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Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation

Editorial Note: Although every effort has been made to insure the accuracy of the material in this presentation, the scope of the material covered and the discussions undertaken lends itself to the possibility of minor transcription misinterpretations.

PRESENTATION BY

Michael J. Henry

Director of Personnel, Department of Human Resources (DHR), Los Angeles County

Topic: Personnel Management in Los Angeles County

January 6, 2005

Chairman Philibosian introduced Michael J. Henry and welcomed him to the Commission.

Board Direction

Mr. Henry introduced his staff: Ms. Lu Takeuchi, Organizational Development Manager responsible for all the training within the county including the Los Angeles County Training Academy, and Mr. Darin Chiu, a staff member involved with organizational development. He then addressed the concern of the Commission - succession planning which is a problem that is not unique to Los Angeles County. Succession planning is a process to prepare employees for promotion to increasingly responsible positions within the county when these positions become available.

On October 12, Supervisor Knabe introduced a motion that was unanimously approved which expressed a concern over the large number of department head vacancies (7 or approximately 20% of county departments). The adopted motion directed DHR and the E&E Commission to review the current county programs that exist which develop and mentor managers into leadership positions and to report back within 90 days.

Human Resources in Los Angeles County

Mr. Henry noted that during his 29 year career with Los Angeles County, human resources (HR) has been all over the map. It began as a very strong centralized personnel department that was transactional in nature. During the 1980's it became increasingly decentralized. The HR responsibility was given directly to departments to manage on their own with the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) keeping a very small HR policy. In the early 1990's the Board of Supervisors realized that it was difficult trying to manage HR information for 90,000 employees in 37 different departments and thus, created the Department of Human Resources.

The Los Angeles County Training Academy

In 1998, DHR developed a plan to address management and executive development needs. The cornerstone of that program was the Los Angeles County Training Academy. The Academy is a partnership of the Los Angeles County with the State Universities, Community Colleges, and LA Unified School District. These educational institutions provide the county with the training and education for the County employees in a customized manner to fit the specific needs of Los Angeles County. The Academy encompasses a wide range of training levels from clerical to department heads.

Succession Planning

In February, 2000, the Division Chief Program was launched. This is a customized certificate training program that targets employees that are one level below Division Chief to prepare to assume greater responsibilities. This program had been created as a result of a December, 1999 assessment that showed 30% of senior management retiring within the next 5 years. The results of that assessment seems to be consistent with the results of a more recent data from in May, 2004 which showed 28% of senior management retiring within the next 5 years. Since a large percentage of this retirement was at the Division Chief level the program was developed to enable employees to compete for these positions. The Academy currently has 14 certificate programs that are recognized by the California State University system and therefore employees receive Continuing Education Units (CEU's) for each course, as well as professional development certificates.

The Academy's Bureau Chief Program is a new, very high level program that had been initiated on October 27, 2004 with 16 Bureau Chiefs going through the training. These 16 individuals were selected for this program by a group of County Managers including the CAO, Director of DHR and several other department heads using merit as a basis for selection. These individuals are receiving the education needed to prepare them for positions of Assistant Chief Deputy, Chief Deputy, or Department Head. There are other training programs being conducted such as Division Chiefs, Section Heads, specialized programs in HR, Budgeting & Finance, and Contracting.

The County Strategic Plan

Mr. Henry noted that he has been working with the CAO on the County's Strategic Plan for almost 4 years. A revised Plan has been drafted for review and approval by the Board. There are goals related to workforce excellence for this plan: implementing an e-learning suite so that managers and employees can utilize an electronic database for different learning applications; creating a vacancy database to enable managers to identify all employment opportunities within the county; and utilizing an intra-departmental job rotation program to enable employees to rotate laterally or vertically into different positions. In addition, a formal management mentoring program that involves identifying managers outside of the department to mentor employees could be established. Mr. Henry reported that he and his staff are taking a look at what competencies are needed for managers to move forward or laterally in their careers. They are also looking at a program that would identify upcoming county vacancies earlier so that incoming individual would have an opportunity for training overlap. He and his staff are looking at working within the budget constraints of simultaneously having 2 people in 1 budgeted position.

Commissioner Questions

Chairman Philibosian asked about the scope of supervision and the executive or management duties for Section Head, Division Head, and Bureau Chief? Mr. Henry and Ms. Takeuchi respond that the Section Head is a first or entry level management position that oversees some technical units, the Division Chief would be the next level up that would be responsible for supervising a much larger unit. A Division Chief might have multiple sections with budget, accounting and administrative responsibility. A Bureau Chief is responsible for many divisions within a department including having policy determination responsibility. A Chief Deputy is the next level and is responsible for policy creation as well. The Department Head would be the highest level within the departmental structure.

Commissioner Petak asked how the Bureau Chief's training schedule is established. Mr. Henry and Ms. Takeuchi responded that they meet 10 times, 4 hours/day in a four month period from 4:00 pm – 8:00 pm.

Additionally, they have assigned projects as part of the diagnostic program that is used to learn new theory and how to apply it in everyday operations. There is also coaching to help them develop as leaders.

Commissioner Petak asked how Mr. Henry proposed to measure the effectiveness of any succession planning program. Mr. Henry explained that the county spent a lot of time with the Academy identifying and accessing needs. Academy participants are tested during and at the end of the training. They must pass all the tests to advance. Considering the challenges in putting into action what has been learned in the Academy, they have given annual follow-up training which also serves as an opportunity for peer networking. The group is growing and will have an impact on the culture of the county.

Commissioner Tortorice asked if this is being done within the civil service framework. Mr. Henry replied that any program of this nature has to be done within the civil service structure although, since some of those positions are at-will, there is some flexibility.

Commissioner Tortorice asked how the people are selected. Mr. Henry answered that the selection process is very stringent. An individual can apply with the approval of their manager and department head or they can be recommended by their department. An executive level committee then reviews their qualifications prior to their acceptance.

Commissioner Petak asked if large American industries (i.e. Motorola, G.E., and Xerox) that are famous for in-house academies have been looked at as a model. Mr. Henry mentioned that he had visited IBM's schools, but recognized that the county lacks the training budget of these large organizations. By partnering with the university and school systems county employees are considered students and these institutions are able to collect other revenues, thereby lowering the county's costs. He is interested in also taking a look at how these large industries do their employee evaluations.

Commissioner Sullivan asked how employees who have gone through the academy are kept from reverting back to their old ways. Mr. Henry answered that one means of keep the energy going is through the support of the CAO and DHR and the possibility of promoting the individuals that have gone through the Academy.

Commissioner Fuhrman asked who's doing the bureau chief training. Mr. Henry explained that a number of professors, some from California State University at Northridge, in addition to special guest speakers who present differing management philosophies.

Vice-Chair Ikejiri asked how managers are encouraged to participate in professional and political mentoring. Mr. Henry responded that after considering both formal and informal mentoring programs, informal mentoring programs work the best. In an informal mentoring program individuals tend to migrate to someone with whom they can establish a relationship over time. DHR is trying to design a formal program that allows for an informal mentoring.

Commissioner Padilla asked what is the Board agreed-upon criteria for department head staff management and how are internal candidates applying for higher level positions compared to external candidates applying for the same position. Mr. Henry answered that the county strategic plan builds goals and objectives for the department heads. Managers develop their goals using the department head goals as a guideline. These goals are then reinforced and aligned throughout the organization.

Commissioner Petak asked how the Commission can help enhance the budget to support this program. Mr. Henry responded that commissioners should review the report that has been passed out and note any deficiencies. If there is a deficiency, the Commission and DHR can go to the Board with a plan and request additional resources.

Commissioner Baltierrez asked how employees and department heads can become more knowledgeable about other departments. Mr. Henry responded that the Academy is trying to teach "The One Stop" information by using electronic and data systems more efficiently. Additionally there are many initiatives to implement the customer service category of the strategic plan.

Commissioner Fuhrman asked about a review of performance appraisals at the division and section head level with the purpose of determining how many are still with the county and how they compare to their peers who haven't gone through the Academy. Mr. Henry answered that it is difficult to tell at this time. Ms. Takeuchi responded that these are difficult programs requiring a large commitment of time. As a result, these individuals highly motivated to succeed. DHR is currently performing some analysis of the available data.

Chairman Philibosian thanked Mr. Henry and his staff for devoting their time to a very informative and insightful presentation.

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