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Knowledge Management As A Reform Mechanism In Public Sector Administration

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Appendix i

School of Public and Development Management
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg

December 1, 2003

Dear Obadiah,

I would like at the outset, to thank you very much for providing support for my case study research. I appreciate and value your interest in my research topic. I would also like to include a special thank you for Simone whom I believe will be administering the questionnaires.

As discussed last week, herewith the questionnaires for 48 members of the National Treasury falling within the levels of senior, middle, professional and supervisory management. What follows is the breakdown of how I would ask you to choose the sample 'population':

- 24 members falling within senior and middle management. Of these 24, please select three members per division
- 18 members falling within professional and supervisory management. Of these 18, please select two per division with the balance (2) coming from the Corporate Services division.

There are four respondants that I would like you to include in the sample: Yourself; Simon le Hane (the only DDG in the sample please); Thorea Pandy and Logan Wort.

In order to get as strong a response as possible, I have divided the questionnaire into two, to shorten it - Questionnaire X and Questionnaire Y. Please will you send Questionnaire X to 21 members of the population and Questionnarie Y to

21 members of the population. This can be random. The letter is generic and can be sent to all the 42 respondents.

In your choice of population please will you include managers who might be deemed ‘knowledge workers’, those who actively work with their staff to build knowledge networks and push existing organisational boundaries as well as those who are evidently not, who are possibly resistant to working in this way.

For the purposes of clarification, you will find attached a generic letter that should be added to each questionnaire. I think the letter clarifies most areas pertaining to the procedure as a whole. If you feel that there is something I have not explained clearly enough, will you please let me know and I will revise? The revision will be promptly returned to yourself.

Once again, thank you for your assistance.

Kind regards
Rachel Browne
Student, Masters of Management, PADM, Wits

Appendix ii

School of Public and Development Management
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg

December 1, 2003

Dear National Treasury Employee,

As a postgraduate student of management, I am currently working on research that focuses on public service administration. The title of the research is: Knowledge management as a reform mechanism in public service organisations. As a member of management, your knowledge and expertise will provide insight into this area of organisational development and it is for this reason that I am sending you the attached questionnaire.

The purpose of the research is twofold, to analyse an existing knowledge management programme that is being implemented as part of the transformation of the public service in post 1994 South Africa, and to examine the implications of such a programme and its impact on public service organisational culture as South Africa enters into its tenth year of democratic government.

I have decided to focus on the National Treasury as a case study for a variety of reasons. The Treasury is a small, tight knit community, which for the purposes and scope of the research that I am required to carry out, fits perfectly to my needs. The merging of the Departments of Finance and State Expenditure in 2001/2 into a new National Treasury where human resource policies and procedures and administrative systems (amongst other priorities) have been and continue to be forged makes the Treasury a compelling research subject. Your department to my knowledge is growing and developing unique organisational practice through your Corporate Services directorate. On the

two visits I have made to Treasury, I have seen clear evidence of this in the innovative spatial organisation, for example. As a key department in the public administration collective, the work that Treasury is undertaking on an organisational level could have far reaching ripple effects vis a vis public service organisation best practice, an area of focus for my report.

The questionnaire has been cleared by the office of your Director General and circulated by kind permission of your Human Resources Chief Director, Obadiah Khwinana. You have been selected as part of a stratified sample of 40 managers as a respondent. All information given to me is strictly confidential and there will be no reference to any person in the research report. Following the receipt of your questionnaire, I will be requesting a small sample of managers to meet me in the workplace for a follow up face-to-face interview. I will let you know by email if I would like to follow up with you. Please note, that when the question refers to 'you' I am not asking for an official response as in a plural 'you'. I am rather looking for your personal opinion or approach. When I refer to 'workplace', I am referring to the environment that you, particularly, manage. When I refer to 'organisation', I am referring to the division in which you work. When I refer to 'community', I am referring to the group of people that you work with and manage. If your community intersects with other groups, something that I am sure is the case with certain managers, then that is your community.

Please will you respond to the questions if possible on computer and return the questionnaire to me at: rachel@pix.co.za by 27 February, ie in a week. Please typewrite your answers underneath the questions. If you are unable to do this, you are welcome to answer the questionnaire by hand and when it is completed, seal it in an envelope and hand it to Simone Grobler, Obadiah Khwinana's secretary (floor 7) for my attention. I would ask you please to use the question numbers given on the questionnaire and not to change them.

When the research report is completed I will give copies to Obadiah Khwinana. Please will you indicate whether you would like to receive one

either on your response sheet or separately to my mailbox. Your cooperation with my research will be very much appreciated and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards
Rachel Browne
Masters of Management Student, PADM, Wits University

Appendix iii

From the desk of Obadiah Khwinana
Chief Director: Human Resources Management

March 4, 2004

Dear

As a postgraduate student of management, Rachel Browne, is currently working on research that focuses on public service administration. The title of her research is: "Knowledge management as a reform mechanism in public service organisations". As a member of management, your knowledge and expertise will provide insight into this area of organisational development and it is for this reason that she is sending you the attached questionnaire.

The purpose of her research is twofold, to investigate the state of knowledge management within the broader framework of the transformation of the public service in post 1994 South Africa, and to examine the implications of such a programme and its impact on public service organisational culture as South Africa enters into its tenth year of democratic government.

She has decided to focus on the National Treasury as a case study. The National Treasury is a small, tight knit community, which for the purposes and scope of the research that she is required to carry out, and fits perfectly to her needs. As a key department in the public administration collective, the work that National Treasury is undertaking on an organisational level could have far reaching ripple effects vis a vis public service organisation best practice, an area of focus for my report.

The questionnaire has been cleared by the Office of the Director General and circulated by myself. You have been selected as part of a stratified sample of 50 managers as a respondent. All information given to her will be strictly

confidential and there will be no reference to any person in the research report. Following the receipt of your questionnaire, she will be requesting a small sample of managers to meet her in the workplace for a follow up face-to-face interview. She will let you know by email if she would like to follow up with you.

Ms Browne has asked me to include the following: "When the question refers to 'you' I am not asking for an official response as in a plural 'you'. I am rather looking for your personal opinion or approach. When I refer to 'workplace', I am referring to the environment that you, particularly, manage. When I refer to 'organisation', I am referring to the division in which you work. When I refer to 'community', I am referring to the group of people that you work with and manage. If your community intersects with other groups, something that I am sure is the case with certain managers, then that is your community."

Please will you respond to the attached questionnaire if possible on computer and return the questionnaire to her at: rachel@pix.co.za by Friday 19 March 2004. Please typewrite your answers underneath the questions. If you are unable to do this, you are welcome to answer the questionnaire by hand and when it is completed, seal it in an envelope and hand it to Simone Grobler (floor 7) for Rachel Browne's attention. I would ask you please to use the question numbers given on the questionnaire and not to change them.

When the research report is completed Rachel will give copies to me. Rachel will be giving me three copies of the report for general perusal.

Your cooperation with her research will be appreciated and she looks forward to hearing from you.

Appendix iv

Questionnaire X

A Biography

1 Name

2 How old are you?

3 What division are you working in and what position do you occupy in the division?

4 For how many years have you worked in the public service?

5 What do your responsibilities entail?

6 How many staff answer to you?

B The Knowledge Environment

7 How much emphasis is placed on managing knowledge or building a knowledge community in your performance appraisal?
Can you give an example?

8 Are workplace community meetings and events built into your monthly work schedule?
Please describe a typical event.

9 How does your your workplace newsletter serves a purpose in the department? Can you give an example?

10 *"It's not what you know that gives you power; it's what you share about what you know that gives you power."*
Does this have meaning for you in your workplace situation? Please explain.

11 What you think drives your organisation?

1 collective work ethic;

2 directors and line managers

3 a strong group of individuals in the organisation

4 the Minister's office

12 What does the term 'continued learning' mean to you?

1 Always attending courses during working hours.

2 Learning on the job by means of instructions passed down from above.

3 Learning together as a workplace community by sharing knowledge.

13 Are you involved with the production of ‘knowledge maps’ (documents, visual or textual that help diffuse information around the department). Please describe a typical example of one if the answer is ‘yes’. If the answer is ‘no’, is this because you have not thought of it, or is it an activity that you are not expected to perform?

C Staff related:

14 Is carrying out a skills audit amongst your staff part of your work profile?

15 What are you doing to promote skills awareness in the workplace? Is this an important focus for you?

16 Does your organisation have a mechanism whereby optimal use can be made of staff skills?

17 Do you have staff members that you would describe as key players? If you do, how would you make special use of them?

18 Are you taking part in a mentorship programme? If you are, what are you doing and what do you hope to achieve through mentorship?

D Knowledge management

19 Can you describe a situation where knowledge management used as a management tool has made a critical contribution to solving a workplace problem?

20 *Tacit knowledge is knowledge that is not readily available, reflecting an individual's unique experience in life.*

How would you grade tacit knowledge as a workplace asset

A Very highly

B highly

C Not very highly

D Low priority

E Not at all

21 *Explicit knowledge is that which is codeified and stored in the form of data and information and archived for use by anyone who needs it.*

Do you think that your organisation's explicit knowledge is accessible and actively enhances workplace activity? Can you elaborate?

22 In what way do you interact with the IT division:

A leave them to get on with that side of org business

B I am not too interested in the IT department's role

C The IT department plays a central role in my working environment

D I bring the IT section members in on workplace discussions as much as possible

Questionnaire Y

A Biography

1 Name

2 How old are you?

3 What division are you working in and what position do you occupy in the division?

4 For how many years have you worked in the public service?

5 What do your responsibilities entail?

6 How many staff answer to you?

D Knowledge management

19 Can you describe a situation where knowledge management used as a management tool has contributed to solving a workplace problem?

20 *Tacit knowledge is knowledge that is not readily available, reflecting an individual's unique experience in life.*

How would you grade tacit knowledge as a workplace asset

A Very highly

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E Not at all

21 *Explicit knowledge is that which is captured in the form of data and information and archived for use by anyone who needs it.*

Do you think that your organisation's explicit knowledge is accessible and actively enhances workplace activity? Can you elaborate?

22 In what way do you interact with the IT division:

A leave them to get on with that side of org business

B I am not too interested in the IT department's role

C The IT department plays a central role in my working environment

D I bring division members in on workplace discussions as much as possible

E How the organisation works

23 How are decisions made in your work environment?

24 How are these decisions informed?

25 In any given week, how many times will your staff complement gather as a group to discuss and share information about mutually important matters?

26 Please draw a picture of the organisation and your place in it. (Please do not draw an organogram, the idea is to visually depict the organisation as a whole and your position in it. I would encourage you to use colour if you can. If you are answering on computer, please seal your drawing for this question in an envelope and give it to Simone Grobler (floor 7) for my attention.)

27 Can you give your creation a title?

F Organisational culture and reform:

28 Can you describe your organisation's culture and identify what values underpin this culture?

29 Is there a difference when it comes to the culture of your particular work environment? If so describe it.

30 How much do you think your organisation's culture has changed in the past five years? Why do you say this?

31 Give an example of how information technology is able to enhance administrative reform in your workplace?

32 What in your opinion has been the most important reform initiative in your organisation in the past three years?

Appendix v

Questions for interview group levels 8,9,10

1

In your experience do you find that the technology that is available to you in your workplace environment has had an effect on your work performance?

- Can you describe how by means of an example?
- Can it be a hindrance?

2

How much learning on the job happens at your desk through your networked workplace computer?

3

Is the NT a place of learning or is it just a place of work?

- If you see it as a place of learning can you explain why?
- If you do not , how would you describe the NT?

4

What sounds like a closer description of NT:

- An organisation guided by a 'living' organisational vision that is shared and developed by all who work in the department;
- An organisation that is guided by rules and established best practices?

5

Do you feel that on a daily basis, you are working in a bureaucracy or do you think that the environment in which you work is a bureaucracy mixed with something else?

If there is a mixture, can you define what that something else is?

6

Where would you place yourself in the decision making process at NT? Are you part of it, encouraged to be part of it? Do you feel that you are completely outside the decision making environment?

7

Do you think there is a uniform managerial approach at NT – a sort of NT brand of managing?

- If so, how would you describe it?
- If there is not, do you think that perhaps there should be – would it make a difference?

8

If you can imagine that information is like electric current. What is the status of the 'current' at NT?

- Strong at all times, the current flows and there are no breakages – the building is illuminated
- Patchy, good in places, but breakages lead to blackouts on occasion
- Not enough current to sustain the illumination of the building so certain areas are left in the dark.

9

Do you think that the managers that have come into government from the private sector have made a difference at the NT?

In what ways?

Are those managers to whom you report, in your opinion, 'an authority', or 'in authority' – if they are a little of both could you provide a percentage ratio?

10

How would you describe the NT's corporate culture?

11

Building capacity at the NT – do you find it is undertaken on an individual by individual basis or do you find it being more of a holistic initiative involving workplace groupings or communities as a whole?

Is the message coming to you through HR, for example, emphasizing your personal growth in isolation, or your growth as part of a bigger picture encompassing the organisation or even a government-wide perspective?

12

What is your take on the NT's Personal Development Plans – is it improving productivity in your opinion? How does the process work?

13

How would you describe the quality of your working relationships at NT?

Is it possible that the values of the organisation have an impact on your working relationships?

Can you describe what these values might be and how they influence your relationships?

17

Do you meet with your peers to discuss relevant issues as a way to share experience and knowledge on a voluntary basis?

Do you have an intranet community that you communicate for these reasons?

Is this something that is encouraged at all at NT?

If it is not, is there anything in your opinion that might prevent these communal gatherings?

14

How have you managed the transition of working in a closed office environment to open plan?

How has it impacted on your work performance?

15

How is e-Goverment impacting on your work?

What kind of messages are filtering down from leadership with regards to e-Gov?

Appendix vi

Questions for interview group levels 11 - 14

1

Do you feel part of the reform processes at NT? Are these processes an organisation-wide shared area of information – are employees consulted regularly on organisational shifts and changes?

2

If you can imagine that information is like electric current. What is the status of the 'current' at NT?

- Strong at all times, the current flows and there are no breakages – the building is illuminated
- Patchy, good in places, but breakages lead to blackouts on occasion
- Not enough current to sustain the illumination of the building so certain areas are left in the dark.

Would you say that as part of senior management, you are 'an authority', or 'in authority' – if you are a little of both could you provide a percentage ratio?

What is your perception of those senior to you?

Do you actively encourage a process of network thinking as opposed to linear thinking with those with whom you work?

3

The reality of government as I understand it is that it is deeply bureaucratic. In what kinds of ways do you at the level of directorate, delayer bureaucratic procedure? Can you give me an example of a way that you cut through traditional inefficient procedure successfully?

3(a) My sense is that the NT is a hybrid organisation, meaning it is not exclusively run along bureaucratic lines. Am I right in thinking this and if so could you justify your response?

3(b) How does the increasingly sophisticated IT infrastructure with which you work interact with bureaucratic procedure?

Are there clashes?

In the final tally, where does the key responsibility for efficiency in government lie – in management or in technology processes?

4

Is the NT a place of learning?

What would you say in the NT contributes towards making it a learning organisation?

(if not)

What in your opinion should be introduced into the organisation to make it a learning organisation?

5

What sounds like a closer description of NT:

- An organisation guided by a 'living' organisational vision that is shared and developed by all who work in the department;
- An organisation that is guided by rules and established best practices?

6

What is it that makes you want to work at the NT?

If you got a job offer in the private sector, would you leave without a second thought?

What would make you stay?

6a What should the NT do to retain its skilled staff?

Can you offer some ideas?

7

Do you think that as part of management, you feel you can contribute to the goals of the organisation as a whole in concert with management across the divisions? Is there a ceiling beyond which you have no input?

8

Where would you place yourself in the decision making process at NT? Are you part of it, encouraged to be part of it?

9(a) What emphasis is placed by the NT leadership on encouraging management at all levels to be part of decision making – to inculcate a culture of responsibility for actions taken?

10

If I were to put it to you that knowledge has become the means of production and organisation the tool of production – would you agree with this and does this resonate with your perception of the NT? Please justfy your response.

11

How strong and sustainable are the lines of supply, information and support from your working perspective at NT?

Strongly or not strongly in place, how are they influencing your performance in the workplace?

Where are you placed along these lines?

Would you agree that these lines make up a circuit of power that gets distributed according to its configuration?

Does this power circuit contribute to your ability to achieve objectives independent of hierarchical control?

12

Do you think that managers that have come into government from the private sector have made a difference at the NT?

In what ways?

13

How would you describe the NT's corporate culture?

14

e-Government – what does it mean to you?

Has its existence in NT as things stand presently changed the way processes are driven and decisions made – has it begun to change your working environment?

What kinds of messages are filtering down from leadership with regards to e-Gov?

15

What is your take on the NT's Personal Development Plan for its staff – is this approach to human capital accumulation an effective way to build the institution?

16

Do the values that underpin the NT reflect in your working relationships?

What are these values?

17

Do you meet with your peers either inside or outside the NT on a voluntary basis to discuss relevant issues as a means to share experience and build knowledge?

Do you have an intranet community pehaps that you communicate with for this reason?

Is this something that is encouraged at all amongst senior management at NT?

18

How have you managed the transition of working in a closed office environment to open plan?

How has it impacted on your work performance?

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