

Workforce planning—leading edge

Customs new workforce planning model puts it in a good position to identify and address future employment, training and corporate needs.

At the forefront of public sector reform, Customs has taken a comprehensive approach to workforce planning, with refinement of its policies and tools.

Customs management asked that a workforce planning project, commissioned in March 1999, establish effective, future-looking workforce strategies capable of meeting changing needs. Customs business vision was the basis on which new workforce planning policies and guidelines were developed.

In developing the business vision, workforce characteristics were identified to provide Customs with a workforce capable of meeting future demands. The workforce characteristics are flexibility, exploiting technology, building alliances and partnerships (networks), information acquisition and management, external focus and integration.

The business vision and characteristics do not sit in isolation and are supported by an integrated set of policies and strategies. The development and enhancement of policies on recruitment and selection, assignment, learning and development, and performance management have been undertaken to ensure that Customs has the necessary tools available to meet future demands.

Implementation of some of the strategies is occurring through education and new recruitment and selection processes.

To ensure the development of capabilities to use new recruitment and selection tools such as behavioural event interviewing, the HayGroup was contracted to assist in the development and implementation of a selection panel training program.

The new approach used by selection panels is being introduced throughout Customs. The selection decision focuses more on the panel using actual experience of candidates rather than posing hypothetical situations.

The foundation on which Customs built its policies and guidelines was outlined by Chief Executive Officer Lionel Woodward in the ANAO *Planning for the Workforce of the Future* overview booklet. He said, "Too often we seek to match our staff to what we do now – without thinking enough about our workforce needs in three or four years from now."

A case study of Customs included in the ANAO's *Planning for the Workforce of the Future* better practice guide for managers speaks about bridging gaps and identifying and addressing workforce issues. It suggests that, "Successful organisations position themselves to ensure that they always have access to people with the necessary skills and knowledge."

Ms Christine Marsden-Smedley, National Manager Staffing said, "The way we were dealing with human resource issues in the past was not delivering what we needed and we could see it was not going to deliver it in the future."

One of the key principles outlined in the ANAO *Planning for the*

Workforce of the Future overview booklet was to know your current workforce.

“This requires the ability to identify the demographic profile and capabilities of the current workforce,” she said.

A component of the workforce planning project was the development of an information system that could support the planning process by defining workforce demographics while providing human resource advisers with detailed data on workforce trends.

“Development of workforce characteristics also pointed toward the need for new tools as well as new methods and approaches to workforce planning,” Ms Marsden-Smedley said.

As a result, an external provider, HRM Consulting, was contracted to develop an integrated human resource reporting solution based on internal and external data sources.

The reporting solution was developed to produce two levels of reports. The first to be developed was a reporting capability for all corporate support and human resource areas using Cognos software. This solution allows regional human resource advisers to build reports based on pre-defined categories on an ad hoc basis. Categories include age, gender, tenure, absence and turnover (data cubes).

The second level provides managers with key information in the form of interactive charts over the Customs Intranet. This reporting tool will provide managers with information on internal and external benchmarks.

The first stage has been completed and all human resource areas now have access to data cubes. It is expected that the development of the reporting tool will be completed by December.

