

**National  
Managers'  
Community**



**Tenth Annual Professional  
Development Forum  
“Dialogue with Senior Officials”  
Session  
Toronto, May 4, 2011**



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The National Managers' Community (NMC) held a "Dialogue with Senior Officials" session as part of its Professional Development Forum held in May, 2011. This is the fourth time that a similar session is held, the last one having taken place at last year's forum in Montreal.

As part of the session, an estimated 1,000 delegates participated in electronic polling where they were asked questions on the following themes:

- People management;
- Workplace satisfaction;
- Current work environment;
- Performance management; and
- Social media.

The 20 questions used in the electronic polling were based on discussions that had been held across the country with managers and central agency representatives. The questions fell into three categories: questions from past forums repeated for the purpose of tracking progress; questions designed to probe deeper into previous findings; and new questions developed to address emerging issues.

The electronic polling results were discussed among the participants and a panel of senior officials, and formed the basis of their inquiry. Ross MacLeod, Assistant Deputy Minister, Governance, Planning and Policy Sector, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, moderated the panel that included the following deputy ministers:

- Michelle d'Auray, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat
- Robert Fonberg, National Defence
- Michael Wernick, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
- Daphne Meredith, Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer
- François Guimont, Public Works and Government Services Canada

The 90-minute dialogue portion of the session was webcast to 56 sites across the country to allow for more participation in the session. A video of this webcast is available on the Forum 2011 page of the NMC website.

The findings presented in this report were shared and discussed with the Deputy Minister Committee on Public Service Renewal on June 9, 2011. The NMC has also shared the report with the deputies ministers of federal public service departments and agencies. The NMC will further analyze these results and feed them into its priorities and activities into the future. The NMC will

also use the findings to inform files across the government as part of its regular business to ensure that intelligence gathered from managers influences as many policy and program decisions as possible.

## Highlights from the Electronic Polling Results

The following are some of the key findings from the electronic polling session. You may consult Appendix A for the complete list of questions and results, and an analysis of the electronic polling.

- **Relationships between Human Resources (HR) and managers remain strained.** Fifty-five per cent of managers feel clearer expectations and defined roles and responsibilities are required.
- **Succession planning continues to be a challenge.** Only 25 per cent of managers polled indicated that their organization develops concrete people resourcing strategies, and only 24 per cent indicated that their organization was adequately equipping new managers.
- **Staffing flexibilities are underutilized.** Twenty-one per cent of managers with staffing responsibilities are using the full range of available staffing mechanisms; 23 per cent identified a need for better understanding of the mechanisms, and 22 per cent cited a requirement for increased departmental support.
- Managers would be more comfortable using shared staffing processes if they could **personally assure quality candidates** (32 per cent) or have a **probation mechanism in place** (22 per cent).
- **Managers are seeking support in managing unsatisfactory performance.** The process is seen as inefficient and time-consuming (33 per cent). This is consistent with the message from last years' results. Managers indicated they would benefit from training or mentoring in conducting difficult conversations (30 per cent).
- **Fifty per cent of managers do not feel they are being consulted on key decisions.** However, workplace satisfaction is relatively positive.
- **Planning and reporting** (at 35 per cent), **followed by staffing** (at 20 per cent) were noted as **the largest administrative burdens for managers.**
- **Managers are not making full use of social media tools.** A large percentage (70 per cent) of managers do not use social media tools at work. Most either do not have access (24 per cent) to these tools or do not see their value (22 per cent).

- **Managers lack trust and openness regarding social media.** They indicated they would benefit from organizational support in learning how these tools can be applied (44 per cent) and from training on the proper use of social media in the workplace (28 per cent).

## **Highlights from the Table Discussions**

Following the interactive electronic polling, delegates spent approximately half an hour discussing the results with others at their table. Delegates were asked to discuss the following two questions and record their answers:

1. What is one question you would like to ask the deputy ministers?
2. What recommendations would you make to deputy ministers based on your discussions?

Approximately 165 questions and 100 recommendations were recorded. The following are highlights from the questions and recommendations received:

### **1. Proposed questions to deputy ministers**

- Forty-two per cent of the questions (69) focused on the themes of the “current work environment” and “workplace satisfaction,” the majority of these questions relating to fiscal restraint and strategic review.
- Twenty-seven per cent of the questions (45) focused on the topic of “social media,” the top two issues being awareness of the value and benefits of social media and the need for government-wide vision, policy and guidelines.
- Twenty-one per cent of the questions (35) focused on the “people management” theme, the top issue being succession planning, followed by staffing.
- Six per cent of the questions (9) were about “performance management;” no specific topic emerged as a key issue.
- Four per cent of the questions (7) focused on broader themes related to communication issues.

### **2. Recommendations to deputy ministers**

Some key themes emerged in the 100 recommendations that were received, as follows:

- There is a need for senior leaders in organizations to improve communications and to consult with managers, especially on issues dealing with budgets and restraints.
- Senior leadership direction is required to encourage the use of social media in the workplace, and the federal public service would benefit from government-wide vision, strategy, policies and guidelines.

- Departments and agencies need to implement strategies and plans to address succession planning and talent management issues.
- The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (the Secretariat) needs to step up its efforts to communicate and promote its performance management tool.

Please consult Appendix B for the complete results and an analysis of the table discussions.

## **Summary of the Dialogue with Senior Officials**

After the electronic polling, Ross MacLeod, Assistant Deputy Minister, Governance, Planning and Policy Sector, facilitated a 90-minute discussion among delegates and deputy minister panellists. The following is a summary of the discussion.

Q1. *Managers need to be trusted and empowered to be successful. But according to the interactive poll, 50 per cent of managers do not feel part of the decision-making process. How is this being addressed? How do we give managers a sense of empowerment?*

### **Robert Fonberg**

- The environment at DND differs from the rest of the public service. Trust needs to be built over time based on performance, merit and the competencies that you bring to the table.
- As for being empowered, discuss this with your senior manager. Empowerment is all about risk management, and we need to empower people to take risk-informed decisions.

### **Daphne Meredith**

- Adding to what Janice Charette said in her opening remarks earlier in the morning, we are going to need leadership. We are looking at profound change in how we manage, and we need to connect and have more dialogue with managers all the way up the organization.

Q2. *What are two or three key messages managers should say to staff to manage expectations in the coming years?*

### **Daphne Meredith**

- Effectively managing performance is our constant challenge, and managers need the right tools and training. Seventy per cent of managers did not know of OCHRO's online performance management tool for managers. This is a wake-up call. All managers need access to this, and managers should seek support from each other.

### **Michelle d'Auray**

- We need consistent and clear communications on our objectives and where we are going. To keep people motivated, leaders need to communicate what they know and find time to engage employees. It takes discipline and resilience. Tools are an important resource, but the communication and finding the time to have an ongoing dialogue with staff is more important.
- The key to performance management is to make it an ongoing conversation, not an annual or biannual exercise. It is much less awkward that way.
- Seventy per cent of managers did not know the online performance management tool was available. This needs to be addressed. The NMC also has work to do to promote these tools.

### **Michael Wernick**

- Do not underestimate the influence you have on others around you. Remember that people are watching, and you set the tone and attitude for your employees. How you act and behave makes an enormous difference.
- The old style of management meant you had to be aggressive to get things done. Nice used to mean indecisive. We now know, however, that a good manager inspires excellence.
- The most important thing is to have ongoing conversations with your people on an ongoing basis. It is easier to deal with performance issues this way.
- We are all managers, and this is a collective challenge for all of us. We need to support each other. Particularly in situations of poor performance, we need to back each other up (i.e., ensure the "whole table" is in agreement and supports you before action is taken against a poor performer).

Q3. *Communications within organizations today are much more inefficient, and there is a significant amount of overlap. What is the value of continuing our movement toward more Web 2.0 tools? Are policy directions and guidelines coming to guide us how to best use these tools in a professional context?*

### **Michelle d'Auray**

- There are some who want to change the world with social media, but start small. Set goals for yourself. Learn how to use GCPEDIA, and see if you can start by eliminating some of your email. Use them to bring people together from across the country.
- It is true, there are some real security concerns with the emergence of Web 2.0, and we are still figuring out how to manage this.
- There is a balance to be struck between being a citizen and a public servant. We all have a responsibility as public servants, even in our private lives. If it takes having two accounts on Facebook and Twitter,

then so be it. For some, this demarcation may be very necessary. In the end, it is all a question of employee judgement.

**Daphne Meredith**

- There needs to be balance between the activities in our private lives versus our work lives. Our common values and ethics as public servants are there to keep us in check and to ensure we are impartial in performing our duties.
- It may be wise to segment your online activities for work and your personal activities. Everyone should keep their private lives as separate from their work as they can.
- It is not like the old days with phone calls—comments and activities are now captured forever and are there for others to see.

Q4. *How are public service values and ethics reflected in senior-level staffing processes?*

**Daphne Meredith**

- The Public Service Commission has values—transparency, fairness, representativeness—entrenched in all of its staffing processes. There are also the workplace values of efficiency that have to be considered.
- The Public Service Employee Survey will be a great opportunity to find out employee attitudes on hiring practices and whether they feel that the process is fair and merit-based.
- We are experimenting with many different types of staffing processes such as collective staffing, and we need to give these a chance.

Q5. *What is the public service doing about succession planning, especially since we're experiencing a large exodus of employees with a lot of experience?*

**Michael Wernick**

- Succession planning for specific positions does not work because organizations are too fluid. There is so much talent already out there. We need staffing processes to be as open and transparent as possible. We want an open and fluid market with the right people in the right job at the right time.
- Effective succession planning requires two things: an in-depth knowledge of your organization's workforce and its realities, which should all be reflected in the organization's organizational HR plan; and more attention to creating a portfolio of talented and pre-screened employees from different functional communities, such as Audit, Communications, PEs etc.

Q6. *Why is delegation of staffing to managers still not happening?*

**François Guimont**

- The speed and urgency of spending under the Economic Action Plan pushed delegation well down into the organization. It had a great

empowering affect. Everyone wins when we delegate—it shows trust. Managers need training to ensure they are fully aware of their accountabilities.

**Michael Wernick**

- I would like to reinforce François Guimont’s point that we need to train and equip people on their authorities and monitor how they use their powers. We also have to watch for over-delegation. It is not like a driver’s licence where you get tested once and that is it. Training needs to take place regularly, and those with delegated powers have to prove they can handle it. We need to train, track and share.

Q7. *Some managers are very good managers on a specific file, but lack portfolio knowledge. Why is access to portfolio knowledge only limited to more senior people?*

**François Guimont**

- The higher one climbs in the public service, the more one becomes a generalist and the more it is all about leadership competencies. The more specialized you are, the lower you are likely to be in an organization. As an aspiring manager who wants to move up, you need to be a “transferable package.”
- In staffing ADMs, I ask whether the person has leadership competencies. A hiring manager wants to know if a potential hire can understand their realities. This is critical if you want to progress in the organization.

**Michael Wernick**

- There is a right balance to be struck between establishing pools of a manageable size, without being overly restrictive. It’s up to all of us to challenge ourselves on establishing restrictive criteria in an attempt to manage the number of applicants in a process. The emphasis should be on finding the best tools and processes to identify talent that gets us away from box-to-box selection processes.

**Michelle d’Auray**

- The Secretariat administered a very large pool of EX-01s. After the results, many candidates and hiring managers were surprised to see that some applicants they had their eye on did not make it. They went through the pre-selection criteria and interview results again alongside the hiring managers. After all was said and done, the results were the same, and the hiring managers agreed with the outcomes.
- The lesson here is we need to trust our colleagues and rely on others when it comes to collective staffing processes. Necessity will drive us there.

Q8. *We are currently experiencing budget cuts, staff reductions and less recruitment, and at the same time are expected to increase productivity*

*while undergoing organizational transformation. How can we achieve these goals without the funding and tools needed to accomplish this?*

**Michelle d'Auray**

- We need to find a way to free up funds to make the investments that are needed, and organizations and their management teams need to make choices that best fit their situation. As an example, at the Treasury Board we are facing similar challenges, and we made choices to invest in reconstructing and rebuilding our systems. I'm not saying it's easy, it is not.
- There are also investments being made that have broader implications. A number of services will be provided from a common platform requiring investments in IT and other equipment.

**Daphne Meredith**

- We have to continue to recruit and need to consider this as part of the baseline for future planning.
- Those who are looking for change and want innovation in the public service, this is your moment. You need to share your ideas, and organizations and their leaders need to connect with each other.
- We can't shy away from investing, and a lot can be done very cheaply, such as GCPEDIA and GCForums. Let us not assume constraints that do not exist.

**Robert Fonberg**

- The public service has gone through periods of restraint and program review before. In the past, we didn't have a group like this (NMC) to connect us, bringing deputy ministers here today and figuring out collectively how to get through this.
- Answers are not always perfectly clear, but the challenges are.
- The federal public service is here to stay, and we don't have the luxury of failing. These discussions are a critical point in that path.

Q9. *The number one issue for managers that has come up from focus groups and other research is performance management. The NMC has begun piloting workshops to help managers understand and use performance management tools. A key step moving forward is communicating these workshops to ensure that managers are aware of them.*

**Michael Wernick**

- Managers should not underestimate the influence they have on other public servants. People look to managers to make the tough decisions.
- Performance management is an ongoing conversation and involves encouraging people who are doing well, coaching people to improve and dealing with non-performers.

**Daphne Meredith**

- Good managers can inspire great performers. Providing managers with the tools and training to deal with performance management is key.
- The Secretariat has developed a tool to help managers deal with performance management and is engaging managers to get feedback on it so that the tool can continue to be improved and built upon.

**François Guimont**

- Performance management starts with strong direction and commitment. Performance management issues should be dealt with throughout the year and not just at the end of the year.
- It is important that managers have the support of senior management in the performance management decisions they make.

## **Appendix A: Overview of the Results and Analysis of Electronic Polling**

At the National Managers' Community (NMC) Professional Development Forum held in Toronto from May 3 to 5, 2011, delegates were electronically polled as part of the "Dialogue with Senior Officials" session.

Twenty questions were asked to the approximately 1,200 delegates on the following five themes:

- People management;
- Workplace satisfaction;
- Current work environment;
- Performance management; and
- Social media.

Delegates were also asked to respond to five demographic questions.

A number of questions asked in this year's electronic polling were repeats from past forums, and some questions were designed to probe deeper into findings from last year. A number of new questions based on new or emerging priorities were developed by managers across the country.

The overall purpose and intent of these questions was to highlight top-of-mind issues for managers and initiate a meaningful two-way discussion with senior leaders in the federal public service. Along with the deputy ministers who participated in the panel, a number of ADMs also attended the session and took part in the interactive polling and discussion with delegates, who were mostly managers (81 per cent), executives (6 per cent) and aspiring managers (12 per cent).

### **Detailed Results**

#### **Demographics**

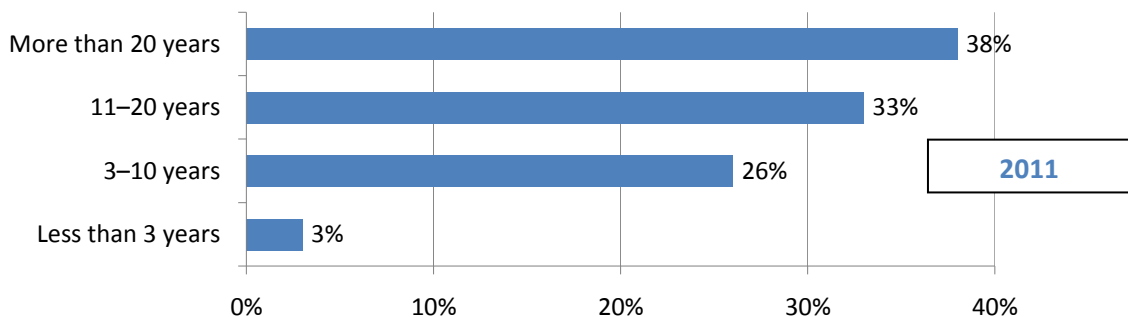
Five questions were asked to collect data and information about the approximately 1,000 delegates who participated in the polling session. Two questions (2 and 4) are repeat questions from the electronic polling session held in Montreal in 2010, and graphs are provided to show comparisons.

The following is a summary of the results:

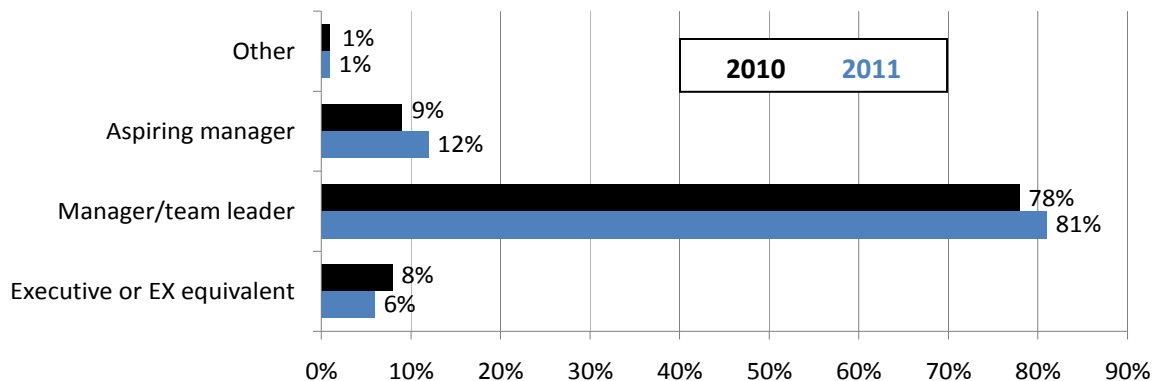
- 81 per cent of respondents were managers, with executives and aspiring managers at 6 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. This is similar to last year's results.

- 38 per cent of respondents had more than 20 years of experience in the public service, with 33 per cent having 11–20 years and 26 per cent having 3–10 years.
- 43 per cent of respondents were between 40–49 years old; 27 per cent were between 30 and 39 years; 19 per cent were between 50 and 54; and 9 per cent of respondents were 55 and older.
- 47 per cent of respondents worked in the National Capital Region (NCR); 28 per cent were from Central Canada outside the NCR (Quebec and Ontario); 14 per cent were from Atlantic Canada; and 10 per cent were from Western Canada. Only 1 per cent of respondents were from the North.
- For 76 per cent of respondents, this was the first NMC forum they had attended; 13 per cent had attended one previous forum; for 7 per cent, this was their third forum. Only 2 per cent of respondents attended all of the last five forums.

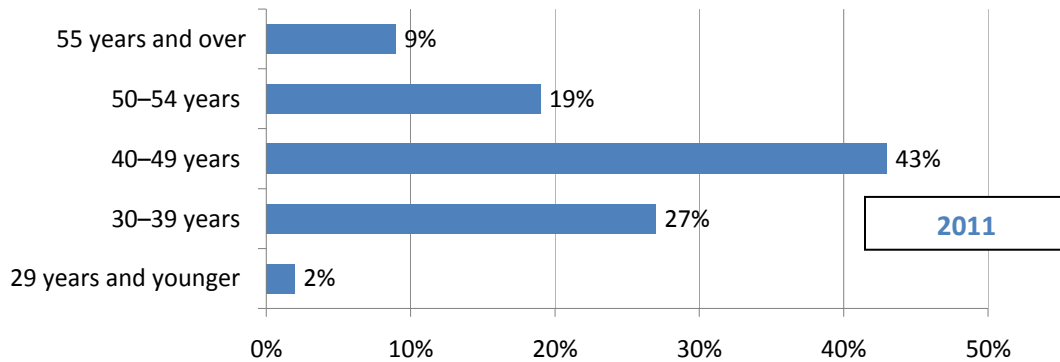
Q1. In total, how many years have you been working for the public service?



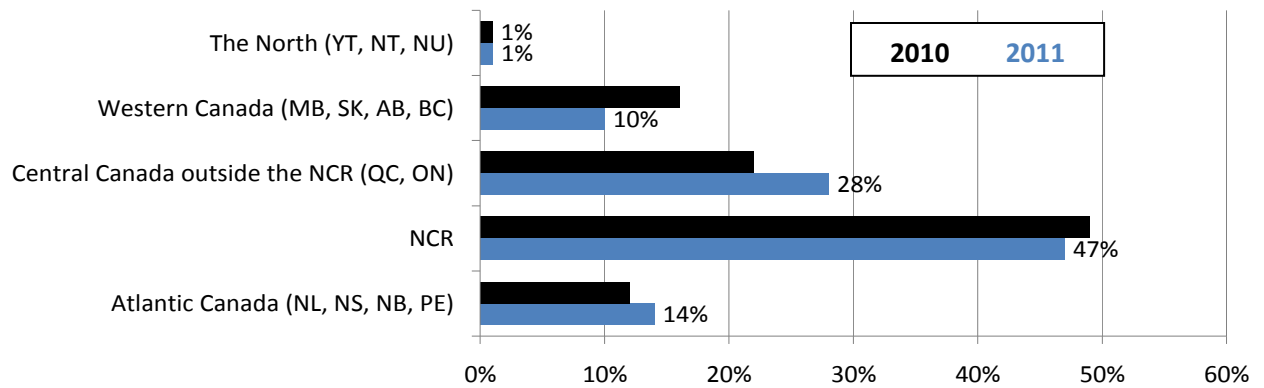
Q2. Which of the following **best** describes you?



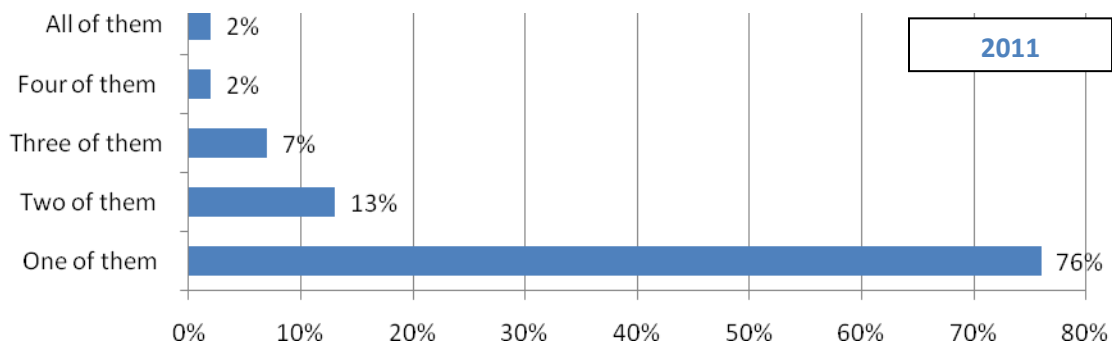
Q3. What is your age group?



Q4. I work in:



Q5. Of the five most recent NMC forums that have been held **including this one**—Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa, and St. John’s—how many have you attended?



## People management

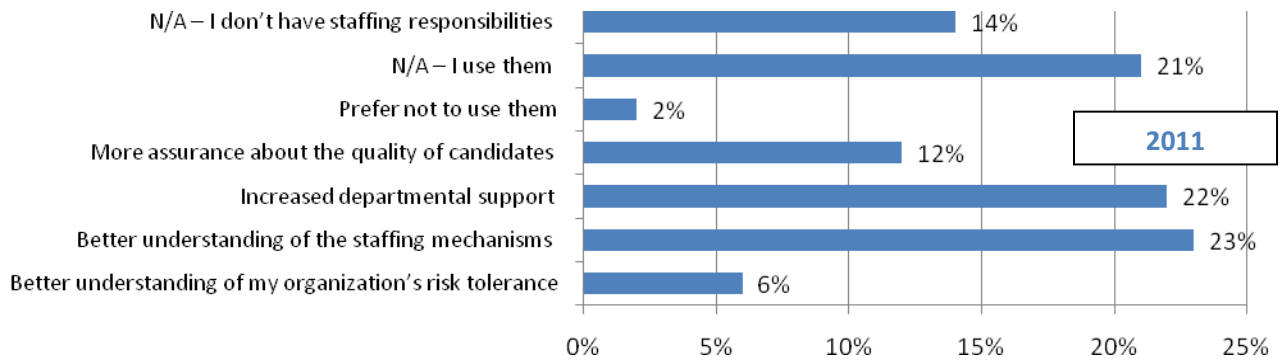
Six questions were asked under this theme. Three questions (6, 8 and 9) were asked based on the findings and recommendations of the recently released *Public Service Management Advisory Committee (PSMAC) Deputy Minister Subcommittee on People Resourcing* report.

- The majority of respondents (55 per cent) felt that better defined expectations, roles and responsibilities are required to foster collaboration between HR and managers.
- Only 25 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their “organization does a good job of identifying current and future business needs, and developing concrete people resourcing strategies that are translated into hiring and deployment decisions.”
- 32 per cent of respondents said they needed to personally assure the quality of candidates in order to be comfortable using shared recruitment processes; 22 per cent indicated that they would like to have a probation mechanism in case the candidate does not work out.
- Only 21 per cent of respondents are using the full range of staffing mechanisms available to them. Respondents identified two key areas that need to be addressed to allow them to better use these mechanisms: 23 per cent indicated that they would most need a better understanding of the staffing mechanisms; 22 per cent indicated increased departmental support was most needed.
- Only 24 per cent of respondents believe their organization adequately equips new managers with the competencies they require to do their job effectively. An analysis of comparable questions asked in previous forums indicates that managers perceive there is a problem with succession planning in organizations:
  - In the 2010 electronic polling session, 49 per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement that their organization is identifying and developing future leaders; and
  - In the 2008 electronic polling session, 69 per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement that their organization is adequately preparing future managers to replace employees who retire.
- 34 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they have access to second language training that meets their needs, and 27 per cent responded “not applicable,” indicating that they do not need second language training.

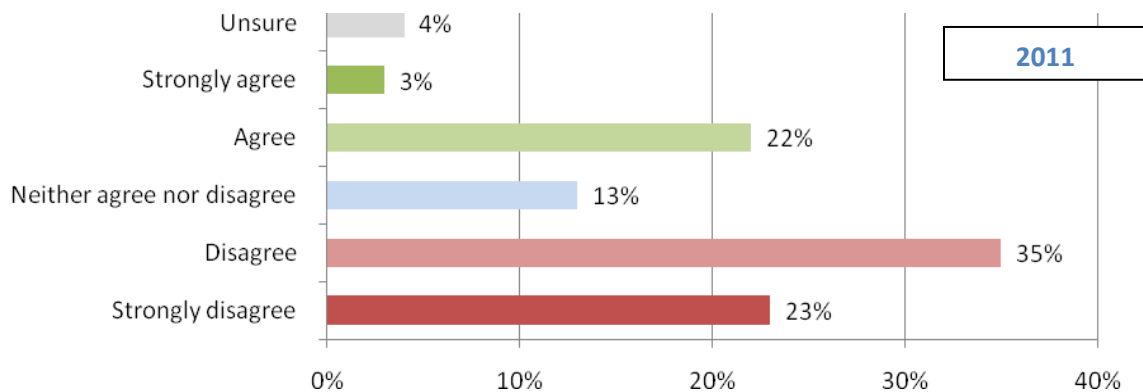
Q6. What is **most** required to foster collaboration between HR and managers?



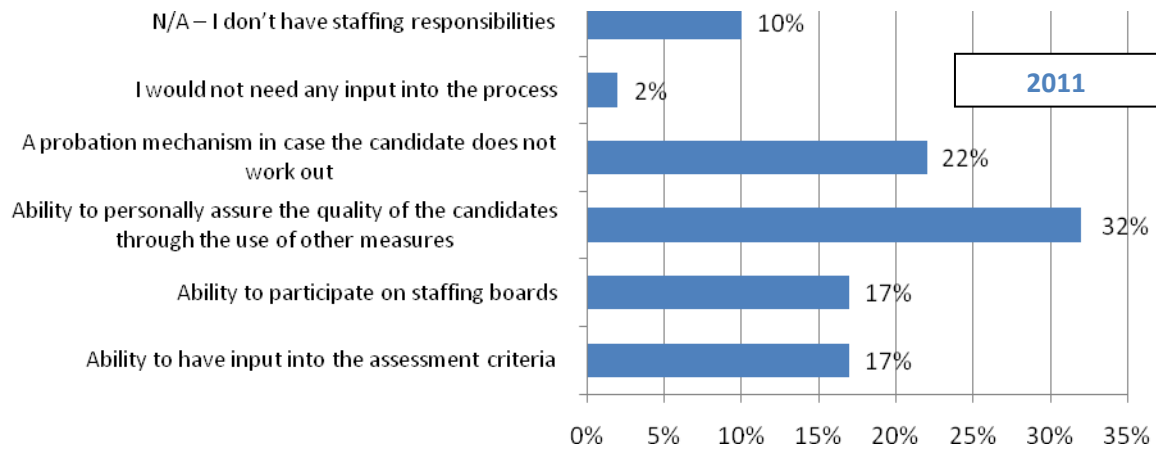
Q7. If you are not using the full range of staffing mechanisms available, what is **most** needed for you to use them?



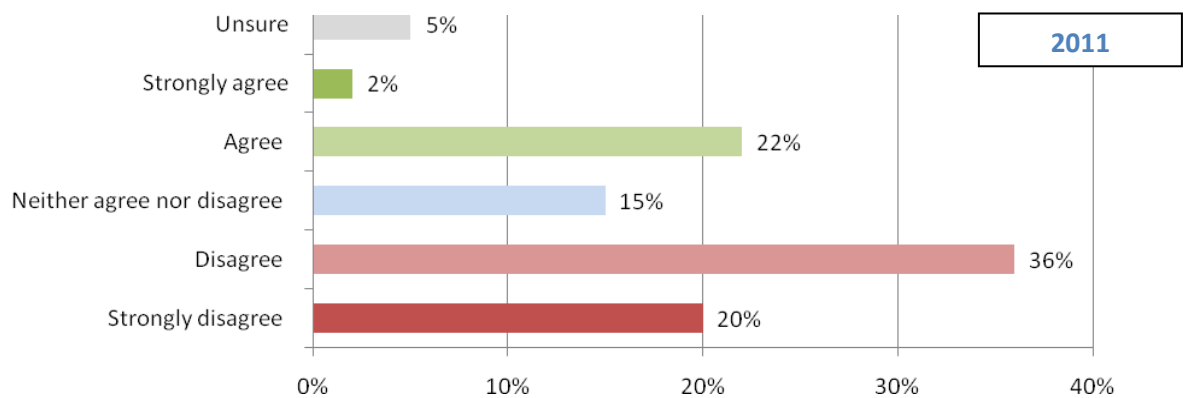
Q8. "My organization does a good job of identifying current and future business needs, and developing concrete people resourcing strategies that are translated into hiring and deployment decisions."



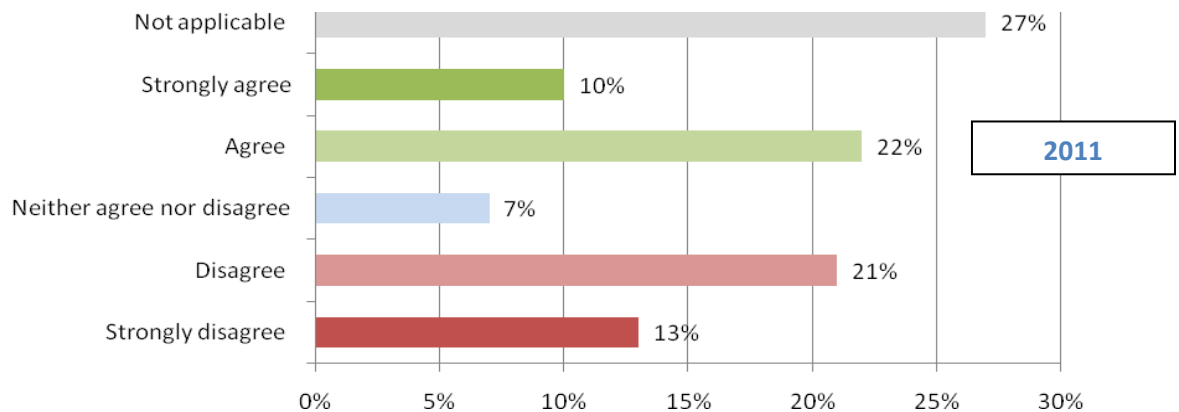
Q9. What is **most** needed to make you more comfortable with participating in shared processes with other managers?



Q10. "I believe that my organization adequately equips new managers with the competencies they require to do their job effectively."



Q11. "I have access to second language training that meets my needs."



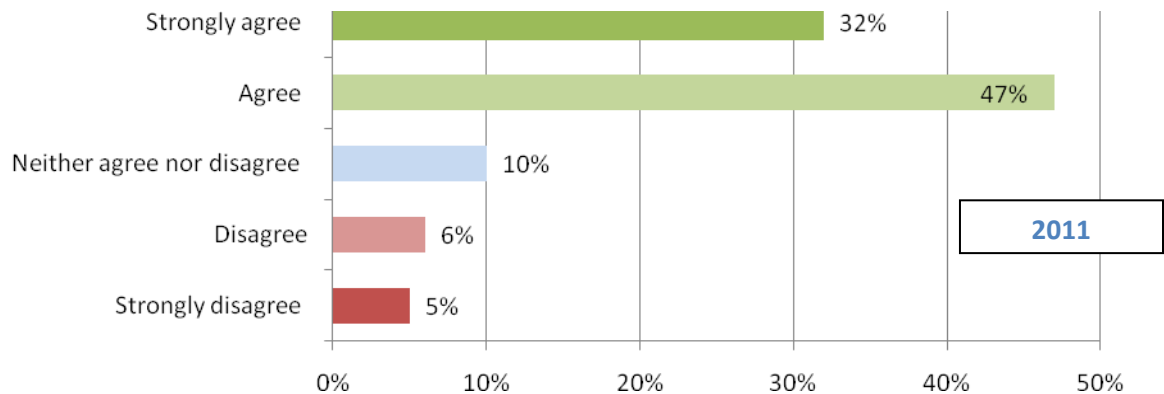
## Workplace satisfaction

Overall, respondents were relatively positive in their answers to all five questions asked on workplace satisfaction. When this year's results were compared with similar questions in the 2008 Public Service Employee Survey (PSES), the electronic polling results were slightly lower in some areas than in the 2008 survey.

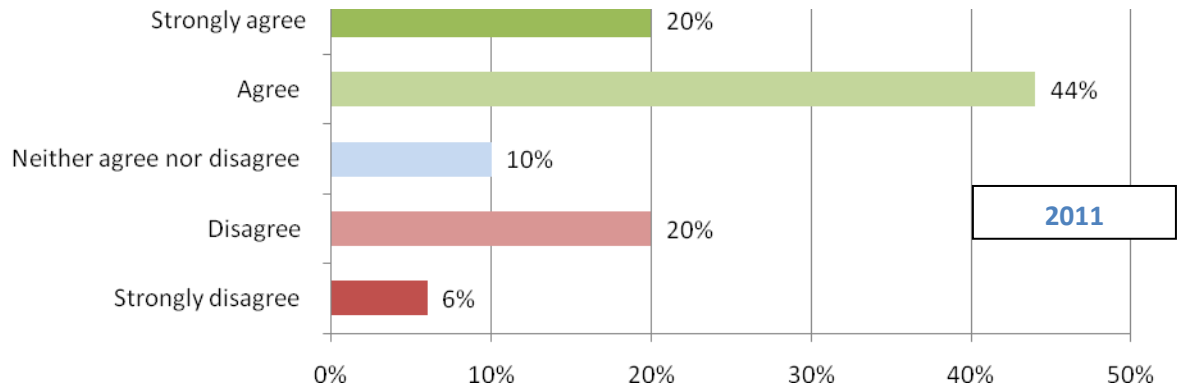
The following key points were noted:

- 79 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their role is a good match for their talents and interests. In the 2008 PSES, 88 per cent of managers reported that their job was a good fit for their interests, and 93 per cent reported that their job was a good fit for their skills.
- 67 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I'm getting the growth opportunities and challenges that are important to me." This is similar to but slightly lower than responses in the 2008 PSES where 76 per cent and 73 per cent of managers, respectively, agreed or strongly agreed with the statements, "I have the opportunities to develop and apply the skills I need to enhance my career" and "I get the training I need to do my job."
- 61 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt recognized and appreciated for their contribution. This is somewhat lower than the results of the 2008 PSES where 73 per cent of managers agreed or strongly agreed to the statement, "I receive meaningful recognition from my immediate supervisor when I do a good job."

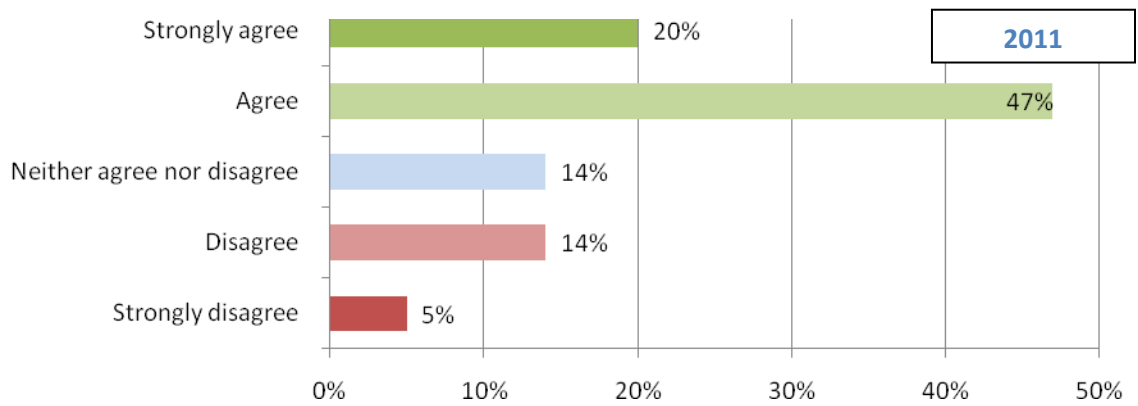
Q12. "My role is a good match for my talents and my interests."



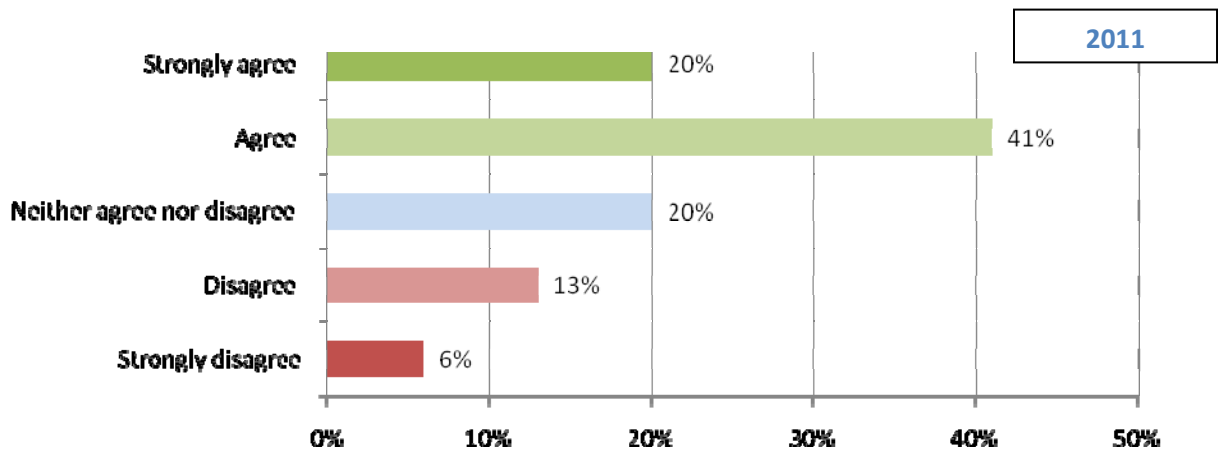
Q13. "I have the freedom and authority to do what I'm responsible to do."



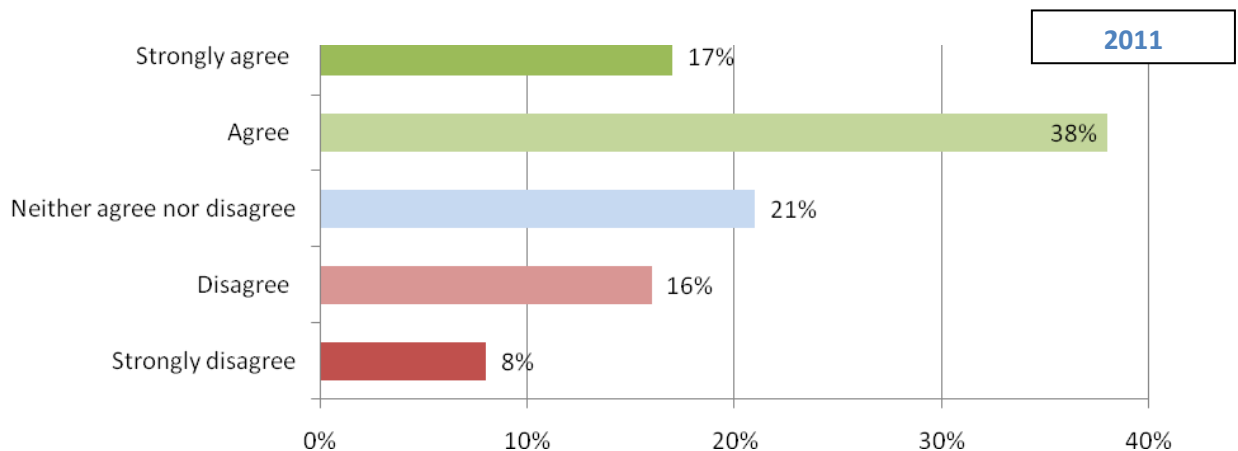
Q14. "I'm getting the growth opportunities and challenges that are important to me."



Q15. "I feel recognized and appreciated for my contribution."



Q16. "My organization allows me to participate in activities outside of my core responsibilities that pique my personal interest."

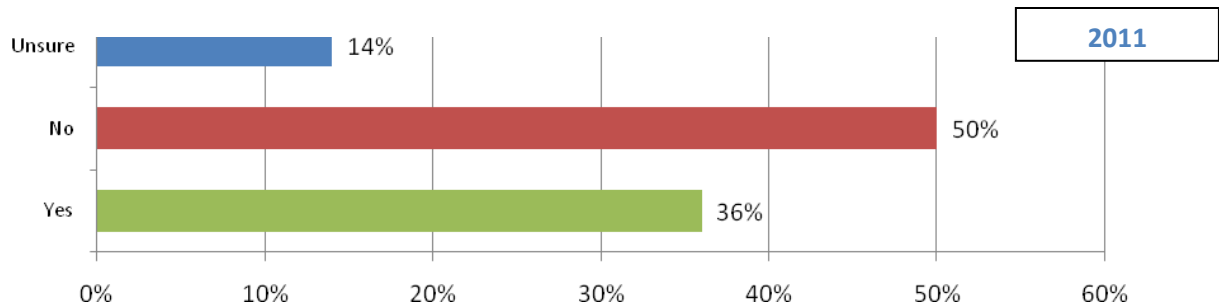


### Current work environment

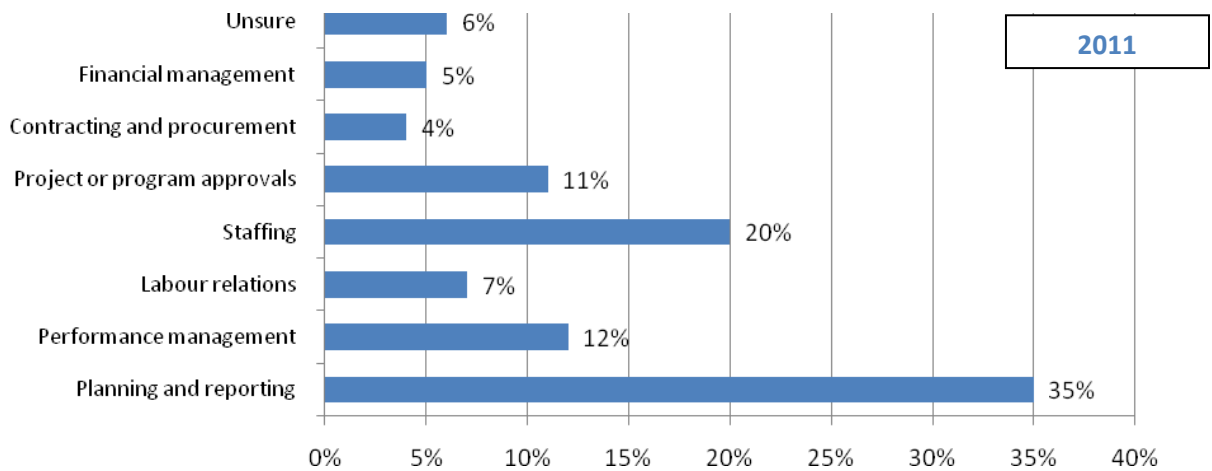
Three questions were asked under this theme, with the following notable results:

- Half the participants felt that they are not being meaningfully consulted on decisions that directly affect them. 36 per cent felt that they are being consulted, which is significantly lower than results recorded in the 2008 PSES on a similar question. 62 per cent of managers agreed with the statement "I have a say in the decisions and actions that have an impact on my work."  
Note: The lower result recorded in this year's electronic polling might be due to the uncertainty of the current environment where organizations are going through strategic reviews that result in organizational realignments and budget and workforce reductions. This was also evidenced in the table discussions that followed the polling where the number one topic discussed was strategic reviews and restraints.
- For 35 per cent of respondents, planning and reporting had the greatest administrative burden; the second most popular response was staffing at 20 per cent.
- 52 per cent of respondents indicated that their organization is not streamlining rules and policies, or eliminating unnecessary ones. This same question was asked last year, at which time 68 per cent responded in the same way. This may indicate that some progress is being made on streamlining and eliminating rules and policies.

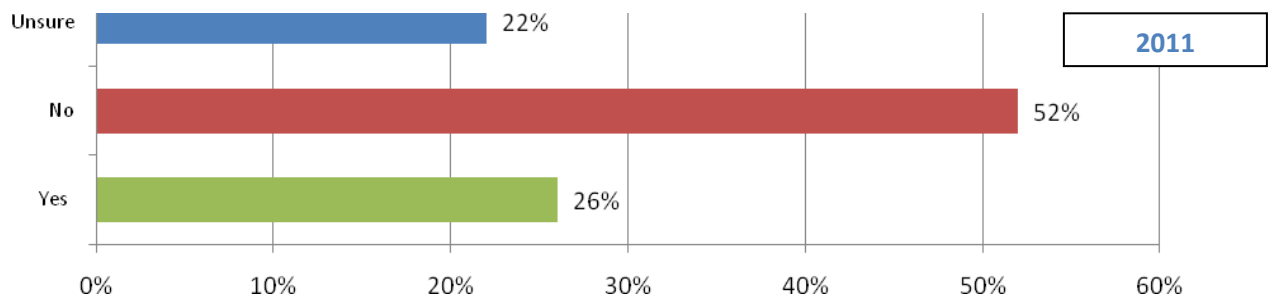
Q17. Do you feel that you are being meaningfully consulted on decisions that are being taken that directly affect you?



Q18. For you, which one of the following tasks has the greatest administrative burden?



Q19. Is your organization streamlining rules and policies or eliminating unnecessary ones?

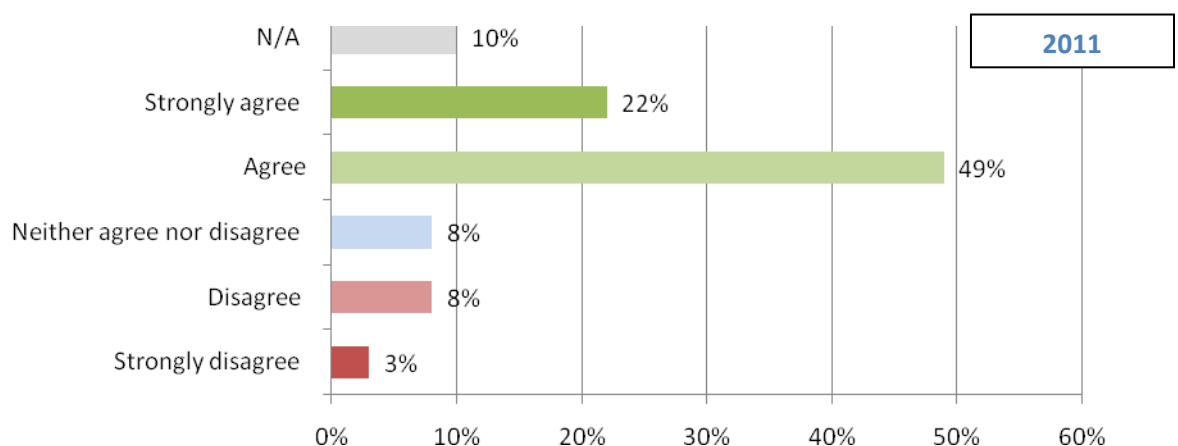


## Performance management

Three questions were asked under this theme, with the following notable results:

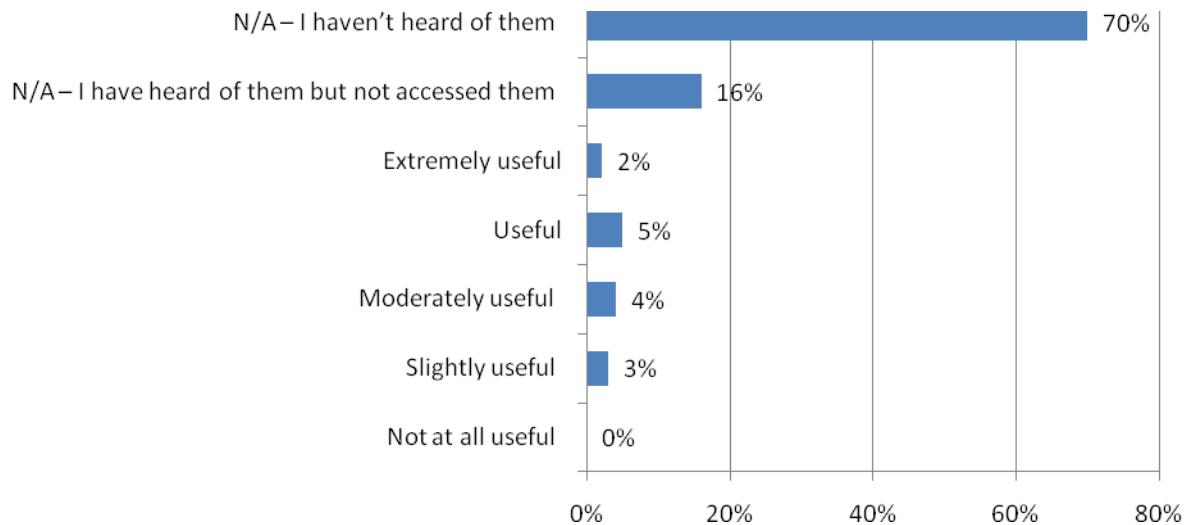
- 71 per cent of respondents indicated that they provide regular feedback or engage in dialogue with their employees on their performance. This is comparable to the government-wide results of the 2008 PSES, which reported the following results on similar issues:
  - “My immediate supervisor assesses my work against goals and achievements”—73 per cent agreed;
  - “I receive useful feedback on my job performance”—68 per cent agreed; and
  - “I receive meaningful recognition from my immediate supervisor when I do a good job”—70 per cent agreed.
- 70 per cent of respondents had never heard of Secretariat’s performance management tool. An additional 16 per cent had heard of it, but had never accessed it.
- Respondents identified two key areas that would help them in dealing with unsatisfactory performance: a more efficient, less time-consuming process (33 per cent); and training, coaching, or mentoring in having difficult conversations (30 per cent). Last year, delegates were asked what they needed most from senior management to support them in dealing with unsatisfactory performance. While this question is not identical, managers identified “a less time-consuming process” as their number one choice for that question as well.

Q20. “I provide **regular** feedback and engage in dialogue with my employees on their performance.”

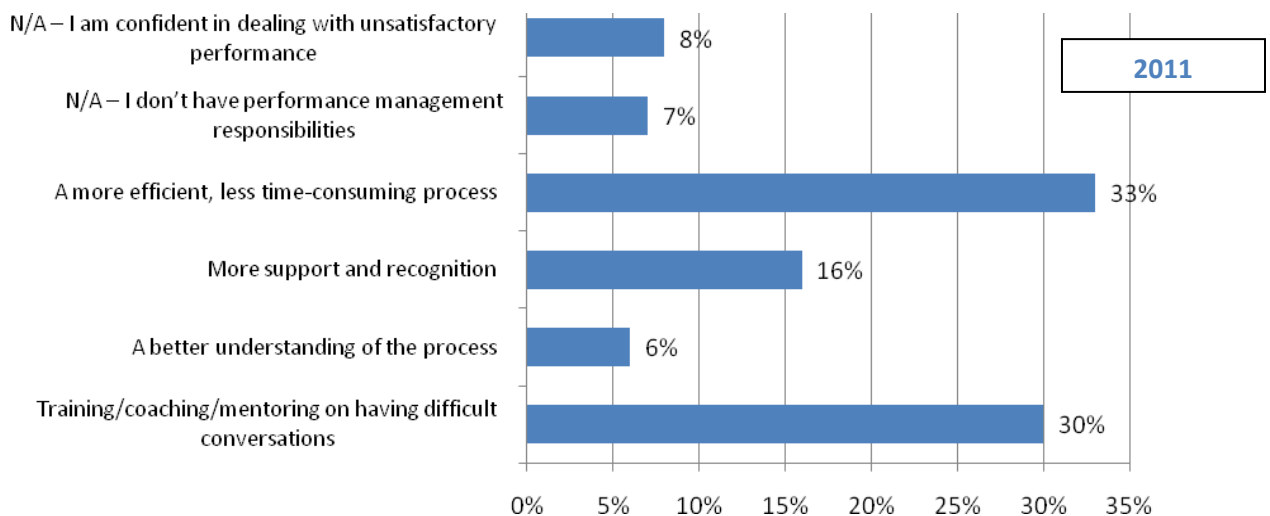


Q21. At last year’s forum, you told us that you need tools and support to help you deal with unsatisfactory performance. There is now a performance management tool available on the Secretariat’s website to guide managers

through the performance process. If you have accessed this tool, how would you rate its overall usefulness?



Q22. What would help you most in dealing with unsatisfactory performance?



### Social media

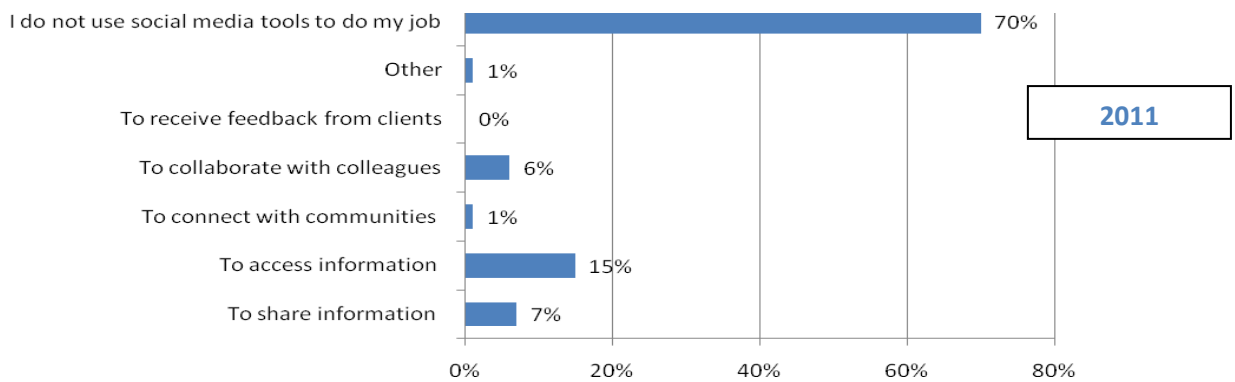
Three questions were asked under this theme, with the following notable results:

- 70 per cent of respondents indicated that they do not currently use social media tools to do their job, despite the fact that the Government of Canada has developed a suite of internal Web 2.0 social media tools that are available to most public servants (GCPEDIA—the Government of

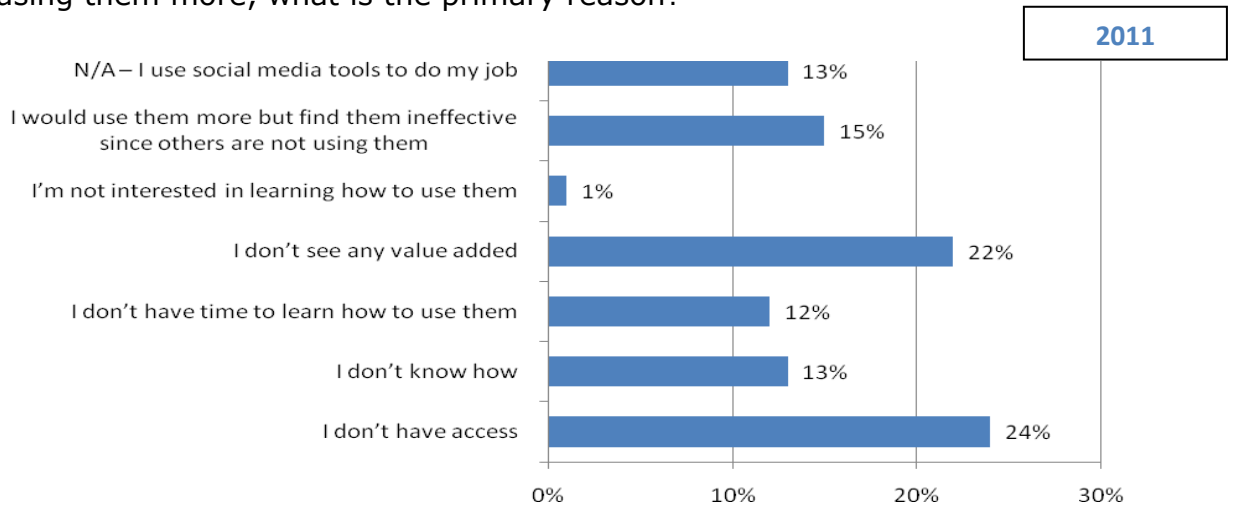
Canada wiki, GCForum for threaded discussions and GConnex, which is a professional networking tool).

- The main reasons respondents are not using social media are that they do not have access (24 per cent) and that they do not see any value in using social media to do their job (22 per cent).
- 44 per cent of respondents indicated that, in order to develop a culture of trust and openness in the public sector toward social media, organizational support would be required to promote training in how these tools can be applied. This corresponds to the findings of a recent report on *Social Media and Public Sector Policy Dilemmas* released by the Institute of Public Administration of Canada, which states that “organizational and cultural change is required in order to modernize government so it can benefit from new media.” The second most popular response from the poll was “training on the proper use of social media in the workplace.”

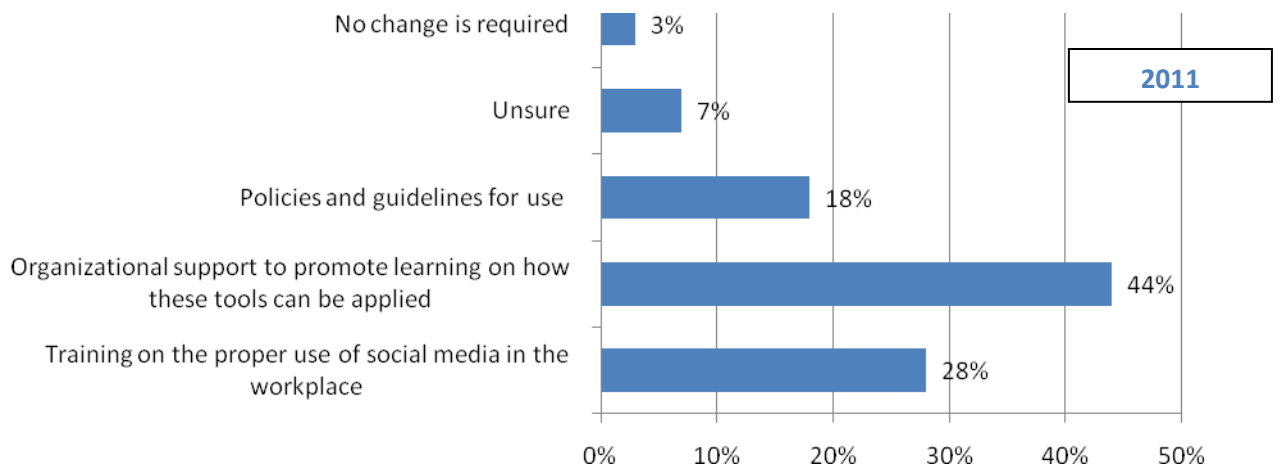
Q23. How do you use social media tools **most** to do your job?



Q24. If you are not using social media tools at all to do your work, or could be using them more, what is the primary reason?



Q25. What is most required to develop this culture of trust and openness in the public sector toward social media?



## Appendix B: Results and Analysis of Table Discussions

Approximately 166 questions and 100 recommendations were collected from the templates that delegates completed after the table discussions that followed the electronic polling session. Approximately 1,000 delegates participated in this session, and the following represents the highlights and a summary of the analysis of information collected.

### Highlights

Delegates were asked to organize the questions by theme based on the five themes of the electronic polling questions:

- Current work environment
- Workplace satisfaction\*
- Social media
- People management
- Performance management

\*Note: Very few comments were identified under "workplace satisfaction." Given the similar issues under "current work environment," these two themes have been integrated in this report.

- 68 questions were formulated on the themes of "current work environment" and "workplace satisfaction," with most questions relating to fiscal restraint and strategic review. The other questions had to do with administrative burden, communication, technological advancements and the political environment.
- 45 questions were formulated on the "social media" theme, with awareness of values and benefits, and government vision, guidelines and policy being the top two issues. This was followed by limited access and security and privacy issues.
- 35 questions were formulated on the "people management" theme with succession planning being the top issue, followed by staffing.
- 10 questions were formulated on the "performance management" theme, with no specific topic emerging as a key issue.
- 7 questions covered a variety of topics that primarily addressed broad communication issues.

Approximately 100 recommendations were received. A number have been included in this report that reflect the majority of responses. These recommendations were formulated by the delegates based on the questions and issues discussed at their tables.

## **Workplace satisfaction / current work environment**

### Fiscal restraint and strategic reviews

A total of 37 questions were formulated on this topic, with the following breakdown:

- 25 questions were formulated asking about innovation and risk taking; concerns were raised about the expectation that we can be innovative and take risks during a period of restraint. Delegates appeared to be questioning the messages from senior leaders about the importance of taking risks and being innovative, noting that it was particularly challenging in the midst of change and uncertainty.
- 7 questions were formulated on the issue of layoffs and attrition; questions focused on whether attrition would mitigate the number of layoffs anticipated, and there was speculation that given the severity of cuts there will be a need to actually lay off people.
- 4 questions were formulated on the topic of "doing more with less;" delegates commented that this expectation was particularly frustrating given the reductions in the budget and in the workforce, with little change in the workload.
- 4 questions were formulated on the impact of the administrative review in terms of layoffs and the potential for improved services.
- The remaining 10 questions focused on a range of issues that had to do with the challenges managers face in implementing change in their organization.

### Administrative burden

- 5 questions were formulated on this issue; most concerned the fact that there does not appear to be much progress in reducing red tape and in addressing the administrative burden related to planning and reporting.

### Communication

- 4 questions were formulated on a variety of issues relating to the current work environment; these included addressing systemic issues that hamper partnership and joint initiatives between departments, improving consultations with regional offices, addressing barriers in communications up the ranks, and meaningfully engaging managers in discussions about change due to restraint (note 55 per cent of managers do not feel they are being meaningfully consulted).

### Technology

- 4 questions were formulated on a variety of technology issues including the need to have electronic signatures, the need to have

standardized software to improve communications between departments (i.e., back-office standardization), and the impact on people, in view of the fact that there is less administrative support and more requirement for professionals and program specialists to use technology in their work.

#### Political environment

- 3 questions were formulated on the impact of a majority government.

#### **Social media**

##### Government of Canada vision, policy and guidelines

- 17 questions were formulated on this aspect of social media; these concerned the government's vision for the use of social media tools and the development of policies and guidelines to provide parameters on the application and use of these tools.

##### Awareness—Values and benefits of social media

- 15 questions were formulated on this topic; most questions concerned the value and benefits of using social media tools in the workplace, including whether these tools would be distracting for staff and have a negative impact on productivity.

##### Access

- 7 questions were formulated on why there is limited access to social media tools in some federal departments and agencies, while other organizations are encouraging them and promoting their use.

##### Security and privacy implications

- 6 questions were formulated on security and privacy issues associated with the use of social media tools; most expressed concerns about infringing on peoples' right to privacy.

#### **People management**

##### Succession planning

- 15 questions were formulated on the topic of succession planning; most questions asked about the federal government's strategy to address the issue of recruitment and retention in a time of restraint when it's anticipated that very little hiring will take place. Additional points were made about attrition and knowledge transfer, the lack of HR support and HR's aversion to risk, the need for a department-wide

program to develop middle managers as a feeder group for the large number of executives retiring, and the need for tools to support managers.

### Staffing

- 10 questions were formulated based on the perception that staffing has not improved since the implementation of the *Public Service Modernization Act*; it continues to be a slow, transactional, non-strategic process that hampers managers' ability to hire. Comments included the following:
  - Pools are tedious to build and become depleted quickly;
  - Audits usually result in the establishment of more rules;
  - There needs to be more clarity on the division of roles and responsibilities between managers and HR; and
  - Managers need to have delegated staffing authority to be able to hire in a timely manner.

### Other

- 5 questions were formulated on a variety of issues related to people management; these included the impact of increased delegation of authority, 360-degree feedback for managers and executives, work-life balance, difficulties in terminating employees, accommodating staff under the human rights provision for "family status," and the need for more administrative support for managers in the regions. Another question concerned whether the competency "working with others" needs to be addressed in order to meet changing societal needs.

### **Performance management**

- 10 questions were asked under the theme of performance management, with no specific topics identified. The following issues were among those discussed:
  - The challenge of dealing with increased mental health absences;
  - The need to identify strategies for meaningful HR performance management;
  - The need for the Secretariat to ensure that products and management tools (e.g., the performance management website) be effectively communicated and utilized;
  - The need to bridge the gap between HR and managers and identify common objectives for performance management;
  - The need for managers to have regular feedback and support from their managers and directors;
  - The challenge of developing staff without funds, especially during this period of fiscal restraint; and

- The challenge of dealing with poor performers, and once an issue has been identified, the need for assistance beyond advice to help with performance management.

## **Communication**

- 7 questions were asked that covered a variety of topics under the broad theme of communication. The following are examples of some of the issues:
  - Does senior management have a true understanding of the issues managers deal with on a day-to-day basis?
  - What are the deputy minister panellists and senior management going to do with the results of the electronic polling?

## **Recommendations**

Approximately 100 recommendations were provided by the delegates in response to the question, "What recommendations would you make to the deputy ministers based on the results of the electronic polling and the subsequent table discussions?"

A number of themes and recommendations emerged from the data collected from this question. The following is a summary of the responses received:

### Communication and consultation with managers

A significant number of the recommendations related to the need to communicate information to managers and to consult with managers when appropriate. Actual recommendations generally conveying these key messages include the following:

- Our group was concerned that 50 per cent of people stated they did not have input into decisions that impact them. There should be improved communication from top-down to manager levels.
- Pending changes should be more adequately communicated, including a rationale for them.
- Consider the value of consulting with middle management, especially on budget restraints.

### Social media

Several recommendations were received on ways to increase the use of social media in the workplace; most indicated a need for a government-wide vision, strategy and guidelines. The following are some of the recommendations on this topic:

- Standardize the use of and access to social media; convey a clear vision and provide policies; explain the purpose for using these tools. Is it to improve the way we work or how we deliver services?
- Provide clear direction on expected use, as well as roles and responsibilities in monitoring usage and dealing with inappropriate use. This should not be left solely as managers' responsibility.
- There needs to be a standard government-wide policy regarding the use of social media and the Internet. It is understood there will be exceptions, but every department is currently doing things differently.
- Social media tools are being encouraged. Deputy ministers should promote training for staff and managers in that area.
- Create a communications strategy to define and explain the value of social media in the workplace.

### Current work environment

While a significant number of questions under the theme of "the current work environment" related to strategic review, only a few of the recommendations primarily related to the issue of administrative burden and risk. The following are some of the recommendations:

- There is a need to speed up the work of the deputy minister committee's administrative review.
- Avoid duplicate requests for information already contained in other reports.
- Streamline project approval processes and policies.
- In the last few years, the administrative burden has increased, which is affecting the balance of management functions. This needs to be addressed if we are to successfully transition to change organizations.
- Develop managers and leaders to better manage risk.
- Increased support is needed for innovation and risk. If we want to take a risk, let us fail.

### People management

There were a variety of recommendations received on the theme of people management including the need to have better succession planning, being more strategic on managing employee talent, addressing issues on HR support and expertise, and finding more time for managers to spend on people management. The following are some of the recommendations received on these topics:

- There is a lack of training for new managers, and a lot of people are advancing into management positions without proper support, training and tools. There are also a lot people reluctant to move up to the EX category. Meaningful training, tools and support for management will be key.

- There is a need for more language training support for middle managers.
- Make probationary periods longer.
- Get managers and EX recruits out to the regions so they understand the realities and develop applicable and relevant policies.
- Strategies are needed to free up managers to spend some time on people management (i.e., workload issues, changing priorities and time restraints).
- Ensure appropriate measures or approaches are taken to retain and recruit high-level HR expertise to support managers and to create an environment of collaboration, respect and trust.

### Performance management

A number of recommendations were received regarding the Secretariat's performance management tool. Seventy per cent of delegates weren't aware that this tool existed, and several suggestions were received indicating that more effective communication was needed to promote this tool. Other recommendations focused on the need for better processes, tools and solutions to deal with performance management issues:

- The Secretariat needs to develop a better communication model to introduce its tools and resources, as witnessed by the results around the performance management tool.
- In order to provide increased support to managers in the area of performance management, we would recommend developing more efficient processes.