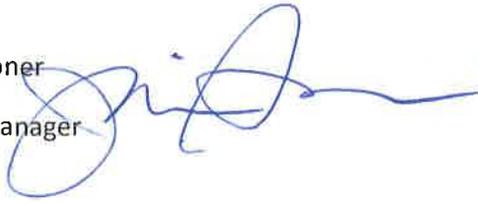


Memo to: Monica Hutt, Commissioner
From: Juliette Anderson, HR Manager
Date: May 13, 2016
Re: 2015 Employee Engagement Survey



I am happy to share a report of our findings regarding 2015 Employee Engagement survey results as well as some possible recommendations. Please know that as yet, we do not have an in-depth understanding of division or department efforts to date, so some recommendations contained herein may already be in place in some form or another.

Statewide Analysis

Statewide, three themes were identified by a team of DHR central office staff as the most frequent and pressing issues:

- ✓ Safety/Security;
- ✓ Performance Management/Accountability of others/Incentivizing Performance;
- ✓ Understaffing.

Open Office/Telework/Alternative Work Schedule; and a Disconnect between Leadership and Staff; were also identified as repeated themes. They determined that teleworking and alternative work schedules could be possible ways to address the issues that continue to be raised about open office design. They also agreed that the complaints really indicate that employees simply don't want it and that some problems just aren't necessarily "solvable".

For the disconnect with leadership, it was the group's sense that by addressing some of the themes cited below, greater communication between leadership and employees would be evident.

Safety and Security

The message we're hearing:

- We don't feel safe.
- We want to know what the Administration and Agencies are doing about safety issues.
- This is not just about shooters, but also personal interactions – customer service and even fellow-employee interactions that escalate. Also, domestic abuse situations that spill over to the workplace.
- We don't know what to do – how to react in our physical surroundings, etc.

Who is most affected/who did we hear this message the most from:

- Unemployment offices
- Tax
- Workers Compensation
- DMV
- Anyone dealing directly with customers/clients

Understaffed and Overworked

The message we're hearing:

- Morale is low
- We're stressed out
- I can't give anymore
- "Not being paid enough to put up with this much _____"
- I was proud to work for the State, but no more
- . . . and it's not going to get any better

Who is most affected/who did we hear this message the most from:

- Managers
- Supervisors
- Employees

It is across the board.

Performance Management

The message we're hearing:

- Underperformers are not being held accountable
- Leaders are not leading by example
- Leaders don't have the skills to do what their roles require
- We want incentives for high performance (tied to performance reviews)
- We want you to manage out the low performers
- Why should I do more when so-and-so is loafing?
- Supervisors are not doing their jobs (managing others)
- Lack of consistency in:
 - Doing evaluations; and
 - Use of the rating scale in evaluations

Who is most affected/who did we hear this message the most from:

- Managers
- Supervisors
- Employees

It is across the board.

DAIL-Specific Analysis

4,523 total SOV employees participated in this year's survey which took place from October 26 – November 2, 2015. 200 of 264 DAIL staff responded - a strong representation – almost 76%.

Results and Comparisons with survey data from 2014

Response rate in 2014 – 75.5%

Response rate in 2015 – 75.8%

Job duties and their relationship to the mission/goals of DAIL

DAIL realized a slight uptick in response to all questions in this area, including a 3% increase in directly linking the work staff do to department goals and a 2% increase in enjoyment in day to day work. 87% of respondents enjoy the work they do which is 9% above the average for all SOV respondents. DAIL also saw a 2% increase in support of the work being meaningful and rewarding (90.5%) – this is a full 15.7% higher than the SOV average.

Communications with leadership and working well with other departments

DAIL realized significant improvement in all areas including an almost 10% increase in satisfaction with top down communications for a total of 74.5%. The same holds true with opportunities to provide feedback – a 9.2% gain! A solid 8% increase in support of how DAIL collaborates with other departments and agencies was also seen. Overall, DAIL is well above the SOV average in these areas.

Morale

Staff morale in DAIL has increased a full 15% which is more than 20% above the average for SOV employees across the board. That said, there's still room for further improvement, as good morale sits at 64%. High marks were realized all the way thru in questions related to teamwork, respect and caring among colleagues, and again, DAIL is well above the SOV average. Improvement was seen in all questions related to the ability to communicate openly, lack of tolerance for harassment and discrimination and confidence about reported misconduct being handled.

The Supervisor

12 total questions were asked related to supervision. Again, DAIL is well above the average in overall support for supervisors and each question reflected improvement from last year. The most dramatic increase (7%) came from the "my supervisor seems to care about me as a person" question which had dipped 8% in FY '14. Questions related to getting the training needed to perform one's job (69% agreement) and ongoing discussion with one's supervisor regarding career development (57% agreement) showed improvement from the previous year, but are areas worthy of further focus in ensuring supervisors and managers understand these elements of well-rounded supervision. Regarding the issuance of performance evaluations, approximately 66% of respondents reported receiving annual evaluations. Nearly 75% of respondents also agreed that the standards used to evaluate performance were fair.

Workload, staffing and resources

Staff quite clearly believe DAIL is understaffed – a full 71.5% which is only slightly less than the state average. Slightly less than half of respondents (48%) feel the amount of work they're expected to perform is reasonable, though this number improved by 6% from last year. A plurality of staff also believe they have the resources they need to do their job well; this is up 6% from last year, but 43% still disagree. In drilling down further, a slight majority of respondents agree that they have the technology

needed to get work done. An 8.6% increase in support of the ability for work-life balance was also realized over FY '14, and DAIL is 3% ahead of the state average in this area, but 38.5% of staff feel otherwise. What is noteworthy and encouraging, is that while DAIL staff do feel they have a lot on their plates, they still appreciate working for DAIL overall. Finally, it's of no surprise that the number of staff who feel safe and secure in their work environments dipped 5.5%. This is true of the state average too. This survey was taken just two months after the killing of a Social Worker in DCF.

Compensation and Benefits

Only one question in this area, across state government, reflected an increase in uncertainty with job security.

One of the greatest takeaways that DAIL leaders can feel encouraged about is... the very last question: "In general are you satisfied with your job?" A full 87.3% of DAIL respondents agreed – a full 9% increase over the previous year and 15% better than the state average.

Staff Comments

86 of the 200 DAIL respondents took the time to add open ended comments. The comments were varied; I categorized them by theme – some had multiple comments spanning a variety of areas. First, their concerns:

- **15** staff cited understaffing as a major concern.
- **9** staff shared concerns about supervisors who were unskilled in their ability to supervise effectively.
- **8** staff cited concerns about pay cuts and need for better pay.
- **8** staff cited a need to improve morale, provide better PR with the public about what they do and get more respect from the Administration for the work they do, rather than focus on cutting more from state employees.
- **7** staff shared concerns about IT – lack of technology, lack of support.
- **5** staff complained about non-performing employees seemingly being retained rather than terminated.
- **5** staff want to see improvements in comparable classification of positions and pay equity as compared to the private sector.
- **4** staff referenced poor cross-agency communications, to include silos that prevent sharing of client information.
- **3** staff had concerns about current contractual benefits and how they're implemented, e.g. losing personal leave or not earning it if using over 8 hours of sick leave.
- **3** staff weren't kind about HR services or lack thereof.
- **2** staff would like to see more training opportunities.
- **2** staff want to see a more liberal telecommuting option.
- **2** staff have concerns about safety.
- **1** employee stated that workloads seem imbalanced; some staff have too much and others, not enough.

Folks are typically more likely to take the time to write about concerns. On the positive side, a few made the effort to speak to what they appreciate:

- 6 employees praised VR – one cited their OD work as critical to the operation.
- 4 employees praised DAIL's culture.
- 1 employee thought there was good cross-department communication.
- 1 employee praised a unit in DLP.

The TOP 3 ISSUES and a few suggestions/recommendations:

1. Understaffing

- Are positions within DAIL properly balanced?
- Is DAIL making efforts to determine where redistribution of resources across the department may be realized?

There are a variety of ways DAIL can, as an organization, continuously monitor the effectiveness of existing position allocations to include:

- a. Requiring division leaders to review and assess each upcoming vacancy to discern if the position can have a more significant impact on overall operations in a different iteration or location, prior to immediately moving to recruit. This could include a checklist that asks specific questions, e.g. – can the duties assigned to this position be reasonably dispersed to other staff without a negative impact on overall operations? Is there a need to add a supervisor to this unit (or conversely, a subordinate) instead of the unit's current configuration? Are the minimum qualifications and job description accurate for what is needed now?
- b. Requiring final approval to recruit any DAIL position come from the Commissioner's office in concert with identifying and tracking legitimate emerging needs department-wide - be willing to repurpose and redistribute existing vacancies across divisions as needed and as able. (This is always a tough sell....)
- c. Ensure divisions are using a LEAN process to assist with identifying resources and eliminating waste.

2. Need for improved supervisory skills

- Are managers and supervisors being held accountable for compliance with issuing original probationary and annual performance evaluations? (There's state statute requiring annual performance evaluations be issued!)
- Is there a need to encourage utilization of your HR Manager and HR Administrator to coach supervisors through performance and misconduct issues? (This is something we do very successfully on a regular basis.)
- Is regular discussion with subordinates about career development and training opportunities a part of DAIL's culture?

HR is always willing and able to support individual supervisor and management needs as well as provide targeted training on a variety of topics. Specific strategies to support supervisors can include:

- a. Development of standard performance expectations for multi-position classes and single positions for the purpose of providing these expectations to employees when onboarding, formally addressing these expectations with supervisees on a quarterly basis in addition to regular "supervision" time, culminating in a working document that's ready to be incorporated into an annual evaluation.
- b. Ensure new and weaker supervisors are enrolling in the Supervision in State Government trainings as soon as possible. This is a mandated expectation from the Agency of Administration of all supervisors and managers
- c. Ensure supervisors/managers engage with the assigned HR Administrator or HR Manager **EARLY** in the process when dealing with performance or misconduct issues to avoid having to "settle" issues and retain poor employees due to management or supervisory errors/ineffectiveness/lack of following policies, contractual provisions/lack of timeliness.

3. Overall morale

- DAIL is very strong in this area which is something leaders can be very proud of, particularly in these challenging fiscal times.

Recommendations:

- a. As VR is consistently cited by staff as a great place to work, learn what efforts have been made with the goal of adopting and implementing select strategies across the department where feasible.
- b. Review current division and department-wide Employee Recognition efforts and invite your HR Administrator to participate as a member of DAIL's merit committee.
- c. Ensure your HR staff are aware of issues as they arise.
- d. Continue and/or enhance department-wide communications.

I hope this overview is helpful; Sarah and I remain willing to engage at all levels to assist with DAIL's goals. Full results of the Employee Engagement Surveys can be found here:

<http://humanresources.vermont.gov/content/employee-engagement-survey-results-2015>