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RMT Representative Work Force Steering Committee

by Jessie Barksdale, AAL-9

What is it? It was called the EEO Steering Committee when it was established by the Regional Administrator in September 1990 to be a catalyst for improving diversity in the regional work force. Since then, the steering committee has undergone a few changes — including its name, membership, and task list.

Priority List. During one of the regularly scheduled meetings in 1991, the committee developed a priority list of items to focus on and established milestones for their accomplishment. At the same time, the Regional Administrator recognized the need for a bonafide charter. By September 1991, a charter had been drafted and approved by the RMT. A couple of elements that were affected immediately by the new charter were its name and membership. It seemed only fitting that the name should reflect or emulate the primary purpose of the committee and that the membership would include managers who had authority to effect change in their organization.

Top Ten. These were the initial items adopted by the committee which became known as the top ten:

- Upward Mobility
- KSAO Video
- Career Path (Brochures)
- Regional Outreach Recruitment Plan
- Alternative Training
- Research and Analysis (CO-OP, Predevelopment)
- Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- Developmental Bids
- Merit Promotion Plan
- Mentor/Sponsor Program Role Models

Upward Mobility. Spirits were high as the committee swung into action in 1991. The group was focused and motivated to accept the challenges that each item provided. For example, the Upward

Mobility Program was revitalized in the Alaskan Region. Upward Mobility is a program that focuses on the development and implementation of specific career opportunities for lower-graded employees (at GS-8 and below or equivalent) who are in positions or occupational series which do not enable them to realize their full work potential. The committee's efforts paid off when division managers identified and confirmed targeted positions for Upward Mobility Recruitment. These positions were advertised, candidates were rated and ranked, and selections were made. Having an active Upward Mobility Program in the region allows employees to enhance their qualifications and progress in career positions. It also motivates employees and creates a climate conducive to increased morale and productivity.

Special Training Programs. When the committee placed Research and Analysis of Special Training Programs (Alaskan Region) on the top ten list, it was thinking that Cooperative Education Programs could be an effective means of reaching a representative work force by the year 2000.

Pay Dirt. AAL-10 struck pay dirt last summer when it began coordinating new Cooperative Education Program (CO-OP) agreements between FAA and the University of Alaska Anchorage. The certification process was completed in October 1991. A signing ceremony between FAA and UAA took place on November 1, 1991. Currently the Alaskan Region has pre-hire programs for air traffic controller and electronics technician careers.

1992 Goal. There is much to be done in 1992. Issues such as work force diversity, career counseling, individual development plans (IDP) are all on the list. The committee's goal is to increase diversity in the agency. One way to reach that goal is to keep plugging away at the task list. Looking back on 1991, several items from the initial top ten list were completed — and to the RMT Representative Work force Steering Committee, that spells progress.

Individual Development Plans

by Kris Conquergood, AAL-17E

How do I get ahead in this organization? What are my career opportunities? What is my goal? What do I want to do? How do I as a supervisor assist an employee in achieving career goals?

Questions from employees...questions from supervisors. To help employees and supervisors answer these questions and support individuals in career planning, the Regional Administrator established the Alaskan Region Individual Development Plan (IDP) Program in January, 1991. The Organizational Effectiveness Branch developed and issued Order 3410 with attached IDP handbook. AAL17 held Train-the-Trainer sessions for a cadre of instructors who in turn conducted special briefings for supervisors on the IDP process and how to coach their employees. All-employee briefings were held to explain the process and discuss employee responsibilities.

Not stopping there, the Region offered IDP work sessions where employees were given time to read and study IDP material and to prepare a draft plan. Coaches were available to explain the process and answer questions.

Some employees were initially skeptical. However, they were encouraged by the work sessions and IDPs are now bearing fruit.... **Boots**

Fluharty, Merrill Field ATCT, attended a work session and comments, "The session was very helpful. It brought together individuals from all parts of the organization. This broadens our horizons. We brainstormed what basic skills and knowledge we need to know to progress in the FAA." She went on to say, "It is hard to do an IDP. It takes time to decide what you want to do or be. This got me started."

Kati Thompson, Anchorage FSS, knows first hand that developing an IDP works. She discussed her developmental needs with her supervisor, **Tony Moulton**, and completed a plan. When a detail in EEO was publicized, Tony acted immediately to obtain the opportunity for Kati. He knew her career goal and the steps they had agreed on to support her.

Dolores Coates, Federal Women's Program Manager, encourages employees to develop IDP's. She states, "If you don't know where you are going, it doesn't matter what road you take. I believe an IDP helps a person focus on a career destination and the specific steps that are necessary to get there." And she emphasizes that whether you have an IDP is taken into consideration when allocating tuition assistance and in allocating quota for training courses.

Use a Career Path

by Chuck Moody, AAL-43

The RMT Representative Work Force Steering Committee has been working on a plan to identify barriers so they can be eliminated in order to assist the Region in achieving a representative work force. The issue of "Career Paths" has been identified as of foremost importance. To reach a diverse work force will require advancement of current employees as well as new recruits.

In working through the significance of career pathing and the lack of data, it became very apparent that this is an FAA-wide issue. To ensure a "One Agency" response, the Associate Administrator for Human Resource Management, AHR-I, was asked to prepare an agency "Career Pathing" brochure. The Alaskan Region offered to assist in working the issue.

Ann Rosenwald, Director, Office of Human Resource Development, AHD-I responding for the Associate Administrator, stated they would look toward starting the project in early 1992.

Upward Mobility

by Jacque Holland, AAL-14

Upward mobility is an agency program that focuses on the development and implementation of specific career opportunities for lower-graded employees (at GS-8 and below or equivalent) who are in positions or occupational series which do not enable them to realize their full work potential. The program strives to provide employees with opportunities that will enhance their qualifications and progress in career positions. With emphasis on motivating employees, the program aims to create a climate conducive to increased morale and productivity.

For supervisors/managers the program provides a broader base for selection of personnel for technical, administrative, and professional positions which will in turn diversify the employee population in those areas. In addition, the program affords an internal recruitment strategy to assist managers in accomplishing their affirmative action goals and objectives.

The program is projected to accept applications once a year during open season. The first annual announcement opened October 9, 1991.

Aviation Career Education in Alaska

by Dave Brubaker, AAL-17

On Friday, November 1, 1991, the University of Alaska became the first university in the United States to sign two pre-hire development agreements with FAA. These agreements enhance the University's air traffic and electronic technician students' opportunity to go directly to work for FAA after graduation.

The "**AIR TRAFFIC Pre-Hire Development**" program will place selected graduates of UAA's Air Traffic Program in on-the-job training (OJT) positions in FAA towers or air route traffic control centers. This will allow the students to by-pass many developmental requirements at the FAA Academy in Oklahoma City, increase their employment opportunities with FAA, create greater opportunity for women and minorities to be employed with the Region, and allow FAA new-hires to begin working toward full performance levels much more quickly than in the past.

The "**ELECTRONICS TECHNICIAN Pre-Hire Development**" program will place selected graduates of UAA's Electronic Technician Program directly into OJT positions in FAA Airway Facilities organizations. This program provides the same benefits as described above. The by-passing of developmental FAA training will save the students and FAA 1,110 hours of basic training at Oklahoma City. The University will provide the basic developmental electronic training while Oklahoma City becomes the "FAA Graduate School".

Also on November 1, 1991, UAA's Consortium Library was designated as an **Aviation Education Resource Center** for Alaska. This Resource Center, provided by FAA, will maintain quantities of

printed materials, video tapes, slides, K-12 curriculum materials, and computer education software for use by the public, the media, and the education community.

On December 2-3, 1991, the University Aviation Association, located in Opelika, Alabama, completed its review of **UAA's Airway Science Program** in a site visit at the UAA campus. Their approval will allow anyone involved in aviation the opportunity to obtain a higher level degree in Airway Science. It also makes UAA eligible to apply for national Airway Science grants.

These giant leaps provide Alaskan aviators, its aviation industry, its University, FAA's Alaskan Region, and the residents of Alaska the most complete aviation education program in the nation. Fine tuning of several of these programs, *e.g.* new simulators for piloting/ATC and aviation laboratory equipment for ETs, could make Alaska and its UAA the premier aviation education facility in the Nation.

Merit Promotion Is Alive and Well

by Dottie Taylor, AAL-14

In this age of special emphasis programs, diversity, veterans preference, and pre-hire efforts, is there still a place for merit promotion of employees?

The answer is definitely "yes." In 1991, 274 positions were advertised under the Merit Promotion Program and over 90 employees were initially promoted. Others were reassigned to positions with promotion potential, and some accepted lower-graded positions to obtain diversity or career enhancing experience.

"One example," says Regional Administrator Ted Beckloff, "was a hire for a staff officer. The individual had 12 years of specialized and managerial experience. It was a bonus that the person was a woman who brought some diversity to the Regional Management Team (RMT), but clearly the quality experience was there."

Merit promotion is a program designed to ensure a systematic means of selection for promotion according to merit. The program ensures fair consideration and merit selection.

RMT Representative Work Force Steering Committee

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Keep Up With Diversity

By Jessie Barksdale, AAL-9A

In 1987, the Hudson Institute released "Workforce 2000," the now-famous study of the work force of the future, which was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Labor. This study offered predictions about changes that will occur in the demographic composition of the United States population and work force by the year 2000.

Among the startling projections were the following: White males will account for only 15 percent of the 25 million people who will join the work force between the years 1985 and 2000. The remaining 85 percent will consist of white females; immigrants; and minorities (of both genders) of Black, Hispanic, and Asian origins. The Hispanic and Asian populations will each grow by 48 percent; the Black population will grow by 28 percent; and the White population will grow by only 5.6 percent.

As you can see from these projections, change is inevitable. The American work force is rapidly changing in all kinds of ways - in age mix, gender composition, racial background, cultural background, education, and physical ability. These changes are having and will continue to have a significant impact on the organizational environment. Why is this so?

Diversity is about setting aside, temporarily, what "I" perceive to be right or the best way, etc., and making an honest attempt to understand another's belief and behavior in terms of that person's culture.

In the past, when the employees of an organization represented much less diversity, there was less variety in the values that governed organizational operations and work performance. Now, because of increasing diversity, there are conflicting values among workers—conflicting messages about how to do things. Changing demographics, along with economic factors and the high cost of turnover, have convinced organizations that they need to make every effort to retain employees, to develop them, and to promote from within. This trend means that it is increasingly important for employees to learn to understand one another and to work together effectively and in harmony.

Without a proper introduction or orientation on diversity, managers, supervisors, and employees might find it difficult, if not frustrating, trying to decide what diversity means. Diversity is about valuing differences. It's about setting aside, temporarily, what "I" perceive to be right or the best way, etc., and making an honest attempt to understand another's belief and behavior in terms of that person's culture. Diversity training is only the first step in the process of managing diversity in an organization. Unless the organizational climate honors and supports cultural differences, training will have little impact.

Certain key elements must exist within an organization in order for cultural sensitivity to be increased; *i.e.*, training and orientation programs on the topic of diversity, and always management support. This approach represents a departure from EEO programs which denied differences and instead promoted the idea that acknowledging differences implied judgments of right and wrong, superiority and inferiority, etc.

Organizations that recognize the value of diversity and manage diversity effectively have realized these benefits:

- ➔ Diversity brings a variety of ideas and viewpoints to the organization — an advantage that is especially beneficial when creative problem solving is required.
- ➔ Employees are willing to take risks. As a result, creativity, leadership, teamwork, and innovation are enhanced.
- ➔ Employees are empowered and have a sense of their potential in and value to the organization.

As the above tips point out, the best way to deal with diversity in the work place is to recognize, identify, and discuss differences.

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