

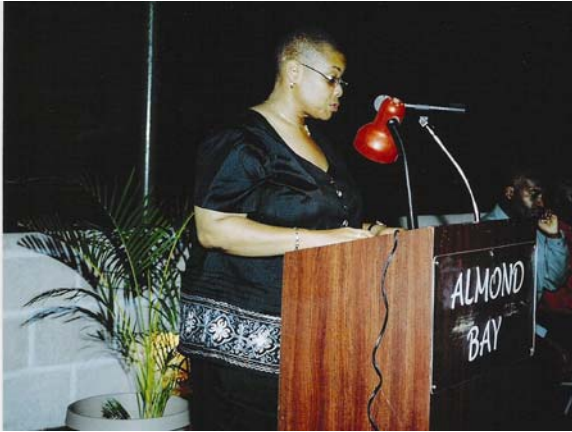
Public Servants Networking

The Performance Review and Development System (PRDS) Unit in collaboration with the Office of Public Sector Reform recently hosted a Networking Forum under the theme: ***Sharing Experiences, Challenges and Solutions.***



A cross section of persons attending the PRDS Networking Forum.

The theme reflected continuing efforts by the Unit to promote the sharing of PRDS experiences, while discussing challenges and seeking solutions. The forum provided an informal environment for the interaction and the exchange of ideas, and offered all classes of users in the system valuable input into areas such as, the PRDS training strategy, technical assistance, the implementation approach, the structure/format of the PRDS form and general usage of the system.



In her welcoming remarks, the current Chief Personnel Officer Miss Gail Atkins acknowledged that while the PRDS is a work-in-progress, the evening should offer a delightful mix of the serious, humorous or anecdotal, whilst at the same time discussing challenges and soliciting possible solutions as feedback to the Project Unit. She cautioned that in order to maximize the benefits that stand to accrue from the PRDS, it was critical that both management and workers discard the traditional mindset of “giving” workers favourable or unfavourable grades based on subjective thinking.



Martin Cox, P.S. Ministry of International Business and International Trade

The featured speaker, Martin Cox, Permanent Secretary of International Business & International Trade, stated that, “the establishment of the Performance Review and Development System (PRDS), is but one in a series of initiatives that demonstrates Government’s commitment to reforming the public service”. He noted that as the nation’s largest employer, the Government is compelled to lead the way in developing its human capital. In addition, he informed the audience that, “Government annually spent approximately five million dollars on training its public officers in a wide range of

disciplines, providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to enhance their performance and Barbados' competitive position.”

The Permanent Secretary contended that, “the PRDS, along with the completion of the Job Evaluation exercise and the widespread use of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) will carry the Public Service to higher levels of professionalism. He confirmed that these three initiatives address:

1. The needs of high achievers as well as those not yet meeting required standards.
2. Rewarding outstanding performance and encourage developmental potential, in an objective and transparent manner.
3. The need to match pay to position and evaluate the value each job contributes to the organisation.
4. The needs of employees who are experiencing personal or work related problems that affects their productivity by providing professional counselling.

Mrs. Ann-Marie Lorde, Research Officer, NUPW noted that public services across the world were undergoing reforms of various kinds as a result of globalisation. She emphasised that the Union had been in the vanguard of reform initiatives leading to excellence in service and lauded this performance approach as a great improvement over the traditional system. Thus, the NUPW supported the PRDS and provided advice as a member of its Steering Committee.

Mr. Frederick Forde, former Chairman of the PRDS Steering Committee acknowledged the challenges inherent in any change and urged users to exercise patience with its implementation. He encouraged them to use the appraisal form as a communication tool, paying greater attention to the needs of the human resources. Mr. Ian Carrington, Director of the National Insurance Department noted that for this system to function effectively it has to be driven by the executive management. Many junior officers echoed this sentiment, calling for demonstrated commitment from senior managers to facilitate the processes of the system, notwithstanding the challenges posed by the change.

The Networking Forum was indeed timely, hosted just before the end of the PRDS annual reporting cycle, it enabled participants to renew energy and motivational levels as they approached a new cycle of reporting and planning. Several of the agencies participating in the pilot are at varying stages in the PRDS implementation continuum and as a result, many of the participants' experiences were varied. Nonetheless, feedback indicated that some experiences were common to all.



Some of the audience speakers giving their views on their PRDS

The Networking Forum followed an Executive Briefing on performance management held late last year. The Briefing, a joint initiative of the National Union of Public Workers (NUPW) and the PRDS Unit, sought to bring together the public service agencies that have instituted performance management systems different from the PRDS to explore methodologies, commonalities, differences and chosen approaches to implementation. Participants at the Briefing included representatives from the National Union of Public Workers, the Royal Barbados Police Force, and the Ministry of Education (Teacher appraisal section) and representatives from the PRDS pilot agencies.

Both the Networking Forum and the Executive Briefings have allowed the PRDS Unit and other key players in performance management to take stock and evaluate the way forward for the implementation of developmental appraisal systems in the wider public service.

Mrs. Wilma Turton, Project Coordinator of the PRDS Unit, looks forward to the unit entering a new phase in the implementation of the performance management system. Come April, five additional agencies will receive training in the performance management system, to be introduced in their department by April 2006. She reminded that the PRDS offers a partnership between management and workers and each group must take an active part in its implementation in order to maximize the potential benefits. Given the frank, balanced exchanges, Mrs. Turton is optimistic that despite the remaining challenges, public servants are becoming more willing to embrace this reform initiative.

The events boasted some of the key players in change management in the public service. In attendance were representatives of the National Union of Public Workers (NUPW) and the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados (CTUSAB), in recognition of the continuing social partnership that exist between government and the workers representatives. The public service was well represented by a cross section of its executive, senior and junior personnel. These included Miss Maxine Layne former Chief Personnel Officer.

Photo 1 Martin Cox, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of International Business & International Trade.

Photo 2 Chief Personnel Officer, Ms. Gail Atkins

Photo 3 A cross section of persons attending the PRDS Networking Forum.

Photo 4 Fire Officer, Patrick Edwards

Photo 5 Errol Maynard, Sub – Officer