

Finding and Developing a New Workforce: Learning from the Utility Industry

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2012 BUS & PARATRANSIT CONFERENCE

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 - ✓ Identifying needs
 - ✓ Restructuring jobs
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- Summary




About American Water

- Operator of municipal Water and Waste Water Treatment Facilities across the United States
- More than 1,700 employees
- About two-thirds of workforce represented by Utility Workers Union
- More than 25% of workforce over age 52



Impact on Organization and Customers

- Inability to provide service to customers as required by regulators
 - Lack of growth due to inability to support new customers
 - Inability to comply with mandated maintenance and quality standards
 - Work/life balance problems leading to poor morale and retention
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Strategic Approach

- Workforce Replenishment (WFR)
- Focus on the critical positions where knowledge loss is the greatest threat
- Identify and prioritize the specific knowledge and skills at risk
- Develop concrete, actionable responses to mitigate this loss



Strategic Approach

Step 1. Conduct a Knowledge Loss Risk Assessment

Step 2. Determine Approach to Capture Critical Knowledge

Step 3. Monitor and Evaluate



Strategic Approach

- Asses the consequences of lost knowledge
- Prioritize where to begin determined by attrition
- Identify options to retain knowledge or mitigate knowledge loss
- Develop action plans



Restructuring Jobs

- Use Job Task Analysis
- Identify best practices company wide
- Leverage technology where possible



Training

- Primarily on-the-job (OJT)
- Well defined skill requirements – used to determine incumbent skill gaps and new hire recruiting skill needs
- Represented and non-represented employees



Successes

- Built infrastructure within American Water to support WFR
- Increased awareness of the initiative and managements role
- Products and outputs developed were found to be useful
- Identified best practices



Challenges

- Differentiating between workforce replenishment and succession planning
- Building an organizational culture that supports knowledge sharing



Lessons Learned

- The process takes time
- Embrace both the positive and negative
- Reinforce standards when necessary
- Leverage best practices when available



Thank You

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