**.

> *"People have passion but we have a culture that says we don't have room for lazy people. There are very severe consequences! For example, today is the deadline for our Performance Assessments. If you miss the deadline, if you qualified for a bonus it gets forfeited. The DPSA deadline is the 30th of May; ours is the 15th of April to make sure we all meet the DPSA deadline, which we report to parliament and are audited on."*

For underperforming employees, the department is required to follow a developmental plan to manage poor performance. If this plan is not effective, a dismissal process begins.

Results

GCIS has put in place a number of tools to track, monitor and measure its ability to deliver. The most crucial of these is their **vacancy tracking tool** which captures all current vacancies and exactly where they are in the recruitment process, including detail such as when CVs were received by whom, when escalations were made to senior management to enforce deadlines, as well as the number of days taken to date. The Chief Director of HR finds it essential in managing the R&S process:

> *"It gives me a weekly bird's eye view of the situation. Each week before our HR meeting I paint any entries that are behind schedule in red on excel and I put people*

under the spotlight in front of the team. Nobody wants to be named and shamed if their deliverable is in red. At the next meeting, there is always a big improvement. It creates a consciousness and responsibility to deliver properly."

This weekly team meeting also provides the opportunity to identify and rapidly rectify any bottlenecks and weaknesses in the process. Other mechanisms include progress updates and a monthly progress report regarding all HR-related issues. HR is standing item on the Management Committee meeting agenda, where its monthly report is presented and examined. The report is also presented to the HR Transformation Committee, which was set up to hold the organization accountable and is represented by people from across all branches and levels of the organization (levels 3-14). HR presents its exit interview report to this committee quarterly, as well as climate studies and other relevant analysis. The committee provides a forum to interrogate, develop and action plans to remedy any issues raised. Finally, meetings with the labour unions also hold the organisation accountable to ensuring the wellbeing of its staff.

These mechanisms have allowed the GCIS to measure the improvements it has made in the past several years. Recruitment and selection turn-around times have been slashed from 11.7% in 2005 to 3.3 % in 2012. According to the CD of HR,

> *"We have many examples of assistant directors who were promoted to deputy directors and who stayed as a result and at the higher levels as well."*

Lessons learned

The GCIS has managed to instil a culture of excellence that goes beyond the call of duty, starting with the CEO right down to each individual employee. This has been achieved through a systematic approach that has required a highly engaged leadership, tailor-made policies that reflect the needs of the department, a raft of tools to enable people to do their work and to track progress, and severe consequences for non-performance. These good practices need to be shared so that other departments are able to benefit from their tools, approaches and lessons.

The HR unit has proven that the Public Service can do better and that red tape can be eliminated, even within the constraints of the policy and legal frameworks that guide its work. It has managed to do this by focusing on several key issues, notably:

Analyse and adapt national policy to reflect the specific employee demographic and the strategic needs of the Department. For example, the Departments developed targets for recruitment and selection turn-around time that are more ambitious than those required by DPSA in order to appoint quickly for the fast-moving communications industry. They also developed a maternity policy for their young staff demographic, which helps mothers to re-adjust to the work-place after maternity leave with half-days for the first two weeks back at work. Where necessary, the Department needed to justify its decisions to DPSA or even challenge the DPSA to review its approach and allow GCIS greater flexibility in meeting its own ambitious targets. GCIS' internal policies are comprehensive, providing implementation guidelines for delivery within the department.

Streamline processes to speed up delivery at every stage of recruitment and selection. Immediate advertising after resignation and shortening the advert running period, as well as running parallel processes such as documenting candidate profiles ready for selection onto the system as submissions are received, has drastically reduced the time taken prior to interviewing. A parallel verification process during the selection and interviewing stage, as well as specialized training for HR staff to carry out much of the verification process internally, has also helped to streamline their processes.

Develop tools that enable delivery and monitor progress. A clear timeframe governs every stage of the R&S process, enabling HR to effectively use the vacancy tracking tool they developed to micro-track progress and address delays as they happen, ensuring overall targets are still met even when delays arise. Templates are used for capturing candidate profiles, reporting on interviews, as well as for the monthly, quarterly and annual reporting processes. Performance Agreements are used as a tool to develop a culture of performance, by incorporating measurable R&S targets and adherence to deadline agreements within individual PAs.

Engage the leadership to support and discipline where necessary. Engagement by leadership in staff induction and throughout HR tracking processes ensures they fully understand the issues, give it the strategic importance it requires, and ultimately recognize the value of the people who are behind the department's ability to deliver. This is reflected in the multiple platforms where HR is required to regularly report on progress against their targets, such as the standing HR agenda item at Management Committee meetings, the HR Transformation Committee, as well as the monthly progress report and weekly team meetings. Non-performance is dealt with immediately as it happens, in front of staff in meetings, through the forfeiting of bonuses and through effective disciplinary channels.

There is always room for improvement both from a policy and a practice perspective. The GCIS has struggled within the confines of DPSA's regulations and would like to see greater flexibility by the DPSA in relation to requests from high performing departments to be able to streamline their processes further. It would also like DPSA to consult such departments when reviewing its policies and directives. There are specific issues which GCIS believes currently need rectifying, including:

- Acting allowance: When someone is sick or on maternity leave, one cannot appoint someone to do their job because the post is officially 'filled' on the system
- Job evaluation process: this requires more flexibility so that it can address the organisation's specific needs
- 1.5% performance bonus: currently the bonus cannot exceed 1.5% of the salary bill. Anything above this requires the minister's approval, which is a lengthy process. The HR team believes that to be able to offer larger bonuses for excellent performance would encourage retention.

The GCIS would like to continue to tighten its targets in order to prevent complacency and to continue pushing the boundaries of what is possible to meet the needs of the Communications and Information industry. External elements provide challenges (such as the roles of SAQA and NIA) and it continues to negotiate on these issues, but the

department remains committed to bringing on board all the necessary stakeholders to enable HR at the GCIS to continue to perform at the top of its game.

Vacancy Tracking Tool

NO	CHIEF DIRECTORATE	DIRECTORATE	POST	SL	VACANT SINCE	POST ADVERTISED	CLOSING DATE	HAND - OVER	VACANCY AGE	INTERVIEW DATE	STATUS	RESPONSIBLE PERSON

DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT

KWAZULU NATAL DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM: THE CUNNING FOX: PICKING A PATH THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN OF CHALLENGES

One needs to understand where the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDT) has come from to appreciate where it is today, and the potentially arduous journey that still lies ahead. It has emerged from chaos, only to begin the steep climb up the mountain of challenges that is disciplinary management. The labour relations (LR) team has used fearlessness, transparency, mediation and "the cunning of a fox" to contest and engage all the right people in tackling the many challenges that still persist. This highly skilled but small team has used certain important approaches on this journey. Basing its interventions on empirical evidence, it has tried to target leadership as well as managers to take responsibility for LR and recognize its strategic importance. It has promoted prevention and pro-activeness alongside its typically reactive role, developing tools and running trainings to ensure high principle becomes reality at the day-to-day level. The team has focused on building relationships within and outside the organisation, in order to build trust and a strong presence that enables more effective disciplinary case management across the department.

Part of the reason LR is such a challenge is because of the multiple internal and external stakeholders involved, whose effectiveness may be compromised by hidden interests, lack of skills, lack of understanding or political will etc. Thus, LR management requires a fine balance of building external and internal relationships, whilst maintaining the integrity to be neutral in disputes. Management of disciplinary cases requires effectiveness to comply with the target of 90 days. To economise time and resources, the Department adopted a proactive approach to complement its reactive approach, managing to prevent issues from occurring or resolving them informally, where the formal route was unnecessary.

The DEDT experience highlights that while LR has been recognized as a challenging area to address, senior leadership within the Department must place it firmly on the strategic agenda to overcome persisting challenges and ultimately to manage the field of staff discipline effectively. While LR and Corporate Services continue to fight this battle internally, the DPSA could also assist more pro-actively in promoting this at a senior leadership level in order to ensure Department-wide implementation.

Greater engagement should take place between well-performing departments to share tools and learning, pool trainings and second chairs across Departments to conduct hearings, in order to build knowledge and expertise.

Context and background

The global economic crisis that began in 2008 has presented immense challenges for any government department that is tasked with economic development. These challenges have been clearly relevant to the KwaZulu Natal (KZN) Department of Economic Development and Tourism. However, the province has also played host to high profile global events – at the height of the global recession – that have enabled it cope somewhat. A key highlight was the 2010 FIFA World Cup, which created tourism opportunities as well as the development of infrastructure including a new airport and stadium. Navigating through the challenges and opportunities it is presented with, DEDT plays a key role in driving the economic growth of the province while ensuring that the government's development agenda is also fulfilled. In the MEC's opinion,

> *"Our mission remains ensuring that the province is competitive and able to generate and attract investment essential for the creation of employment opportunities."* [22]

The department's strategy details its mission to be the development and implementation of strategies that drive economic growth; a catalyst for economic transformation and development; the provision of leadership and integrated economic planning; and the creation of a conducive environment for investment. [23]

In the 2012/13 financial year the department had a total budget of just below R1.8 billion. [24] DEDT focuses on five programmes: administration, integrated economic development, trade and industry development, business regulations and economic planning. In the spirit of Ubuntu, employees are expected to act with integrity, be caring, supportive, ethical, accountable, transparent, and innovative and to work with a high level of commitment.

The Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) of the South African government revealed that the department performed well in the area of employee relations and particularly in the standard relating to the management of disciplinary cases. The department's MPAT score improved from 1 in the previous year to 3 in the current analysis. In achieving this MPAT assessment, the DEDT showed evidence that it was able to finalise disciplinary cases within the policy requirements and that these cases were captured on the PERSAL system.

A small number of departments across South Africa have attained the highest scoring on the MPAT assessment for labour relations, with DEDT being the only department in the Kwazulu-Natal province that obtained a rating of 3. In effect, all other departments in the province were not compliant with the policy framework. The importance of this area of human resource management is clear. Failing to discipline staff can have an impact on the entire morale of the organisation. Mismanagement of discipline can breed a culture of impunity if cases drag on or are not properly pursued or a culture of mistrust if people perceive the arbitration process to be unfair or LR to lack integrity.

Rising from the Chaos

> *"When our current LR manager arrived, the liquor unit employees were suspended and there was chaos. There were practically no successful cases although they were suspending people left right and centre. Gradually we began to see that humane approach of recognising that the people are this organization."*

The challenge of discipline management is not new in the DEDT. Human resources (HR) officials in the department described a situation of complete chaos from as far back as they remembered over a decade ago. Suspensions were routine, and pervasive. Sometimes an entire unit was suspended; but people were usually re-instated without opening an official case because there was no evidence on which to base a case. Suspensions were frequently politically-motivated. Others were due to poor HR processes and a lack of understanding of such process, or were simply a result of poor management decisions.

The current LR manager was enlisted to tackle a particularly charged crisis in 2006, in which 20 people had been suspended with pending cases, but without evidence on which to charge them. He analysed the situation and used a frank, head-on approach in the way he engaged leadership, highlighting that such an approach to discipline was not appropriate in the circumstances and that

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[22] DEDT Annual Performance Plan 2012/13
[23] ibid
[24] ibid

there needed to be a shift in how people were valued in the organisation. He proposed withdrawing charges and monitoring their behaviour. As the HR Director noted,

> *"The honesty and being brutally upfront with the political leadership and senior management was important. In government, you are often mindful of pleasing your boss. But pleasing doesn't help your integrity. You must be able to say yes or no or why something is wrong. Our LR people are able to do this even if I am not there. They have been acknowledged for this by the rest of the department."*

Since 2009, despite ongoing challenges, a more coherent, systematic approach to LR has begun to emerge, championed by the LR team.

Simple compliance is a challenge

The department has adopted and is compliant with the LR policy framework, including the disciplinary code and collective agreements. However, the department included a supplementary template into its disciplinary code to assist managers to record disciplinary cases. It also helps in capturing the information on PERSAL and with monitoring cases.

In 2011, the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) issued a directive that all cases must be resolved within 90 days. The DEDT has found this highly challenging to comply with on various levels:

- Managing disciplinary cases relies on the involvement of multiple internal and external stakeholders, many of whom don't display the sense of urgency required to complete the case within the time frame. For example, union members, the chair or the employee may book off sick, witnesses fail to attend for weeks, etc.
- Documents sit on people's desks awaiting inputs or sign-off and the authority of LR may not be adequate to request managers or senior leadership respect deadlines.
- Some cases remain pending because of systemic problems with how cases are captured on PERSAL. For example, there is no provision for financial misconduct to be reported on the system.

However, the LR team has tried to put in place systems and processes that improve its ability to meet this target. Through the teams' weekly Monday meetings, their planning processes have been systematically developed, monitored, regularly reviewed and improved.

Proactivity makes things happen

LR has a strong work ethic which recognizes that **one cannot effectively deliver on disciplinary management by simply administering the policies**. As described by one LR staff, the process of planning and implementing must be pro-active:

> *"LR cannot do simple administration. Some people get bonuses for compliance and that is wrong. We need to go beyond that, we need impact. That's what happened here. LR used to be administrative – the unit would submit statistics when a case was opened, it would appoint people to cases and then take time writing appointment letters. But to have an impact we need to build relationships, focus on communications, manage knowledge and so on."*

LR tries to get to the root of the problems it faces. By improving its documentation and reporting, such as the unit's annual review and report, it has been able to cluster cases and analyse trends. Such analysis has revealed high levels of 'conflict of interest' and particularly cases of 'insubordination' and failure to follow instructions, which accounted for 80% of all cases in 2013. As a result, LR is planning a qualitative study to better understand the issue from the employees' perspective, to enable them to implement preventive interventions to effectively tackle the issue.

The unit has also managed a suggestion box and Employee Assistance Programme, through which it identified problem areas in alcoholism and manager's lack of understanding of suspension processes. LR developed a management guide for tackling drunkenness in the workplace, and a manager's guide to suspension, which integrates national policy and case law.

Regular analysis and the implementation of studies has allowed for better knowledge management and learning that can be effectively acted upon in this way.

Valuing people is the biggest challenge of all

LR identified two critical challenges in effective discipline management and meeting the 90 day target. Ultimately, both relate to the value that the organization places on its people. The first challenge is getting **leadership to recognize the strategic importance of LR for the effective delivery of the department's vision and overarching objectives**. The second challenge is getting **managers to shoulder their responsibility in the disciplinary process**.

Recognition of the strategic importance of people remains a challenge within the senior management of the organization. LR is often involved too late in critical HR processes. For example, during a recent restructuring, it was only when the transfer of staff was about to take place and after the unions had stepped in to complain that LR was consulted. Together with the unions, LR drew up a position paper on how the transfer would take place.

> *"Strategically we must fight for our space to be recognised. We would love to be involved proactively rather than only when we are reactive. Often with line managers it's different. They will come to us and ask for advice. But at the strategic level we still need to see this happen."*

However, the LR team has managed to gain support from senior leadership in prioritizing the up-skilling of the LR team, making funds available to expose them to trainings, conferences, even PHD study, at a time when cost-cutting in the province has prevented other LR teams from benefiting from such opportunities.

The team has also made use of its positive relationships with leadership and the department's informal approach and open door policy, which cuts out some of the protocol and bureaucracy that exists in other departments. They pick up the phone or go and speak directly to leadership when they need to. Indeed, even the work environment of the department suggests this – with its young leadership, relaxed feel and panoply of pot plants.

However, ultimately **LR has not managed to place discipline squarely on the strategic table**; arguably, **this remains a larger battle to fight in the way staff are valued right across the public service**.

> *"Leaders should concentrate on people, but across the Public Service, leaders shy away from this. We in LR challenge this constantly. We even challenge HR."*

The second challenge area has seen slightly better results. **LR has used a strategy that combines communication, training, and performance tools to enlist managers to shoulder their responsibilities**.

> *"We put out a position document that we will not get actively involved in discipline process but will advise line mangers to take that responsibility. LR advises the MEC on appeals, so how can we sit in a hearing and the next day advise the MEC? We are there to advise the employee and the line manager. We need to keep our legitimacy and credibility."*

LR has since rolled out various pro-active activities to tackle this issue:

- Conducted trainings for line managers on discipline management and their role in meeting the 90 day deadline. LR made use of Part 1X of the Public Service regulations to enable the Head of department to make attendance at the trainings compulsory to overcome challenges of non-attendance,
- Secured 15-minute slots in Line Management meetings to share 'take-home messages' and discuss specific disciplinary issues
- Secured responsibility for HR as a responsibility in manager's Performance Agreements (PAs)
- Conducted quarterly empowerment workshops on labour matters and general education sessions with employees. These have contributed to a reduction in the number of transgressions from the policies.

These sessions have helped to dramatically reduce the number of suspensions (to one a year in 2012 and 2013), as managers apply the policies more appropriately and understand when it is more suitable to use informal routes. In addition, LR has been smart in its use of the code of conduct which stipulates that suspension is only allowed during the investigation phase of the case. This gives an incentive to managers to act rapidly in resolving the case in order to prevent the person from returning to work. They are thus more willing to be supportive throughout the process.

However, in spite of these initiatives, LR still struggles to appoint managers to chair cases. The drive to ensure that the 90 day target is met has meant that it is often quicker and easier for LR or external people to chair cases rather than losing time trying to identify another manager internally. As the LR director explains:

> "I go to chair throughout the province and have strong relationships with LR colleagues them so I will finish a case rapidly. I don't allow anyone to retard discipline cases. We trained managers to equip them to deal with LR issues and chair disciplinary cases which is a success. But when we try to get them to do the cases, they often don't. Often we have to rely on outside colleagues to chair these cases."

What drives the team is its engagement with others

LR prides itself on ensuring that **its team has a system-wide understanding of HR, and a specialized knowledge of LR**: a panoramic view of the mountain but the nose of a fox. This enables LR to understand the overall frameworks in order to conduct technical diagnostic assessments and to advise managers on appropriate action. Such a skilled team is able to identify issues that may be possible to resolve immediately without a formal process. This integrated approach promotes strategies of avoidance or prevention rather than one of winning cases. This has helped the team to build strong relationships based on demonstrating its skill and integrity and through developing a strong presence internally and externally.

> "It's about the way you conduct yourself, we have a brand, an identity as LR. We are approachable and we will accommodate people when they come to our office even if we are busy. We put out a service charter document that commits to respond to people's problems within three days. It explains what we offer."

The team has **used various communications tools to build its presence within the department**, such as posters, newsletters, electronic alerts and reminders of mandatory compliance issues, and it has organized expert panel sessions on specific issues relevant to all employees such as sexual harassment. In addition, by ensuring that employees are fully informed of the progress of cases, they have been able to demonstrate consistency of their case management approach in the Department.

Externally, LR has worked hard to **build a relationship of mutual trust with the unions**, which has been essential in trying to meet the 90 day target, but this requires constant work. As the LR team explained,

> *"We have a cordial relationship with unions, we are not enemies. They even come to us for advice. We have frank discussions – often on an ad-hoc basis but we also meet with them at chamber meetings where we discuss collective issues. If there is a major issue, the council sets up a task team. Such a relationship comes with trust."*

Whether engaging internally or externally, the LR team believes it plays a crucial role in the department's ability to carry out the effective delivery of its services to the public. It prides itself on beginning to build a new approach to discipline within the organization that focuses on preventive initiatives that help prevent disciplinary issues emerging in the first place, or that avoid opening full-blown cases, where unnecessary.

> *"We don't pride ourselves on the number of issues we win; we pride ourselves on the number of issues we can avoid."*

Against all the odds – what can be learned

The LR unit has made several suggestions to senior leadership to try to formalize responsibility for disciplinary management among managers and to ensure that the department meets the 90 day target for case management.

Firstly, LR suggests building the 90 day target into the PAs of line managers, the HOD and even the MEC, by splitting the time so that each person has a few days to complete their part of the process and LR is no longer required to chase sign-off of documents etc. Secondly, systematic issues with PERSAL need to be resolved to ensure that it can be used as an effective case management tool. For example, it must include the ability to capture financial misconduct on the system. Finally, there needs to be a cultural shift within the Department that recognizes a people-centred approach to work, as outlined in Sections 23 and 24 of the Constitution.

However, while such policy and organizational changes are yet to be seen, the DEDT offers hope to other departments struggling in this field. This small team, fully aware of the mountainous challenges that it faces daily, has found cunning, smart, and persevering ways to overcome some of these challenges.

The team has demonstrated the importance of developing a highly skilled team with an integrated set of HR and LR skills and expertise. This has placed them in the best possible position to base their interventions on empirical evidence from continual analysis of the issues facing the department, and to promote a sense of integrity in the services that they provide.

While the 90 day target may sometimes be perceived to add to the existing challenges, having such a benchmark has been vital in helping to formalize their processes into a concrete case management system; it has even been used as a tool in itself to keep the pressure on others to deliver rapidly.

The team has found PERSAL a useful tool in the case management system because it allows the department to run checks on new employees about previous disciplinary cases (which has helped the department to identify undisclosed records in the past) and also allows anyone in the team to generate an up-to-date case report when needed.

The LR team has placed **a strong emphasis on relationship-building internally and externally** in order to engage the necessary people to shoulder their responsibilities in the discipline management process. While this has not yet yielded a fully empowered, engaged management structure, it has helped to improve how managers understand the discipline process, producing a more preventive approach and more appropriate responses through the informal structures. It has also helped in ensuring that unions do not block or slow down the management of cases.

Always room for improvement

A critical factor, identified by LR, in preventing this shift in managers' approach to their responsibility for disciplinary management is the inadequate **priority given by senior leadership to placing effective human resources management firmly on the strategic agenda**. Without sufficient recognition by leaders that people are the driving force of any initiative, LR will continue to struggle galvanise managers into taking on this responsibility themselves. The DPSA, which promotes this line function approach to disciplinary management, could do more within its power to bring this to the strategic attention of senior leadership.

Finally, **greater engagement needs to take place between well-performing departments** to share tools and learning, pool trainings and second chairs to conduct hearings across organisations, in order to build the knowledge and expertise required to create a shift in thinking and improve disciplinary management across the public service.

DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT

NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF MINERAL RESOURCES: BUILDING RESPONSIBLE MANAGERS: 'LEAVE 10111, I CAN DO THIS MYSELF'

In the National Department of Mineral Resources (DMR), people used to informally call labour relations (LR) '10111'. When the unit was set up in 1999, LR was perceived as the unit that managers would call when someone needed firing. However, through the perseverance of a small, dedicated team, LR was able to turn this perception on its head. They built the requisite ownership among managers, using a proactive engagement strategy that equipped managers with the knowledge and skills to fulfil their own responsibility in disciplining their staff. Furthermore, the LR team, drawing on their own work ethic of self-reflection and discipline, conducted a thorough analysis of the disciplinary process and developed an entire stockpile of strategies and tools to improve the effectiveness and speed of the department's management of disciplinary cases. Working as a close team, LR's mantra has been to stay ahead of the curve, going beyond compliance to contribute to enhancing a strong public service in the spirit of *Batho Pele*.

DMR recognised that several key factors were crucial to the success of an effective disciplinary process. These factors, when addressed by unstoppable individuals, drove the department to effect a remarkable turn-around:

- **Find out what is not working and change it**: Understanding what holds the department back ensures strategies are based on facts and not perception
- **The existence of policies does not in itself shift ownership**: shifting ownership of the disciplinary function of responsibility away from LR onto managers requires hands-on engagement
- **Documenting the process ensures consistency**: documentation and tools development brings results and promotes a preventive approach
- **Proper engagement and consultation pays off**: developing effective internal and external relationships helps timely resolution of cases

LR highlighted that more analysis could still be done in the department to identify how to prevent the most common cases before they occur. Furthermore, sharing one's process mapping throughout the organisation would strengthen strategies of engagement and ownership.

Context and background

DMR lays claim to being one of the oldest government departments in the country, with a lineage that extends as far back as the 1890's. In May 2009, President Jacob Zuma announced that two new units, namely the Department of Energy and the Department of Mineral Resources, would replace the Department of Minerals and Energy. In the DMR Minister's words on the need to have a specific focus on mineral resources:

> *"Even after more than a century, mining remains a sunrise industry that provides impetus for the development of various sectors of our economy, whilst it plays a critical role as we tackle the triple challenge of inequality, unemployment and poverty."* [25]

DMR has as its mission the promotion and regulation of the minerals and mining industry for transformation, growth and development and to ensure that all South Africans derive sustainable

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[25] Minister's Speech, National Assembly, 12 March 2014, Parliament, Cape Town

benefit from the country's mineral wealth.[26] The department formulates and implements policy to ensure the optimal use of the country's mineral reserves to fight poverty and underdevelopment.

In the 2012/13 financial year the department had a total budget of just below R1.2 billion.[27] With 1200 staff spread across a head office in Pretoria and branches in all nine provinces, DMR focuses on four primary programmes: administration, mine health and safety, mineral regulation, and mineral policy and promotion. The values that drive the organization culture are the Batho Pele principles of ethics, honesty, integrity, accountability professionalism and Ubuntu.

The mining industry in South Africa has recently been faced with huge challenges related to labour instability. The effort of government, business and labour to come together to ensure a stable mining industry has been a priority.

The department has had notable achievements in its programme areas.[28] It has begun to streamline licensing processes and is finalizing the development of a mineral beneficiation plan. In terms of safety, DMR's work has enabled a 9% decrease in fatalities between 2011 and 2012. Skills development in the mining industry is also a priority, with the introduction of learnership programmes and bursary schemes.

The Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) of the South African government revealed that the DMR performed well in the area of employee relations and particularly in the standard relating to the management of disciplinary cases. The department's MPAT score improved from 3 in the previous year to 4 in the current analysis. This achievement shows that the department managed disciplinary cases within the prescribed policies and ensured that following rigorous analysis, recommendations to reduce the incidence of misconduct were implemented.

LR is a difficult field to get right and few Departments across the country have even achieved compliance. Failing to discipline staff can have an impact on the entire morale of the organisation. Mismanagement of discipline can breed a culture of impunity if cases drag on or are not properly pursued. It can also lead to a culture of mistrust if people perceive the arbitration process to be unfair.

Identifying the need for change

Towards the end of 2010, the DMR was struggling with multiple challenges relating to disciplinary case management. Managers were refusing to chair hearings, unions were complaining that cases were taking too long to resolve, the impact of unresolved cases such as alcoholism in the workplace were demotivating affected teams, and there was scant monitoring of the processes to know what was really taking place.

A decision was taken by the Director of LR to conduct a root cause analysis in order to identify the key issues that were holding the Department back from carrying out effective disciplinary processes. One of the study's main findings revealed that managers' refusal to chair disciplinary hearings was dragging out the time taken to resolve cases. Furthermore, it highlighted that managers' refusal was often due to the fact that they did not adequately recognize, or did not *want* to recognise the function of discipline as their responsibility. They saw it as the remit of LR. A member of the LR team reflected that:

> *"People used to call us 10111. When labour relations turned up they'd say 'here comes the 10111' and if they saw us talking to someone in the office, they thought something*

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[26] DMR Strategic Plan, 2010/11 to 2012/13
[27] DMR Annual Performance Plan 2013/14
[28] DMR Annual Report 2012/13

was going on, that someone was going to be uprooted. We realised we had to change this mindset."

The 90 day target that put the fire under 10111

In 2011, the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) issued a directive which set a target that disciplinary cases must be initiated and finalized within 90 days. This came at exactly the right moment: the Directive provided the yardstick the department needed to measure itself against, providing the heat needed to formalize its analysis into concrete processes and tools. The processes that emerged have been fully mapped and re-engineered for improvement with the support of the organisational design unit and are being turned into visual charts and posters to be shared with employees in the department's 11 offices country-wide.

There are two legally binding policy documents that prescribe the field of disciplinary action:
- Resolution 1 (2003) of the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) deals with all disciplinary cases of employees from levels 1-12
- Chapter 7 of the SMS Handbook deals with all disciplinary cases of employees from levels 13 and above

Neither of these documents prescribes a maximum timeframe for the resolution of cases. They only stipulate that notice must be served within the first 5 days of opening a case and the hearing convened within 10 days after that. It is this gap that was addressed with the DPME's directive of 2011. The Director of LR described how his team decided to formalize the 90 day process:

> *"I sat with my team after management gave us the DPME directive. We asked what we can do to comply with the 90 day target. We looked at how we currently do it and we brainstormed what could help us. Out of that I developed a tool to help us deal with formal disciplinary cases."*

LR developed a critical tool that began the formalisation of their case management system. Their **90-day Process Compliance Tool** splits tasks down chronologically, allocating a set number of days for each stage in the disciplinary process (see annex 1). This tool enabled the department to track in detail the stage and status of each case. It helped LR to flag resignations of employees with pending cases, in order to fast-track the case before the employee left. It also allowed for preventive action to be taken when a stage was delayed, in order to ensure that the 90 day target was still met.

> *"I have a register of when all cases were logged. Every Monday I receive a weekly progress report of all cases. This allows me to monitor if staff are on track and ensures I can assist to help get things back on track if needed."*

However, this was not enough to resolve the root problems they were facing with regards to manager's ownership of the disciplinary function. This required a hard-hitting, pro-active campaign to change managers' perception and behaviour within the organisation. This strategy involved the development of a raft of tools to improve the way in which internal disciplinary investigations were carried out by the department's managers:
- **Guidelines for Conducting an Internal Disciplinary Investigation**, including methodology and investigation tools that promote consistency. The methodology stresses the law of evidence and verification, and the importance of showing a clear link to how a specific policy was contravened. Tools include the use of a journalistic formula ('Who What When Why and How'). These guidelines, developed in 2011, were revised in 2014.
- A comprehensive in-house **Training Manual and Guide on Chairing Disciplinary Hearings** for managers (levels 10-13). This resource lays out each step that the chair should follow when facilitating a hearing, including specific steps if the employee pleads guilty or not guilty. It

provides definitions for different issues (such as incapacity, grievance, misconduct) and a guide of suggested sanctions for each type of issue, to ensure consistency between chairs' approaches across all cases.

- An electronic **Template Hearing Report** that ensures consistency of reporting after cases are closed and enables easier analysis across cases
- **A weekly progress report** of all open cases to track their status and help flag any delays
- **Modified official departmental notice letter** to the employee to attend the hearing. LR modified this to include a section where the employee's rights, under labour law, are clearly stated. This was recognized as a gap, since these rights are not clearly stated within the Chapter 7 or Resolution 1 policy documents.

Implementing a strategy to make managers 'do it themselves'

A pro-active strategy was rolled out by LR, with support from the Chief Director of HR, which disseminated the policies and enlisted the tools developed in order **to shift the line function of disciplinary into the domain of managers** on the ground.

Crucially, **trainings were conducted to equip managers from all provinces to chair disciplinary hearings**.

> *"I contacted regional managers and principle inspectors in the regional offices and the SMS at head office through a communiqué explaining the need for chairs to come forward, as hearings were taking too long. I requested them to nominate themselves and other colleagues at Director, Assistant Director or Deputy Director levels in their province to be trained. The response was amazing: people want to be trained."*

These trainings included conducting mock hearings in which participants used role-play to act out the chair, employer, union, witnesses, employee and other stakeholders. On completion of the training, managers were formally appointed as chairs and given the opportunity to attend hearings to shadow and learn the processes. When requested to chair, these managers are usually sent to conduct hearings in provinces other than their own to ensure fairness and avoid conflicts of interest. The impact of these trainings has been remarkable, according to the LR Director:

> *"Now whenever we appoint someone to chair a hearing, people are happy to do that. This means we don't delay the process and we get quality people chairing."*

Other elements of the strategy include running **regular training sessions and discussions with staff across the country on current policies and any challenges** that they face. LR was able to capitalize on a drive started by the DDG of Corporate Services in 2013 in which she and a group of key head office officials visited regional offices to sit and discuss with staff. This included the CD of HR who was able to champion LR at these fora. By listening and engaging people at all levels of the organization, it has helped how staff understands and views HR and LR within the department.

Keeping people informed has been a key component of the campaign and LR ensures that it always has an article slot in the in-house magazine, and it posts regular articles on the intranet to engage with staff.

Hand-in-hand with its internal communication strategy, LR's relationship with external actors, most notably the unions, has been a key priority. Since the 90-day directive, DMR's relationship with the unions has changed significantly. As one LR official explained:

> *"Our relationship with the unions is healthy and conducive now. We have our ups and downs but we know how to manage the relationship. It's been a turning point in life of DMR. Sometimes the unions come to us for advice. I am seen to be neutral – I will tell them if they have a chance [pleading not guilty] in a case based on what happened. Unions trust that the hearings will be fair."*

LR consults with the unions on all its processes – whether in policy development or disciplinary case management. For example, when LR drafted a new Alcohol Policy (which was based on results of the Corporate Services Employee Assistance Programme) the draft policy was presented to the unions at an initial meeting. The unions reviewed the draft and then presented its inputs at a second meeting. The policy was then brought before the General Bargaining Chamber (SSBC). With its finalisation, the policy had collective agreement and full union buy-in for its implementation.

Engaging Leadership

At the level of senior leadership, LR organizes an annual discussion session where someone from the Public Service Commission or the DPSA presents and has a discussion on disciplinary management with MANCO. They would like to institute this bi-annually.

The DDG of Corporate Services and CD HR fully understand Human Resources Management and have been supportive of LR's initiative to shift disciplinary management to its management function and improve the Department's case management processes. In addition, senior management has cooperated when necessary and there is a strong open-door policy within the organization, which ensures processes are not held up by waiting several for an appointment. **The improvement in leadership support since 2009 has contributed to the ability of LR to carry out its work**. One HR official described this change:

> *"From 2009, the new DG played an important role in HR matters. There was a time when we felt we weren't taken seriously in the department. We would sit in a meeting discussing performance and managers would use HR as a scapegoat. When the new DG joined, she would not accept that. She would say 'leave this meeting now and go do your job'. Respect for the importance of Corporate Services by leadership has changed a lot."*

However, ultimately **it is the actions of the six members of the LR team that have enabled the changes to take place in practice**. What drives the team is their disciplined approach, their reading and their determination to improve on what exists. As one member of the LR team explained,

> *"We read a lot. We look at case law; we attend seminars to be up to date on latest in LR, such as the current process of updating LR Act, which will have an impact on employer-union relationships. We periodically meet as a team to benchmark our work with the private sector, parastatals and others in the public service. We look at if our processes are still valid and if they are still producing the results we want."*

The broader impact

The work of the LR team is rooted in practicing what they preach for the service they provide to staff and ultimately to the citizens of the country. LR promotes a corrective rather than a punitive approach wherever possible, recognizing its own role in ensuring that staff - the people behind the department – uphold the Batho Pele principles and the Code of Conduct for the public service in their work and in dealing with the public.

The Department of Mineral Resources managed to resolve xxxx % of its cases within the 90 day period in 2013. Most of these were chaired by managers, not the LR team because chairs are equipped with the skills they need to carry out the hearings effectively and have taken ownership of discipline management seriously. The Department has even received requests from other departments to chair their disciplinary hearings and has since provided this support to SASA, COGTA, the Departments of Rural Development, Energy, Trade and Industry and PALAMA among others.

The disciplinary management system is more effectively used because managers understand and are engaged in how the process works. Where possible, managers are able to resolve issues through an informal process of progressive, corrective discipline such as verbal warnings and counselling, rather than taking a formal disciplinary route, where this may not be appropriate or necessary.

Lessons learned

The experience of the Department of Mineral Resources shows us how on the one hand, policies are crucial in the promotion and enforcement of compliance, but it also highlights that **the existence of policies will not in itself lead to results, if the underlying problems are not addressed**. Indeed, while **the DPME's directive helped to galvanise the department into establishing mechanisms to measure concrete results, their move from a reactive '10111' approach, to a pro-active, manager-owned approach, was already well underway**.

Other **departments could benefit from greater sharing of tools, training materials and guides**, or even the development of generic tools by DPSA, similar to those developed by DMR. This would enable departments to more effectively put into practice the existing policies and strengthen ownership for discipline as a managerial function. Such tools could be more closely linked to an online system – possibly a replacement of the current PERSAL system - which the LR team feels does not add value to its work. Allowing for online case management and tracking would ensure greater coherence not just across DMR, but across the public service as a whole.

There are many important lessons to be learnt from the DMR experience. The department has demonstrated that **simple compliance is not enough to ensure effectiveness**. Instead, it preferred to stay ahead of the curve, taking initiative to analyse the root causes of their challenges, developing departmental policies such as a sexual harassment policy and an alcohol policy long before national versions were developed, creating tools to address the gaps in staff capacity to carry out the disciplinary function. This positioned LR perfectly not only to fulfill its duty but to go the extra mile to ensure a first-class disciplinary management service for all staff, ultimately promoting a culture of transparency and fairness across the department. Key lessons that can be drawn from this experience include:

- **One needs to know what is wrong in order to change it**. Introspection in understanding what holds the department back in its ability to conduct effective, timely disciplinary case management ensures that strategies are based on the reality and not perception. This needs to include an examination of staff capacity (not just in terms of qualifications but also their experience), as well as organisational processes and practices. This can be done through conducting a root cause analysis, followed by proactive implementation of corrective action based on this evidence.

- **The existence of policies does not in itself shift ownership of discipline management onto those responsible**. Policy implementation requires the development of practical tools to help people do their jobs better. In addition, staff requires empowering with the skills and knowledge to make most effective use of these tools: Engaging managers through workshops, trainings, consultations and appointments to chair hearings shifted ownership of the disciplinary function of responsibility away from LR onto managers themselves.

- **Documenting one's processes ensures consistency and builds trust**. Documenting the processes and developing tools to track and monitor the disciplinary process ensures consistency, fairness and timeliness in the department's approach nation-wide. It demonstrates that decisions are based on concrete evidence, not just opinion and allows for a smooth

transition where there are staff changes. Finally, it also allows LR to analyse trends in disciplinary cases and to implement preventive action in key problem areas.

- **Proper engagement and consultation pays off**. The LR team developed effective relationships within the organization through constant communication, but also particularly with the unions through regular consultation and developing working relationships, which helped ensure the rapid, effective resolutions of cases.

What could the future hold?

An area that LR identified for improvement was the need for increased analysis of some of the common trends in disciplinary issues at DMR. LR did manage to effectively identify alcoholism as a key theme, which led to the department's creation of an alcohol policy. However, much more could be done in other common problem areas to try to prevent disciplinary issues from occurring in the first place. Furthermore, **no official policy, guidance or targets currently exist that encourage departments to reduce the actual incidence of disciplinary cases through proactive and preventive strategies**.

The 90-Day Process compliance tool

Days	1-5	6-40	41-49	50-70	71-88	89-90
Disciplinary Process	…	..	..	..	..	..