

PRDS UPDATE

The Performance Review and Development System (PRDS), the new performance management system introduced into eight Ministries and Departments in the Public Service of Barbados in 2002, is moving the public service closer to having an improved employee appraisal system service-wide. The PRDS Unit, established in 2001 to manage, implement and evaluate the new performance appraisal system, has made good progress over the last five years.

COMPLETION OF THE PILOT PHASE

The pilot phase of the PRDS was completed in 2004. The project is currently into **phase two**, which involves training of the departments that fall under the pilot ministries. From 2004 to the present, the system was introduced into fourteen departments. With effect from April 2007, eight more ministries/departments will be implementing the system.

CONSULTATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

The PRDS Unit has been collaborating with the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados (CTUSAB) and the National Union of Public Workers (NUPW), and one such activity was the workshop “**Executive Discussions on the PRDS**”. The workshop targeted members of the executive of CTUSAB, public officers currently engaged in managing the reform programme within the public service.

The programme was designed to provide a forum for stakeholders to exchange views and ideas on the progress achieved thus far and to consider how they could contribute to the way forward for the PRDS.

The workshop provided ample opportunity for the participants of the workshop to compare the performance management practices of various government agencies with those employed by select private sector organisations currently engaged in similar exercises. A panel discussion provided the opportunity to examine comparisons and contrasts between the features of the PRDS and the other performance management systems, namely, those currently being administered by the Central Bank of Barbados, the Arawak Cement Company Ltd., the Royal Barbados Police Force and the Teaching Service. Among strong **comparisons** realised were:

- Direct linkage between strategic planning and the formation of individual work plans;
- Significant focus on the mutual development of and agreement to work plan objectives between the Supervisor and the appraisee; and
- Use of the 360-degree method of evaluation/multi-rater system (for Principals in public schools)

Contrasts:

- Payment linked directly to performance;

- Appraisal exercise not viewed as optional by employees since it was agreed to by contract signed on entering the organisation; and
- Strategic planning process systematically undertaken every two years by a specially appointed committee;

FUTURE PLANS

To date, the PRDS has focused on assessment on all levels of the public service except senior managers. The PRDS Unit is poised to introduce the 360-degree feedback method, also called full-circle appraisal, multi-rater feedback and peer evaluation. It is a means by which an employee receives feedback on his / her work performance from a number of sources. It is neutral, objective, comprehensive and developmental. The PRDS 360-degree approach to performance management has been developed to nurture an environment for:

- a. Better communication with leaders;
- b. Improved relations with colleagues;
- c. A culture for improved productivity;
- d. Motivation;
- e. Enhanced efficiency; and
- f. Improved management practices.

Senior managers in the public service for example Permanent Secretaries and officers of related grades, Deputy Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Departments, and Deputy Heads of Departments will be assessed by this method.

The 360-degree approach is an integral part of the PRDS. It provides the supporting developmental element for senior managers by helping them to recognise their strengths and highlighting areas for improvement through the use of individual development plans and coaching / mentorship sessions. Permanent Secretaries and other senior managers are responsible for driving the PRDS process within their respective agencies and must ensure that their management practices continue to develop to meet the demands of the dynamic environment in which they operate. Performance feedback to senior managers will strengthen the integrity of the overall performance management system - the PRDS - and augur well for the enhanced productivity of the service.

A 360-degree subcommittee in collaboration with the PRDS Unit is currently spearheading the preparations for the implementation of this feedback system.

SENSITISATION EFFORTS

The PRDS Unit has seen an upsurge in interest shown for the PRDS as agencies and individuals embrace the change. Some of this interest has come from tertiary education students, quasi- as well as non-governmental organisations. These include the National Assistance Board, Urban Development Commission, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the National Housing Corporation. During the month of

September, the PRDS Unit has been conducting sensitisation sessions in the PRDS for staff of the National Housing Corporation. The Corporation is preparing to use the PRDS to manage the performance of its staff.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) has also expressed an interest in using the system to appraise its staff. To this end, along with sensitisation sessions for senior managers, a two-week PRDS Training of Trainers course was conducted for twenty staffers. This method seeks to build in-house capacity thus enabling the institution to conduct in-house training for its personnel.

The PRDS, once implemented in accordance with the standards outlined in the guidelines, and during training, will give public officers the opportunity, through dialogue, to participate in the day to day management of the organisation, be assessed in an objective manner, based on the agreed work plan objectives, be recognised and rewarded for excellent work and be given the opportunity to develop their weaknesses through training or other developmental strategies.

Generally, the key stakeholders have been very supportive in the implementation of the system. Ministries and Departments who are yet to use the system are urged to start preparing the prerequisites (strategic plans, job descriptions, organisational charts, procedure manuals and individual work plans.) The PRDS is not an option nor is it a trial, it is real and it is here.

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