

HPC Employee Focus Groups – April 2006

Employee Attitudes to Working at the Health Professions Council

The HPC commissioned 'Mintel' to conduct two ninety-minute focus groups. Sixteen respondents participated from various departments across the organisation and from various age groups.

These focus groups illustrate that HPC is at a significant turning point. HPC has developed enormously since the transition from CPSM, and with so much growth and change, it is important to get feedback and comments from the organisation about how they feel, any aspects of growth they are concerned about and improvements they would like to see happen.

Key Findings – General Work Atmosphere

Respondents were asked to rate the HPC on a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is low and 10 is high) in terms of being a good place to work. 7 was the most commonly cited number, and most employees rated HPC a '6' or above.

Employees seemed generally to be happy, and appreciated the 'extras' such as the summer barbecue and Christmas lunch. Respondents were also fairly happy with their salary and other work-related benefits such as the amount of annual leave all employees are given.

The growth within the HPC that is happening at the moment is generally perceived to be a positive thing; however there is concern as to whether or not the appropriate measures are in place to deal with such growth, and the long term direction of the organisation.

Recommendations:

- Keep employees abreast of changes and assure employees by clearly communicating plans for handling the progression.
- Ensure there are adequate resources and training in place to handle future plans.

Key Findings – Working Relationships

One of the most positive aspects of working at the HPC is the friendly, social environment. Respondents appear to like the people they work with and seem to spend time with their co-workers outside the office. This camaraderie is positive and helps to cultivate trust and team work. However on the other hand respondents did feel that there is a strong sense of an "us and them" mentality that indicates tension between employees and management.

Recommendations:

- More frequent departmental team meetings to ensure that employees have a chance to voice their opinions and are heard.
- More frequent 1-2-1s. Some employees will find it difficult to speak up in front on their colleagues so more intimate meetings are required.
- building a middle management team to have a strong presence, including regular forums and meetings with middle management and a more regular presence by middle management at departmental meetings and EMT where required

Key Findings – Work Pressures

Employees from the registrations departments felt a lot of work-related pressure, and although this was accepted as part of the nature of the role, improved communications across the organisation will improve this situation.

It was also felt that many employees were resigning and no explanation was given. It's not simply the lack of information that concerned employees, but the staff shortages and no reassurance that these positions would be filled. Many of the respondents felt they had large workloads and the resignations would impact on this.

The perceived staff shortage is also forcing some employees to take on responsibilities that are not in their job descriptions, and some found this demoralising (carrying out catering related duties) and in some respects, detrimental to the tasks they are trying to carry out.

Feedback was also given regarding a shortage of office equipment, such as photo copiers and fax machines. This issue is now being resolved.

Recommendations:

- Improved communication to all departments, especially registration departments who are on the 'frontline' and receive phone calls from registrants. It is vital they are aware of all external events, communications mail outs, and new policies and processes.
- Improved internal communications about the various resignations, plans for the new building, new resources etc. and a 'plan of action' to reassure employees.
- Hire temporary staff during busy periods, or when there is an employee shortage.
- Purchase/hire more fax machines/photocopiers to improve accessibility and increase efficiency. This is currently being resolved by the Office Manager.

Key Findings – Internal Communications

Several employees reported being satisfied with internal communications. The major factor in this appears to be regularly held meetings and close relationships between employees and management. Some respondents commented that there have been improvements in internal communications within their departments, this tends to be

where they are in close contact with their manager, and also due to the emails they receive concerning organizational updates.

Because resources are reportedly stretched thin, catch-up meetings are perceived to be a luxury thus something that can be postponed to another date and time, which can be detrimental to productivity. If issues aren't discussed within a period of time, there is a danger they can snowball.

Respondents like to be in the know when it comes to what is happening within their department and across the organisation as a whole. A number of comments indicate that there is a desire to be a more cohesive organisation. There is a sense that being both informed and connected makes employees more informed in their roles.

Not all respondents are aware of the forum for suggestions, and with the influx of new people and ideas, the HPC would benefit from feedback and suggestions. Those who are aware of the forum for suggestions have some doubt that suggestions would be implemented due to the perceived shortage of resources.

The word 'consistency' came out a few times throughout the course of the discussion. Some of the comments seemed to indicate that what is said is not always done. As the organisation is growing and changing and employees sense instability and unpredictability, employees may turn to management for guidance and reassurance. Inconsistency signals a lack of control and can cause employees to feel even less confident in their role at the organisation and less confident in their management.

One respondent commented that important information is often distributed to the whole company via email. Although the information is appreciated, the method is perceived to be impersonal, and in some ways understates the importance of the topic.

Positive reinforcement is important to employees as it helps to reassure them that they are conducting their work appropriately and that their efforts are appreciated. Some employees are satisfied with the feedback they receive, whilst others feel that managers should increase positive feedback for deserving individuals. At present some employees felt that if processes are running smoothly, managers may not offer any type of positive feedback.

Recommendations:

- Compulsory, regularly scheduled meetings with pre-determined agendas.
- Educate employees on the procedure for accessing and contributing comments and suggestions.
- Management should continue to and improve upon the way in which they listen to suggestions, and if they are valid, dedicate sufficient resources to investigating feasibility of implementation.
- Significant announcements to be shared in a more personal manner such as a face-to-face presentation.

- Managers should give more positive feedback to both individuals and departments on a more regular basis – this will also help to motivate employees/the team.

Timetable:

Action	Date
Findings and recommendations sent to EMT for Comments and Feedback. EMT given until Tuesday 16 th to respond	11th May 2006
Paper presented to Communications Committee (to note)	24 th May 2006
Document sent out to all staff for consultation period of 2 weeks	8 th June 2006
Feedback and comments received from all staff regarding findings and recommendations	22 nd June 2006
Document sent out including any changes (where appropriate), and reasons for not including changes (if appropriate)	Employee BBQ July 2006

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