Self Evaluation Learning Form (SELF)

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Group Project
Executive Leadership Program
ELP 07/01

Aim of Project

After team discussions in the first ELP workshop the team agreed that the team project to be developed would an Employment Self Evaluation Tool Kit for individual performance management.

The main objective of the project was to develop a more efficient work force by producing a self evaluation learning form (SELF) that would allow individuals to assess their own work performances and obtain feedback from their direct managers. The more specific project objectives were:

1. Ensure that the solution is simple to use.
2. Reduce duplication on existing systems.
3. Move forward towards a positive work force and improve the department’s culture.
4. Improve relationships with staff and their direct managers.
5. Provide managers with a tool that their staff can self initiate.
6. To empower individuals.

The project needed to align to the NSW DCS Corporate Plan as well as the NSW State Plan. The team researched these documents and matched it to the Corporate Plan with Section 2, “Organisation Capability, Governance and Staff Support” - SELF will facilitate positive outcomes in key result areas: safe and healthy work environment, staff support in meeting workplace demands, staff performance management, ethical work environment free from grievance, harassment and misconduct and improve professional conduct.

The alignment to the NSW State Plan was that SELF would improve the work performance of staff, which will lead to higher levels of professionalism and improve interaction between staff and inmates. This would assist positively towards the Department’s goal of reducing recidivism by 10%.

Research

The team acknowledged that an objective investigation to identify the facts of what was in place within the department was the starting point for the project research component, this would assist in building the knowledge for the project.

The team set out to develop a number of research strategies, these included:

1. Determining the type of research that was required.
2. The methods to be used to conduct the research. These included: interviews (meetings, emails, phone and conference calls), DCS Intranet, the WEB and other government agencies.
3. The type key information required including:
   - What is in place in DCS
   - What do individuals and management want
   - What do other government agencies do
   - What is the feedback from the Union representatives in relation to SELF
   - How would SELF be received in DCS
4. Who needed to be interviewed and by whom.

As well as the strategies the team identified the tasks that needed to be achieved and determined as a team who would do what.

Meetings were conducted with the project stakeholders, individuals, management and other government agencies.
Results of the Team Research

The team conducted a very in-depth research process which included interviews with key stakeholders, telephone conversations with other government agencies, and a survey of employees. In summary, the results of the team research are as follows:

In relation to what is in place in DCS:

- There is no standard or single process in the NSW Department of Corrective Services for individuals to evaluate their own work performances simply and effectively. Some of these examples are:
  - The department has an out-of-date and bulky Performance and Career Management System which was launched in the nineties.
  - Another is Performance Agreement for General Managers used by regional staff only.
  - Career development is another tool used by the academy.
- Performance Management is perceived as a negative process, you are on performance management when you are in trouble.
- Limited information was available in the department’s Intranet.

To obtain data on what individuals want, the team informally surveyed staff:

- It was surprising how interested individuals were to get feedback from management on how well they were doing in their current jobs and how they could improve themselves.
- Employees reported that it was hard to talk to their managers about their work performances unless they were in trouble.
- Employees reported that managers did not want to have the time and skills to support individuals with their performances.

From this feedback, the team concluded that an effective performance management tool like SELF would greatly assist the department improve an effective workforce.

To obtain data on what management want, the team interviewed management:

- From the interviews conducted with managers, it was very clear that managers and management understood the importance of performance management and wanted a simple system to be introduced that was supported by the department. It was further reinforced that currently managers are often only involved when an employee is underperforming in their current role.

The team made contact with a number of agencies to determine what other government agencies do:

- Queensland Corrections have a system in place. The system is based on achievements and future development. The tool a document targets groups of similar roles and responsibilities within their department. The tool is used in consultation with staff members and their direct supervisors who then set the performance goals for the next 6 months. The team highly recommends that this tool be further investigated as it is a working model that can support and assist SELF.
- The NSW Department of Police has acknowledged that if they are managing people, they need to have a system in place to manage people otherwise, the fundamentals are not in place. Police is currently developing a system to implement early next year. The system is rewards-based and linked to promotions and performances. The system will also identify poor performance for direct management, implementation of remedial strategies, eg arranging training for large groups as a direct result of data collected from the new system. This system aims to improve management of staff, document actions, encourage staff and management to talk, improve personal development and agree
What is the feedback from the Union representatives in relation to SELF?

- Individual union comment was surprisingly positive toward SELF even indicating that being a voluntary process may not go far enough. A collective Union position may be quite different and less positive toward anything but a voluntary process. Interestingly, there was a general positive view toward some form of performance management being necessary within our department.

To determine how SELF would be received in DCS the team developed a SELF document and survey individuals and the results are as follows:

- 60% of the applicants believed that no system was in place to gain formal feedback. The other applicant’s stated that informal feedback was the only system in place.
- The majority of applicants agreed that SELF was easy to complete.
- The majority of applicants agreed that SELF is a good/positive pathway to obtain feedback from managers.
- The majority of applicants agreed that SELF assessment process will lead to a more positive workplace.
- The majority of applicants agreed that SELF would improve relationships with their manager and
- Applicants agreed that the SELF process empowered them.

The survey results strongly support the implementation and use of SELF. Although it wasn't part of the survey some participants suggested that supporting guidelines would be useful. Overall the survey results were a positive indication that the concept of SELF and its implementation would achieve the ambitions of the project.

In conclusion to the team’s research indicated that the department of NSW Corrective Services needs to change the perception of performance management and introduce an assessment tool like SELF. The team’s survey indicated that SELF with further development would be welcomed in the workplace by individuals and management as it was viewed as a non-threatening way to improve the current situation in the workplace. SELF was also positively accepted as it employee given not management driven. In relation to Union negativity towards implementation of a new system this would be offset by the voluntary nature of the process.

The team’s research also showed that ICAC performed an investigation into the case management and administration of Community Service Orders and produced the “The Cadmus Report” which made the following Recommendation:

> It is recommended that the DCS implements a performance management system for Community Offender Services staff, to better ensure performance standards are maintained.

This further supports the case for the implementation of an effective performance management system in DCS.

For further details on the team’s survey refer to the attached “SELF Research” document.

SELF

The most important criteria when designing the Self Evaluation Learning Form (SELF) was that it needed to be easy to use and quick to complete. The team developed a first cut of SELF after long discussions of what it should include. It was agreed that the form needed to have Key Result areas that needed to relate to the employee’s current Position Description, Communications & Liaison, Teamwork, Code of Conduct & Ethics, Equity, OH&S and Legislative & Policy Compliance.

The form also needed to have a method for the employees to rate themselves, provide comments as well as having a supervisor’s area for agreeing or disagreeing with the employee however this needed to be
very un-intrusive and have room for positive feedback. The form was developed so the employee and supervisor have a different method of scoring.

It was agreed that "one fits all", that is one form only, should be developed for all the departmental needs otherwise it would painful and costly to maintain multiple forms.

SELF was piloted and the feedback received was most positive however the team believes it needs further research and recommends further development.

Refer to the attached “Self Evaluation learning Form”

Benefits of SELF

There are a number of benefits for the employees, managers and the department these include:

- Employees will be able to understand their roles and responsibilities more clearly. Widen the opportunity of having involvement in setting their own goals. Better opportunities for discussing work issues with their managers and working out methods of further developing the employee. And having control of their career development with assistance of the manager.

- For the manager it will provide information on issues, which could assist, with early intervention of poor performance. Develop a positive rapport with staff. Link the unit’s skills to the business plan and the department’s corporate plan.

- For the department it can enhance staff skills through staff development. Improve communications within the department. Maximise staff potential and help staff meet their career aspirations.

Cost Benefits

The team was limited with time to perform a cost analysis; however it is very apparent that the department spends an enormous amount of capital on poor staff performances, grievances and work cover payouts. By implementing a Performance Management system like SELF the department of NSW Corrective Services will save not just in capital but will improve in employees and managers work satisfaction, reduce sick and stress leave, retain staff and have an overall improved work force.

Implementation

The project team reviewed the best method of introducing SELF and concluded that the most effective methods of implementing change within the department of Corrective Services would be a staged implementation approach as follows:

Implementation of DCS SELF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description of Stage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SELF be adopted by DCS HR</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Establishment of a Project Steering Committee for SELF</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Link SELF to the DCS “Way Forward”</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Develop a Project Plan</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Estimate Project Costs, Duration and Resource Requirements</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Further Research NSW Department of Police, Queensland Corrections and other agencies.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Further develop SELF</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Develop Successful Measurement Criteria’s</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Pilot SELF at Wellington Correctional Centre and Community Offender Services</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Evaluate Pilot</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Develop User Guides and Training Material and Delivery</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td><strong>Rollout to within the department</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Launch SELF with a Commissioner’s Memorandum.</td>
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<td>- Publish SELF and guidelines in the Department’s Intranet.</td>
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<td>- Provide training and support for SELF via the department’s Academy during staff inductions.</td>
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<td>- Promote SELF in the DCS Bulletin, divisional news letters and the department’s Broadcast systems.</td>
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**Recommendations**

- That DCS Implements SELF as per the recommended “Implementation of DCS SELF” table provided in this document.
- That DCS Complies with the ICAC report to implemented Performance Management not just at COS offices but state wide.
- That DCS changes the negative perception of Performance Management within the department.

**Bibliography**

- Brush Farm Corrective Services Academy (2006) Straight Talk about job appraisals: ELP Management Documentation, Brush Farm Corrective services Academy, NSW Department of Corrective Services, Eastwood, NSW.
- First Data documentation “A process to Focus and Reward Performances”

**References**

- NSW Department of Corrective Services Board of Management
- NSW Department of Corrective Services Staff
- NSW Department of Corrective Services Union Representatives
- NSW Department of Police
- Queensland Corrections
- Tasmanian Corrections
- ACT Belconnen Remand Centre