# DSS Human Resource Areas for Improvement
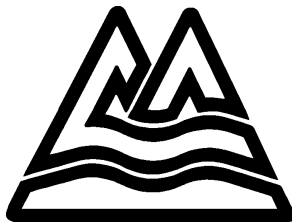
Good Government Benchmark Analysis
Multnomah County, Oregon

Department of Support Services

**APRIL 1999**

# Department of Support Services
# Human Resource Areas for Improvement

Over the past year, the Department of Support Services (DSS) has used three instruments to measure employee satisfaction and to identify areas for improvement.  Employee input from the three instruments has uncovered three consistent areas of improvement.  Please keep in mind that the report is identifying specific areas for improvement, and should be kept in the context for which it was written.

**Instruments:**
- **130 DSS Employee Surveys (72% response rate)**
- **39 DSS Survey Comments (30% response rate)**
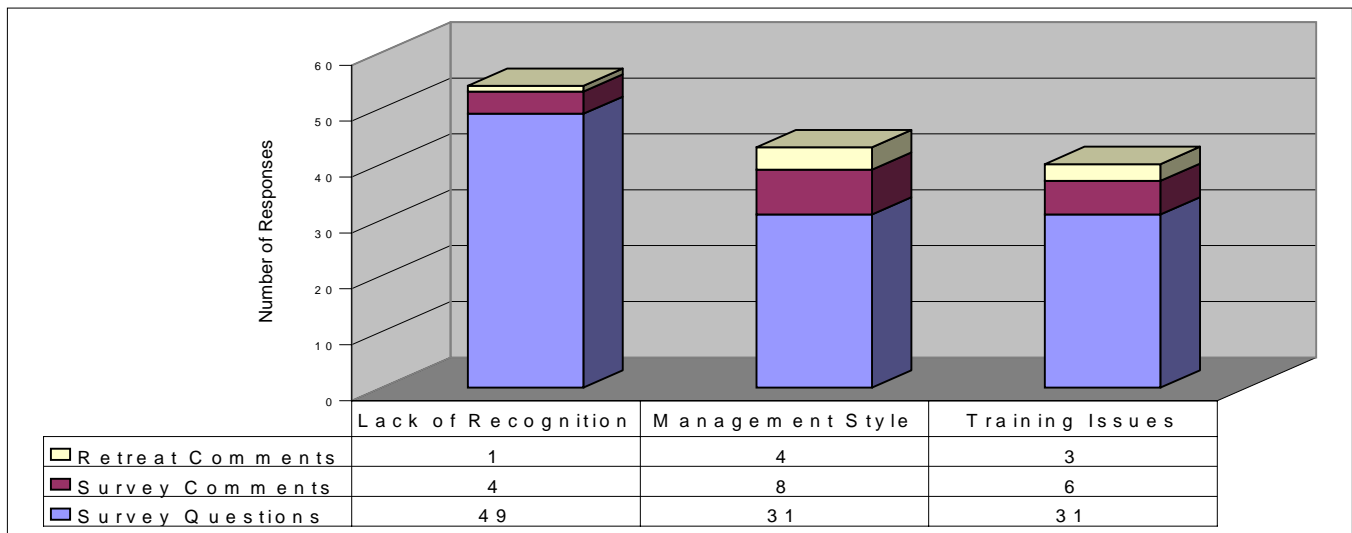- **24 DSS Employee Retreat Comments**

## • Lack of Recognition
1. 38% of DSS employees did not feel recognized for their quality work.
2. 10% of all negative DSS survey comments (not including concerns about the survey design) stated a lack of recognition.
3. 4% of the DSS retreat comments were categorized as recognition issues.

## • Management Style
1. 24% of DSS employees disagreed with various aspects of management style--specifically, issues of decision making, trust, communication, and roles at DSS.
2. 20% of all negative DSS survey comments were concerns about management style.
3. 17% of the DSS retreat comments centered around management style--specifically management/line staff interpersonal communication issues.

## • Training Issues
1. 24% of DSS employees expressed concerns about training—specifically, receiving training, career development, and new employee training.
2. 15% of all negative DSS survey comments centered around training issues.
3. 12% of the DSS retreat comments dealt with employee training.



| | Lack of Recognition | Management Style | Training Issues |
|---|---|---|---|
| Retreat Comments | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Survey Comments | 4 | 8 | 6 |
| Survey Questions | 49 | 31 | 31 |

# Lack of Recognition

Overall, Lack of Recognition accounted for the greatest amount of concern by DSS employees. This area had the greatest number of employees in disagreement with employee recognition in the DSS employee survey. Dissatisfaction was also reflected in several DSS employee survey comments and one question from the DSS employee retreat.

Survey Question (SQ): *Question 35, We receive meaningful recognition when we achieve quality and customer service goals.*
Survey Comments (SC): 1) *Line staff not acknowledged for good performance, 2) Unfair bonus and promotion practices*, 3) *There is a need for more positive affirmations*, and 4) *Others are overlooked.*
Retreat Comment (RC): 1) *Are there career advancements and promotional opportunities available?*
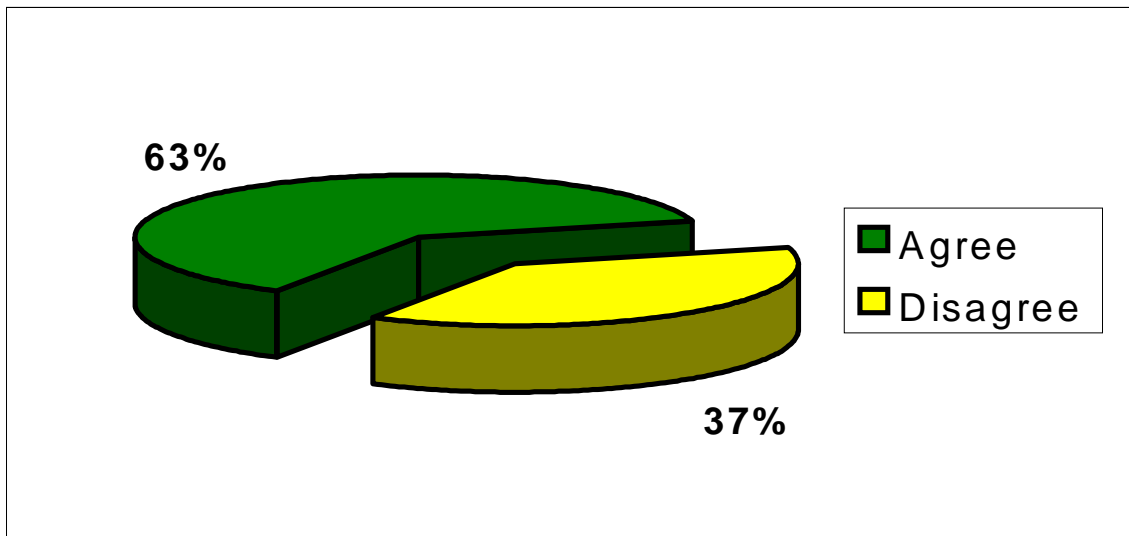


Question 35, *We receive meaningful recognition when we achieve quality and customer service goals.*

## Specific Issues
### No Recognition for Quality Work
- 37% of DSS employees felt they didn't receive meaningful recognition when we achieve quality and customer service goals (SQ35)
- Line staff is not acknowledged for good performance (SC1). There is a need for more positive affirmations (SC3).
### Bonus and Promotion Frustrations
- Unfair bonus and promotion practices (SC2). [In terms of promotions in DSS] others are overlooked (SC4).
- Are there career advancements and promotional opportunities available (RC1)?

# Management Style

Overall, Management Style accounted for the second greatest amount of concern by DSS employees. This area had the highest number of comments from both the DSS retreat and the DSS employee survey, and the second greatest number of employees in disagreement with Management Style in the DSS employee survey questions.

Survey Questions (SQ): *Question 5, My division manager communicates goals and values clearly and openly; Question 6, My division manager is willing to address all issues; Question 31, I have the opportunity to give input regarding the human resources practices of our division; Question 38, There is a relatively high level of trust between managers and employees in this division; Question 87, When people in our work unit contribute input and ideas, they feel they have been "listened to"; Question 92, In our work unit, people feel free to express alternative viewpoints; and Question 93, Differing individual communication styles are valued as adding to the effectiveness of our work unit.*
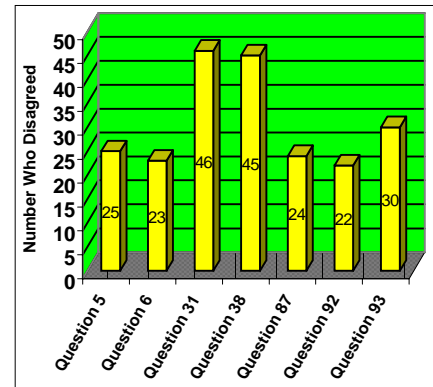


Survey Comments (SC): 1)*Unfair division between management and non-management, 2) Train and lead by example, 3) Until lower-line managers change, nothing will, 4) Some upper management are counter-productive, egocentric, abusive, and insensitive,* 5) *DSS is disorganized, 6) Management doesn't include line staff in decision making process,* 7) *I don't feel a part of DSS, and 8) (Question 93, Differing individual communication styles are valued as adding to the effectiveness of our work unit) Individuality isn't as accepted as stated.*
Retreat Comments (RC): *1) Are there clear job descriptions and work expectations for each employee? 2) Could you have made improvements suggestions if you had been asked? 3) Does your manager trust you? 4) Evaluation of managers by line staff to identify managers who need to improve communication and accountability.*

## Specific Issues
### DSS Decision Making
- 35% of employees don't feel as though they have the opportunity to give input regarding human resource practices (SQ31).
- Management doesn't include line staff in decision making process (SC6).
- Could you have made improvements suggestions if you have been asked (RC2)?
### Employee & Manager Trust
- 35% don't feel a sense of trust between themselves and their managers (SQ38).
- Does your manager trust you (RC3)?
### Communication Style
- 23% don't feel differing communication styles are valued as adding to the effectiveness of our work unit (SQ93). 17% don't feel free to express alternative viewpoints (SQ92).
- Individuality isn't as accepted as stated (SC8)
- Evaluation of managers by line staff to identify managers who need to improve communication and accountability (RC4)
### DSS Employee Roles
- Unfair division between management and non-management (SC1). Train and lead by example (SC2). Until lower-line managers change, nothing will (SC3).
    - Are there clear job descriptions and work expectations for each employee (RC1)?

# Training Issues

Overall, Training Issues accounted for the third greatest amount of concern by DSS employees. This area had the second highest number of comments from both the DSS retreat and the DSS employee survey, and had 31 employees in disagreement with Training Issues in the DSS employee survey questions.

Survey Questions (SQ): *Question 12, My Division Manager supports training and other learning opportunities for all employees throughout the division; Question 26, People in our work unit receive the education and training they need to stay current on their field; Question 29, The training we receive in our work unit is part of an overall training and development plan for the division; Question 30, In our work unit, we have received appropriate and timely training about how to apply quality concepts and tools to improve performance;*



*and Question 70, I have received guidance and training about our customer service standards to enable me to serve a wide array of customers effectively.*
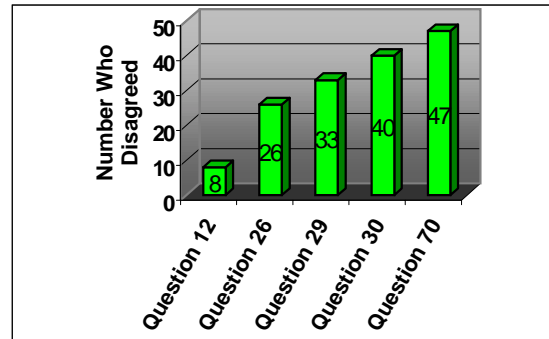
Survey Comments (SC): 1) *Training for understanding should be a continuous process*, 2) *Lack of training, especially for new employees*, 3) *Talk only not action, especially with training RESULTS, 4) Quality Initiative terms, and Diversity training should be mandatory for all new hires*, and 5) *Diversity and education are good, but no time is available.*

Retreat Comment (RC): 1) *Are adequate means available to deliver needed training to your clients? 2) Do you feel your work area is changing faster than you can keep up with, even with training? 3) Encourage employees to take initiative and responsibility for own development. If they want training, they need to ask, etc.*

## Specific Issues
### Receiving Training
- Employees do not feel as though they have received training in many different areas: 20% in their current field (SQ26), 25% in their divisional development plan (SQ29), and specifically, 31% in their quality concepts (SQ30) and 36% in their customer service standards (SQ70).
- Training for understanding should be a continuous process (SC1). Diversity and education are good, but no time is available (SC5).
- Encourage employees to take initiative and responsibility for own development. If they want training, they need to ask, etc (RC3).
### Career Development
- 20% of DSS employees do not feel that "people in our work unit receive the education and training they need to stay current on their field (SQ26)."
- Training for understanding should be a continuous process (SC1).
- Do you feel your work area is changing faster than you can keep up with, even with training (RC2)?
### New Employee Training
- Lack of training, especially for new employees (SC2). Quality Initiative terms, and Diversity training should be mandatory for all new hires (SC4).