

Public Sector Reform Challenges for an incoming Government

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Agenda

- Key reforms focus on improving performance.
- The characteristics of high performing organisations.
- The challenges to be addressed.
- Old problems need innovative solutions.
- Conclusions.

Reform plans to improve performance

- The objectives of the Public Service Reform Plan cover – delivery of improved outcomes, capitalising on the reform dividend, digitalisation and open data, and openness and accountability
- The four cross cutting initiatives are – a focus on service users, a focus on efficiency, a focus on openness and a focus on leadership and capacity
- The aim is to develop a high performing workforce that possesses the range of competencies required to function more effectively in the more complex policy environment

Reform plans to improve performance

- Specifically the plan states that
- “there is a need to strengthen the culture of driving, measuring and supporting high performance at senior levels in the Public Service”
- “As a consequence we need to develop a strong and systematic approach to defining clear expectations of performance and to measuring performance among the leadership cohort”
- The Plan for Civil Service Renewal includes the vision “to provide a world class service to the State and to the people of Ireland”

Specific initiatives include -

- A focus on developing members of the SPS.
- A review of the performance management and development system in the civil service which will have implications for the public service as a whole.
- A new learning and development strategy.
- A focus on improving the capacity of line management.
- The further professionalisation of the Human Resources function.
- The introduction of a yearly staff engagement survey for the civil service.
- New HR initiatives – grading, restrictive recruitment practices.

The characteristics of a high performing organisation

- High performing organisations are characterised by –
- Shared leadership that drives direction and urgency.
- Structure that is aligned to strategy.
- People that are empowered with crystal clear goals.
- Culture that is performance focused.
- Engagement that is measured and cultivated to generate discretionary effort.

The characteristics of high performing organisations

- More specifically they include-
 - high performance leadership teams
 - a strong leadership pipeline
 - few layers between CEO and frontline
 - wide spans of control
 - capabilities matched to role requirements
 - brand is an asset

What does high performance look like?

- Case study - How a Motivational Climate was created and maintained in the All Blacks.
- A change from a command and control leadership style to more inclusive styles.
- Shared leadership.
- One to one performance discussions.
- Feedback and development plans.
- Empowerment, accountability and responsibility.
- Expectation of excellence – to be the best in the world.

What does high performance look like?

- There is a direct link between leadership styles and the climate created in an organisation or unit. What leaders and managers do and say really matters
- Through adapting leadership styles the All Blacks created a highly motivational climate which has resulted in world class performance.
- The most used leadership styles were – visionary, participative, affiliative and coaching – least used were directive and pacesetting.
- Other studies show that these styles of leadership create a highly engaged and motivational climate which creates a high performance workforce.
- The command and control style is becoming less and less effective.

How close is the public service to a high performing organisation?

- Positive remarks some months ago by AJ Chopra of the IMF and repeated by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform about public service capabilities being uniformly superb.
- Successful Presidency, Exiting Troika in spite of resource constraints.
- Ireland's governance effectiveness rating increased from 1.34 in 2010 to 1.53 in 2012, above the OECD average of 1.29.
- In terms of public administration, the quality of Irish public administration is seen as above the European average with Ireland ranking 5th compared to the EU28 in 2013. This represents both an absolute and comparative improvement since 2010

However.....

- PMDS Survey 2010
- On Planning and Monitoring.....
 - 75% of staff said they agreed their objectives and key deliverables with their manager!
 - 73% said they had a good sense of how well they have been performing throughout the year!
- Good... But this is not high performance.

PMDS survey

- On Performance.....
 - No question asked on whether PMDS actually improved performance!
 - 16% of staff said that their Department/Office tackles underperformance appropriately – 84% say they do not.
- Dealing with performance is a weakness.

PMDS survey

- On Motivation and Development.....
 - 27% say that they talk with their manager about motivation and development
 - 28% say that they were getting development assignments.
- Motivating and developing staff is a weakness.

PMDS survey

- On Senior Management support.....
 - 39% of managers agree that senior management are giving support, leadership and commitment to the PMDS... 61% say they do not.
- There are significant leadership weaknesses

Public Affairs Ireland

Survey of HR managers 2015

- Top Five Issues
 1. Sustaining employee morale and engagement – 62%
 2. Securing resources to deliver effective services – 57%
 3. Attracting and retaining qualified staff – 54%
 4. Developing talent management strategy and practice – 53%
 5. Developing a positive industrial relations climate – 50%

Engagement Survey

- When asked –if you could change one thing to make the civil service more effective what would it be? The top five answers were –
- Performance and PMDS
- Promotion Process
- Training and Development
- Skills match
- Mobility

Absenteeism

- Average days lost in the Public Service in 2014 is 8.7 compared to 9.5 in 2013.
- Average days lost in private sector is 6.
- Civil Service in general – absenteeism more prevalent the more junior the grade.
- Evidence of lack of employee engagement?

Recent report on the Department of Justice and Equality

- Key recommendations
 - strengthen leadership and management
 - implement performance management
 - 360 degree feedback for Secretary General and Assistant Secretaries
 - Clarify remit of Department and Agencies
 - Mandatory meetings and division/agency reviews

Conclusions

- Positively regarded internationally.
- Recurring problems at home.
- PMDS is not working.
- Poor morale and engagement.
- Leadership styles used are not creating a motivational climate and therefore are not promoting high performance.
- The thrust of the reforms are dealing with the appropriate issues.

Old problems need innovative solutions

- On performance – broaden the focus - its not just about dealing with underperformance but about creating a motivational climate.
- Instead of guidelines on managing underperformance what about a handbook on successful management?
- Instead of an explanation of PMDS what about an explanation of how to improve engagement?
- PMDS needs a radical overhaul – back to basics.

Old problems need innovative solutions

- Instead of three meetings a year why not one every month? It happens in the Scottish Civil Service.

Every month a one to one discussions on -

- What have you achieved? What are you learning? What issues do you have? What support do you need for next month?
- A real focus on performance requires frequent conversations on performance.
- Instead of five ratings why not three – above target, on target and below target- and frequent discussions on developing competencies?

Old problems require innovative solutions

- Mandatory accreditation for managers with continuous professional development and continuous assessment. Seeing management as a profession like other professions.
- Mandatory staff engagement initiatives – a body of research suggests successful engagement leads to high performance.
- For success, engagement initiatives require that organisations have a clear strategy, capable managers at all levels, the voice of employees is heard and processes to align management aspirations with their behaviours are in place.

Old problems require innovative solutions

- Instead of promoting mobility why not make it mandatory? Other countries do.
- Make better use of the Public Service as a whole for development and learning – open recruitment and more mobility.
- Change role of HR – possible functions and expertise could include–
 - Business partners to line managers, staff engagement experts, business process experts, change management experts and experts on promoting high performance.

And in conclusion.....

- There are very positive initiatives in the reform plans.
- However, promoting high performance requires different ways of managing and leading.
- To be taken seriously more rigour is required and mandatory systems for implementation need to be introduced.

- Thank you for your attention