Four Valuable Performance Evaluation Tools for Employees

NANCY HAGER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case study describes four Santa Cruz County (SCC) Human Services Department's (HSD) Performance Evaluation tools that were developed for employees to be more productive and be able to provide exceptional customer experience. These tools are the on-line Employee Expectations Manual, the Employee Expectations Checklist Certification, the Supervisor File, and Job Expectations. Contra Costa County (CCC) Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) selected this case study because it is in the process of remodeling the intranet website, one of its main communication tools, to make it more attractive and user friendly for employees. SCC HSD's organizational development model is based on providing the necessary tools for employees to succeed in their jobs and the standardization of policies to hold employees accountable for their actions. The implementation of these tools has proven to be effective. Employees find the on-line Employee Expectations Manual user-friendly and enforceable along with the Employee Expectations Checklist Certification. The Supervisor File is also a powerful organizational tool as it provides a guide for recordkeeping often needed for coaching. The Jobs Expectations is a blue print of the application of the job duties for employees, intended to help employees to be able to meet the department's expectations and provide exceptional customer experience. It is recommended that CCC EHSD take these valuable tools into consideration for implementation and make the appropriate changes to meet the needs of the employees and the department in order to support a focus on exceptional customer experience.

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Introduction

Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services (EHSD) is committed to the delivery of exceptional customer experience and recognizes that employees play an instrumental role in the delivery of services. One way to measure the county's progress on the delivery of exceptional customer experience is by evaluating employees' performance. Performance evaluations are used to measure outcomes and hold employees accountable for their actions. Consequently, having the necessary tools and resources available to employees will be essential to their professional success while delivering exceptional customer experience. This case study primarily focuses on tools and resources that have become best practices in the Performance Evaluation system of SCC HSD. Within the last four years, SCC HSD reevaluated its performance management system to create an organizational development model that focuses on providing information and tools necessary for employees to contribute to SCC HSD's mission. Some of SCC's ideas presented in this case study are the on-line Employee Expectations Manual, Employee Expectations Checklist Certification, the Supervisor File, and Job Expectations. Some of the methodologies used for this case study included site visits, interviews, survey analysis, follow-up questions, general academic and on-line research. An analysis of the implications is discussed, and recommendations are presented in hopes that CCC HSD will consider revamping its performance management system.

Key Elements

On-line Employee Expectations Manual

SCC HSD developed the On-line Employee Expectations Manual to provide employees with information that promotes the HSD's values and expectations related to county-wide policies. It serves as a one-stop, centralized resource comprised of four primary chapters: 1) Promoting Professional Conduct, 2) Supporting Safety and Well-Being, 3) Protecting Confidentiality and Personally Identifiable Information (PII), and 4) Complying with Technology, Facilities and Equipment Policies. During the selection of above policies, county and HSD policies were reviewed and prioritized; the ones selected are pertinent to every employee regardless of position and reinforced annually. The policies related to specific positions are cross-referenced.

SCC HSD used the DNN Evoq Content Management System (CMS) to present the on-line Employee Expectations Manual. The content and organization of the web pages were developed by subject matter experts (SME's) that included members of staff development, personnel, policy, information technology (IT) and management. The use of drop-down menus and hyperlinks helped present the information in a concise and easily understood way. SCC HSD utilizes the CMS automated process to keep its policies updated. These policies have "expiry dates." The SME's revise these policies semi-annually or annually; the content editors have security access to make the appropriate changes in CMS.

SCC HSD's staff provided excellent feedback of the on-line Employee Expectation Manual. They found the navigation to be helpful and user-friendly. It provides various county and HSD policies in one location. Also, it provides convenience as staff are able to go back and review these materials when time permits. For disciplinary purposes, the county has leverage to hold employees accountable for their actions, as information is accessible in various ways.

CCC EHSD's intranet could be improved to resemble the web pages of SCC HSD's On-Line Employee Expectation Manual and develop an on-line centralized resource for policies. CCC EHSD uses Shared Text Automated Retrieval System (STARS) in the intranet as the main tool of communication for its employees. Department manual sections, department memoranda, emergency communications, and other types of communications are published and stored in STARS in different sections. For example, the Standard of Conduct policies are located under the section 10-002 of the EHSD Administrative Standard Manual, while confidentiality issues are addressed in different program regulations, such as the 64-001 section of the Medi-Cal Manual. Confidentiality forms, such as the Confidentiality Statement ADM 10, is found under the FormSTAR section. Even though these communications are related, they are stored in different locations, sometimes making it difficult and discouraging for employees to search for them in a timely manner. In addition, some of these communications need to be removed, revised, or updated altogether.

CCC EHSD uses SharePoint as its web application; however, its features are underutilized. This application has great functionalities such as a search engine, intranet portals, document/file management, social networks, public-facing website, and more. It also has the ability to set expiration dates. CCC EHSD could use these functions to improve the intranet to communicate with staff.

CCC EHSD IT Department conducted a survey in 2014 to identify the employees' IT needs. As a result, employees voiced the need to improve search capabilities of policies within the intranet. Currently, EHSD IT Department has a team of SME's working on remodeling the intranet to make it appealing and easy to navigate. This case study presents a timely opportunity for the CCC EHSD IT Department to observe SCC HSD's intranet to gather ideas regarding the organization and presentation of policies to its employees; possibly then implementing similar ideas in CCC EHSD.

EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS CHECKLIST CERTIFICATION

Along with the on-line Employee Expectations Manual, SCC HSD developed a one-page checklist of these policies. Employees are required to read the checklist on-line and then initial and certify a checklist confirming they understood and discussed the content of each policy with their supervisors. Employees are required and allowed time to read the on-line Employee Expectations Manual at the time they are hired and during their annual evaluations. Employees have access to the manual at all times. During the annual evaluation, the supervisor is required to review and discuss the manual with the employee and sign the checklist verifying the discussion. The supervisor sends the completed checklist along with the performance evaluation to personnel. The implementation of this process has been beneficial to SCC HSD when applying progressive discipline. Employees are held accountable for breaching a policy they signed.

CCC EHSD managers, staff development specialists, personnel staff, and supervisors found the Employee Expectations Checklist helpful and complimented SCC HSD's creativity. CCC EHSD has encountered similar situations in which employees claimed they did not receive the material or did not understand its content. Implementing a checklist of mandatory policies will be beneficial for CCC EHSD. This checklist could be included into the Eligibility Worker Training Unit (EWTU) induction training material and the New Employee Orientation (NEO) binder at the time employees are newly hired and during their annual evaluations. At each evaluation, employees will have the opportunity

to review these policies and ask questions. The implementation of the checklist will prevent misunderstandings between management and staff. It promotes transparency and accountability for both the county and employees.

Supervisor File

UC Davis Extension, a leader in professional training, works collaboratively with California counties to provide effective training. Both SCC and CCC supervisors participate in these trainings. One of the trainings offered is The Supervisory Effectiveness Program. Monitoring and Evaluating Job Performance is part of the curriculum. During training, a sample Supervisor File is provided to help supervisors better organize employees' performance records. The content of the Supervisor File is as follows:

Calendar – This is used to keep record of absences including tardiness, sick leave, vacations, etc. in order to identify patterns of misused time.

Documentation Notes – This is used to keep notes of monthly conferences and positive/negative events which can be used to personalize performance evaluations.

Employee Appraisal – Upon annual evaluation, the employee is asked to complete an individual appraisal questionnaire which goes into the Supervisor File. In the event the supervisor misses details, the employee has the opportunity to elaborate on his/her accomplishments which can open the door for further discussion.

Training Notes – This section is meant to list formal or informal training. It provides the supervisor an opportunity to identify failure to apply learning and provide coaching.

Progressive Discipline Documents – The order in which progressive discipline documents should be filed is provided for reference.

Emergency Contact – Personal information is kept in the folder in the event of an emergency.

Although SCC HSD and CCC EHSD received the same information from UC Davis, SCC HSD is applying it department-wide; and, CCC EHSD is applying it on a case-by-case basis. Leslie Scanagatta, SCC HSD Personnel Officer, has trained each HSD supervisor on the usage of the Supervisor File allowing all supervisors to have the ability to use and implement this tool. This Supervisor File has been standardized department-wide.

Job Expectations

When the employer communicates clear expectations describing job duties, the employee is able to meet these expectations as well as customers' needs. In order to hold employees accountable for their actions, SCC HSD embarked on a monumental project developing job expectations for every classification including clerical staff, benefit representatives, and supervisors. As part of the research, the SCC HSD Director reviewed the job specifications for approximately 69 job classifications held by 490 employees within HSD; the director determined the job descriptions were too broad, and the roles needed to be updated. The objectives of this project on its 2014 draft states:

- "To provide a blue print for employees to understand how to perform their jobs and for the supervisors to support and evaluate employees.
- Take HSD job classifications and develop a job expectation document for each division..."

For two years now, a SCC HSD's team has continued working diligently to develop the job expectations for each HSD job classification as the number of disciplinary actions and appeals has decreased indicating their success.

Similar to SCC HSD's findings, CCC EHSD has different job classifications and job descriptions that are generic as they do not describe the specific job duties, and some roles have changed. CCC EHSD supervisors are expected to develop the goals and expectations for their unit members. Goals and expectations may vary among units and are not standardized department-wide. Although the goals and

expectations provide more information, they are intended to describe general guidelines to establish good relationships with other unit members, the supervisor, and the department.

Implications

For the **On-line Employee Expectations Manual**, remaining focused on the strategic goals will be fundamental to keep the size of the project manageable. This will also help minimize intranet space and data storage. For the **Employee Expectations Certification Checklist**, the employees may forget to submit it to Personnel causing delays in the process and requiring follow up. For the **Supervisor File**, supervisors may resist implementing it as they may have their own organization system established. The employee appraisal questionnaire will be a new practice for some of the bureaus within the department, which may cause speculations. Employees may feel unsure of its purpose and cause hesitancy. For the **Job Expectations**, determining the "job duties" for all EHSD job classifications could be overwhelming as this will be a large project. Due to the size of EHSD, it is imperative to have sufficient personnel analysts to dedicate their time; however, currently the Personnel Department is understaffed. Other implications to keep in mind for all tools are resources and budget. Employees' time and salaries would be the main resources used. The budget will include various soft costs for all four tools, such as employees' salaries, training, surveys, testing, and printing materials—among others. The on-line Employee Expectations Manual and Job Expectations tools will require hiring a consultant and or retiree for their services.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the on-line **Employee Expectations Manual** be handled by a project management team and follow the current EHSD Project Charter Process. The team members may include an executive leader sponsor, a project manager, a SharePoint designer, a Public Information Officer, and members of Staff Development, Personnel, Policy and IT departments.

The strategic objectives will be redesigning the intranet website to improve ease of use, attractiveness, functionality, and develop the content and deliverables within set timeframes. It is recommended that this project be strategically planned in phases for a period of six to nine months in order to make the research, organization, and presentation of data manageable. The timeline will include getting feedback between deliverables and publishing finalized documents. Employees will need training that could be done in a classroom or on-line setting. It is recommended to keep open communication with labor unions, evaluate the process, and make appropriate changes as needed.

For the **Employee Certification Checklist**, **Supervisor File**, and **Job Expectations** it is recommended to keep open communication with employees to standardize the policy. Managers or personnel analysts showing and explaining the purpose of the **Employee Certification Checklist** and **Supervisor File** to employees will be helpful. It is recommended to include the Employee Certification Checklist in the NEO and EWTU Induction binder. Due to the size of the **Job Expectations** project and personnel turnover, it is recommended to follow the EHSD Project Charter process and determine strategic objectives and timelines in the future. This will imply creating a workgroup that would primarily be composed of personnel and staff development team members.

It is recommended that EHSD consider standardizing these tools department-wide for consistency and better delivery of services. Also, it is recommended to determine a performance measure mechanism to monitor and evaluate outcomes. In addition, maintaining open communication with labor unions throughout the process will create a smooth transition.

Conclusion

This case study presents four performance and evaluation tools that will help employees improve their work productivity promoting customer service experience. The standardization of these tools by

SCC HSD provided department-wide consistency and reduced the number of disciplinary actions and appeals. As CCC EHSD is currently remodeling its intranet, this is a timely opportunity to incorporate some of SCC HSD's best practices. The on-line Employee Expectations Manual, the Employee Certification Checklist, and the Supervisor File are tools that EHSD should consider implementing this year. The Job Expectations tool presents a challenge due to current Personnel understaffing and the large scope of the project; however, it can be further evaluated in the near future.

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References

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