

Understanding Employee Retention – It's Not Business, It's Personal!



Anita Mlinar
598 Policy Report
Masters in Public
Administration
University of Victoria
March 15, 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank several people who have had important roles in this project.

I would like to thank Dr. Bart Cunningham for his unprecedented patience and support throughout the entire project. I cannot thank him enough for his input, encouragement, guidance, and humour.

I would also like to thank the Ministry of Environment and the team of directors that supported my ambitions over the past 6 years. I stand in complete humility before them for giving me the wings to fly and encouraging me to advance myself. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to Hu Wallis, Lynn Bailey and Margaret Eckenfelder for their support and inspiration. They were my former directors, coworkers and mentors, and I will never forget them. Thank you to the director Randy Scott for providing me with a theme for my 598 project, and to the deputy director Yvonne Foxall for her curiosity in the field of human resources. She was never afraid to ask the challenging questions while providing a constructive feedback. Also, thank you to the many former MOE employees that provided information and participated in interviews.

Finally, I want to acknowledge my family and friends for their ideas and support during the entire project and the MPA program. In particular, I cannot thank enough to both my mother Angela Berlanda and mother in-law Marija Mlinar for giving me the time and support with my children when I was unable to be with them over the past several years. Thank you to my husband Zeljko who encouraged me to stay focused and never give up. I thank him for believing in me even when I did not believe in myself. Thank you to my sweet little Ema and Marko for being such good babies. I hope to inspire them to believe in education and to become the future scholars themselves. This is all for you.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report - commissioned by the Ministry of Environment (from here on the MOE) and carried out by the MPA candidate Anita Mlinar - provides a comprehensive analysis of best practices in worker retention and knowledge transfer strategies.

As the economy revives, companies with dissatisfied employees will experience a swift migration of their top talent. In a down economy, employees have fewer opportunities to take a job at another company, but entrepreneurs would be foolish to take their fingers off the pulse of company morale simply because employees have fewer options. "Companies that don't think about employee retention, that basically rest on their laurels and think 'the economy will take care of us, where are they going to go?' Those are the companies that, as soon as the labour market picks back up, their turnover rates are going to go from 5 percent to 50 percent and it will happen overnight," says Mark Murphy, author of *The Deadly Sins of Employee Retention*.

Employee retention and/or employee turnover is a widely discussed but generally complex issue. Most private and public sector organizations have and will, at some point in time, review their employee turnover rates. In 2008, the MOE examined the number of employees that had left their Ministry. The review was based on a randomized in-house study. The results showed that between the 2nd and 7th year of the employment with the MOE, approximately 30 percent of all employees left their organization. Compared to other private and public sector organizations, their numbers were twice as high (i.e., other ministries report losses of about 15 percent while well-established or highly successful organizations report losses of only 6 percent).

The report will provide a literature review on retention and will present a qualitative analysis based on 30 interviews conducted with former MOE employees. Given that employee retention is currently a popular topic in many executive circles, and given that many governments are reviewing and revising their human resource policies, this paper will propose a framework, and a sequence of steps that employers could use to minimize the turnover rates. Within the framework is a list of recommendations, practices and approaches used to retain employees.

The conceptual framework was derived from the results based on the interview questions. The key concepts that emerged from those interviews include:

- Job Fit
- Culture Fit
- Career Fit
- Engagement and Motivation

The report looks at plausible causes for the MOE's high turnover rates. Among the top cited responses are: management issues, low advancement opportunities and culture related problems (i.e., nepotism, "boys club," etc.).

Though money is not a factor that can be ignored, the majority of contemporary research finds that employees leave mainly because of the workplace relationships. Whether it is the lack of job fit, organizational fit or cultural fit, employees are in high demand and they know it. If their needs are not met, they feel no loyalty to stay with the same employer.

Generally speaking, it is the hope of the author to create awareness and a connection between employers and employees. Our employees are our citizens and happy employees create happy citizens, which in turn creates a socially and economically conscious society that strives to provide better living conditions for its entire population. What we do at work and how well we do it does not only affect our current employer, but our families, spouses, children and friends. Thus, organization's current retention strategies and their development should be important to both employers and employees.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	6
INTRODUCTION	7
Project Objective.....	9
Academic Requirements	9
Client Background	10
Rationale for Employee Retention Research	12
LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	14
Understanding Retention.....	14
Job Fit.....	17
Culture Fit	18
Career Fit.....	20
Engagement and Motivation	21
Human Resource Strategies.....	25
METHODOLOGY	27
Strategy Structure	28
Sample	29
Comparable Business Plans Review	29
Smart Practices of Successful Employers	30
Recommendations and Implementation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
FINDINGS.....	32
Ministry and Personal Vision	32
Career Expectations and Personal Growth	34
Career Development and Personal Job Learning	35
Colleague and Supervisor Support.....	37
Recognition	39

Engagement and Motivation	39
DISCUSSION	41
Job Expectations and Interests	41
Career Advancement	42
Organizational Culture (Culture Fit)	43
Engagement and Motivation	44
It Correlates With Performance	45
Understanding Employee Engagement	45
It Correlates With Innovation	46
The Case for Employee Engagement - The Evidence	46
CONCLUSIONS	48
RECOMMENDATIONS	50
Recognizing (reorganizing) the MOE Culture	50
Measuring Engagement, Evaluating Retention	51
Job Fit	51
REFERENCES	52
APPENDIXES	58
Raw Data Tables	60
Sample Interview Questions	71

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

FIGURE 1: RETENTION MODEL	16
FIGURE 2: MPS 2005 QUESTION	23
FIGURE 3: MINISTRY VISION	33
FIGURE 4: PERSONAL VISION	33
FIGURE 5: CAREER EXPECTATIONS	35
FIGURE 6: PERSONAL GROWTH	35
FIGURE 7: CAREER LEARNING	36
FIGURE 8: PERSONAL JOB LEARNING	36
FIGURE 9: COLLEAGUE SUPPORT	37
FIGURE 10: SUPERVISOR SUPPORT	37
FIGURE 11: RECOGNITION	39
FIGURE 12: ENGAGEMENT	40
FIGURE 13: MOTIVATION	40
TABLE 1: RETENTION STRATEGIES	59
TABLE 2: MINISTRY AND PERSONAL VISION	60
TABLE 3: CAREER EXPECTATIONS	63
TABLE 4: PERSONAL GROWTH AND PERSONAL JOB LEARNING	65
TABLE 5: RECOGNITION	67
TABLE 6: COLLEAGUE AND SUPERVISOR SUPPORT	68
TABLE 7: ENGAGEMENT	70

INTRODUCTION

A glance at the front page of a Victoria newspaper or any other media outlet provides an overview of the current reality in much of the world: climate change, political unrest, homelessness and poverty, in addition to a global financial crisis. This project condensed prior to global market crash and during the period when the Government could not higher fast enough, could not fill all the available positions for months and the issue of having no people to do the work was very real. However, towards the end of 2008, this situation changed. Many people became unemployed, including hundreds of BC Government employees. During this process, Ministry of Environment (MOE) made a commitment to deal with their budget constraints on every other front as long as they retain their human power. They were left with a number of misplaced employees. The committee was formed with a specific purpose of finding new positions for those employees.

However, many programs and projects were put on hold or were completely dismissed. This knee-jerk reaction is not a surprising one for most government employees since, in a time of hardship, projects are often put on a back burner. But studies show that these types of behaviours are starting to catch up. Public service employees are no longer content. Simply put, over the years, the insecurity and instability in the public sector has caused the quality employees to leave. These problems are partly due to personnel policies implemented in earlier years in order to make cuts and reductions. The government now recognizes that new measures are necessary to make the public sector a more attractive employer. Although many executives generally believe that the public sector is already an attractive employer, some problems continue to exist. These problems will be discussed in the literature review section.

In 2008, the Ministry of Environment (MOE) conducted a research through the People Strategies Branch (also known as Human Resources), which included examination of in-house data on the number of employees leaving the Ministry to pursue other public sector opportunities. The results of this research demonstrated that approximately 30 to 33 percent of employees left the Ministry between the 2nd and 7th year of service. The results also suggested that this phenomenon occurred across different age groups, job streams, and classifications. In order to lower the exit rate, the Ministry was interested in understanding what underlies this phenomenon. In comparison to other public and private sector organizations, the Ministry of Environment's exit rate was twice as high. Other public sector organizations reported losses of around 15

percent at the time, while other well established private sector firms were even lower, around 6 percent.

In achieving its purpose, the report will first review the literature in both private and public sector domains and summarize the key concepts that will guide the study. Through data analysis of a set of interview questions, it will illustrate what employees had to say about their specific cases. The report is guided by the conceptual framework, derived from the 30 interviews conducted on employees that have left the Ministry. The goal is to present a client with a set of interview questions as a process for collecting internal data from former and current employees, and to deliver methodology and tools for collecting data so that it can be used in further research. The final parts of the report provide implications for responding to the retention related issues and recommendations for the client.

There are various studies available on why people leave their workplace but the MOE believes they would benefit from learning about the organization from their own employees. The Ministry comes in as one of the smaller organizations under the BC Government umbrella. They believe the internal study would benefit the staff and the management. The Ministry taking the initiative to solve their problems internally gives an indication to the staff that their concerns are taken into account and are treated with utmost importance. It tells the former employees they care to hear about the issues they had as they seek to have their input in order to improve the organization and their policies.

The methodology and findings sections discuss the interview process and data collection in detail. In the discussion and recommendation section one can find the leading theories, ideas and suggestions related to the issue of retention. The appendices provide interview questions and raw data collected during the interview process. There is also material to provide more depth to the research question and its importance.

Some sources estimate that Canada may see a labour shortage of one million people by 2020, because of lower fertility rates and retiring baby boomers (Blessing & White, 2011). Due to potential shortages, the Government of Canada is considering increasing the retirement age to 67 (Government of Canada, 2012). Thus it is of significant importance to retain the labour force – the one that is entering the workforce, and the one that's about to exit. While numerous studies provide an insight to how to retain quality employees, they also note that every organizational unit is unique and has its own specific culture. Thus, the needs of those employees may differ as well (Towers Perrin, 2001).

Project Objective

Key research question: *What are some of the key reasons that MOE employees left the Ministry between their 2nd and 7th year of employment?*

The objective of this project is to provide the Ministry with a clear understanding of why higher than average number of employees left the Ministry. A set of focused interview questions used during the interview process will be provided to the Ministry to be used in future studies they wish to conduct during the exit interview. Many studies have been done on employee retention and even the Government of British Columbia, through the Public Service Agency has done an extensive researcher on how to keep the talent within public service. However, while this information was useful it was not necessarily applicable in its entirety to the MOE, since their case was ministry specific. The following sections explain the project objective and client background in more detail.

In achieving the above purpose, the report will first review the literature in both private and public sector domains (i.e., PSA exit interview questions may be reviewed for comparison purposes) and summarize the key concepts that guide the study. It will illustrate how a set of focused interview questions was developed and applied to the pool of 30 randomly selected participants for detailed interviews. The goal is to present a client with an identification of a process for collecting internal data, and to deliver methodology and tools for collecting data so that it can be used in further research.

The report's purpose is to serve as a pilot/exploratory study that will inform further research and enhance our current understanding of how particular employees fit within an organization. The report primarily focuses on employees that moved to other ministries and are within the public sector.

Secondly, the study will define years of service being examined (i.e., time period between 2000 and 2007). A communication was sent to 45 former employees indicating the researcher's intention. Further, a plan was developed to prepare sample interview questions that can be modified and used in surveys as well.

Academic Requirements

For completion of the Masters in Public Administration program at the University of Victoria, candidates are required to complete a major report, similar to a thesis. The Advanced Management or Policy Report is expected to be a substantial analysis of a management, policy or program problem for a client in

the non-profit or public sector. The ADMN 598 Report is prepared in consultation with the client and an academic supervisor in the School of Public Administration; the report must be practical and useful to the client as well as academically rigorous. It is intended that this project with the MOE will meet the requirements for this report.

All research proposed by students in the School of Public Administration must be reviewed by the UVIC Human Research Ethics Board (HREB). The mandate of HREB is to ensure that all human research is conducted in accordance with the highest ethical standards and that the public, the researchers, and the University are protected from harm. School of Public Administration 598 projects are expected to conform to those guidelines. As this project included interviews and other data collection methods, which involved people, an ethics review was conducted to ensure the integrity of the research.

Client Background

The Ministry of Environment employs over 1400 staff in over 50 different locations throughout the Province. The Ministry of Environment has its headquarters in Victoria, where staff advise the Minister of Environment and the Provincial Cabinet on matters relating to environmental policy. The Ministry also has regional and district offices throughout the province that deliver environmental programs and services.

According to the ministry Business Plan, they promote diversity in the workforce. The staff come from a variety of different backgrounds with a variety of different skills. The staff are encouraged to work together, develop themselves, and be innovative in their approach. "People are our most valuable resources; they make the Ministry a great place to work", states their current write-up on the Ministry's website.

Through partnerships across government, and with First Nations, the private sector and communities, the Ministry works to enhance the protection and stewardship of water, land and air resources, advances sustainable use of environmental resources, and provides outdoor park and wildlife services and opportunities. Their goal is to protect human health and safety, and maintain and restore the diversity of native species, ecosystems and habitats (Ministry of Environment, 2011).

In addition, the Ministry has clearly outlined ideas about their vision, mission, values and goals. The following list provides those ideas as they appear on the Ministry website.

MOE Vision

A clean, healthy and naturally diverse environment

MOE Mission

Lead, inform, involve and support British Columbians to achieve the best environmental stewardship and sustainability.

MOE Values

We believe in working with our clients, each other and our partners in a way that reflects:

Service — We provide service that is responsive, adaptive and based on client needs.

Objectivity — We perform our work in a professional manner that promotes an objective approach to environmental management.

Integrity — We act in a truthful, ethical and transparent manner.

Excellence — We encourage innovation, creative solutions and a culture of continuous learning.

Accountability — We are efficient and effective in our work and accountable to the Legislature and the public for results.

Wellness — we believe in a working environment that promotes health and well-being, and allows staff to achieve their highest potential.

MOE Goals

MOE goals reflect an approach to environmental management, encourage collaboration across ministry divisions, and indicate the long-term results they intend to achieve. Here are some of the goals the Ministry deems imperative.

- 1. Clean and safe water, land and air***
- 2. Healthy and diverse native species and ecosystems***
- 3. British Columbians understand that they share responsibility for the environment*** - environmental sustainability depends on the collective knowledge, commitment and actions of individuals, organizations, communities and all levels of government as a whole. This requires partnerships with industry and stakeholders, and an environmentally conscious public.

4. **Sustainable use of British Columbia's environmental resources** - sustainable use of B.C.'s environmental resources promotes job creation, contributes significantly to the quality of life of residents and visitors, and ensures the resource is available for present and future generations.
5. **A high performance organization** - the Ministry website declares them to be "a high performance organization", which is reflected in "its leadership, people, culture and the services it provides. It is flexible, able to adapt to situations and events, and is responsive to the needs of its clients and its staff (Ministry of Environment, 2011)".

Rationale for Employee Retention Research

While significant effort has been made to transform the MOE into an employer of choice, in house data shows that the number of employees leaving the Ministry is higher than in other ministries. So why is this a problem? In this day and age of continuous turbulence, chaos and job insecurity, quality employees want to know why they should stay loyal to one particular organization. According to research, by 2003, the number of "baby boomers" retiring exceeded the new recruits who took their place (Advanced Leadership Consulting, 2012). Average job tenure dropped from 23+ years in the 1950s to 4+ years in the 1990s. In 1997, 53 percent of all working people reported expecting to quit their jobs in five years. Average turnover for all companies is 10-15 percent. Average turnover in established organizations is 6 percent. Again, turnover in the MOE is 30-33 percent. Average turnover in other ministries is 10-15 percent. Thus, here are the top ten reasons why the Ministry should be concerned with high turnover levels:

1. The impact on the bottom line may be significant and by minimizing the turnover they may save money.
2. The cost of terminating employees has a significant impact on the budget.
3. The cost of hiring replacements is often high.
4. The cost of training new employees.
5. The cost of lower productivity for new employees.
6. The cost of client dissatisfaction with less or lower quality service from new employees.
7. The cost of newer, less experienced employees maintaining the business in lieu of growing it.
8. The cost of lost ideas and suggestions because of less experience.
9. The impact on the implementation of the Ministry Corporate Strategy, i.e., slower, less timely, not well done.
10. The cost of not really knowing what you have lost until the next fiscal results come in.

Unless the Ministry can quantify these possible or probable losses, they may never truly understand what the loss of experienced employees' means to their organization. According to Inc. (2012), estimates suggest that the loss of one exempt employee from the organization cost 1-2 times the average salary and benefits of that one exempt employee. That alone should be a strong motivator for any organization, but even more so for the one with ever increasing fiscal constraints.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A goal of the literature review is to identify key components of the MOE's issue with retention, focusing on motivation and psychological factors that affect employees of the MOE. The research involved a review of Public Service Agency Exit interviews, a review of academic journals and periodicals, in addition to a scan of reports and other information on specific programs and organizations (i.e., Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure). Another major component of this research was a review of academic literature to determine if there are established models or theories that could be applied to development of an effective strategy to retain employees in the MOE.

A scan of academic articles, reports and several surveys identified many factors that apply to retaining quality employees. A few of the key sources used throughout the report are Public Service Agency Surveys, People Plan for the Ministry of Environment, the BC Jobs report and the US Merit Systems Protection Board Report. In addition, the literature review encompasses research from other jurisdictions and several different countries (i.e., USA, Netherlands, Australia).

While the surveys and plans from other organizations do not provide precise answers as to why the MOE employees leave, they provide useful insight into some key motivators and reasons that affect the decision process when employees decide to voluntarily terminate their employment.

Understanding Retention

Voluntary staff turnover – a component of employee retention - is a fact of life for nearly every company, regardless of size or industry. Employees leave for a variety of reasons, many of them beyond an employer's control. These can include personal issues such as health problems, major life changes, family demands, the relocation of a spouse or partner or the desire to pursue educational goals full-time.

Some of these elements can impact the workplace no matter how engaged the employees are or how proactive the management team is. Beatty argues that "a work unit might fail in spite of a manager's best efforts to influence its outcomes and conversely that some work units might succeed despite managerial efforts (p. 179)."

But what may be surprising to many is that personal reasons account for only a small percentage of overall turnover. According to BC Jobs, in a survey commissioned by their company, only two percent of executives said employees leave because of lifestyle changes, such as relocation. When top performers start jumping ship, it's most often for professional, not personal, reasons. In another survey commissioned by the same company, executives said that good employees leave primarily because of limited opportunities for advancement (39 percent), unhappiness with management (23 percent) and lack of recognition (17 percent) (BJ JOBS, 2012).

While the interviews conducted with the former MOE employees pertain to a small percentage of the overall workforce, the findings did not stray away from those conducted by the BC Jobs and other public sector organizations in Canada and globally. Retention of the MOE employees was analyzed through the following concepts used guiding the research:



The conceptual framework is therefore built around those four pillars. The retention of the MOE employees was explored through the job fit, culture fit, career fit and through motivation and engagement. While there are many elements that affect the turnover rates, in conjunction with the ones mentioned earlier, the report also focuses on the following: ministry and personal vision of employees, career expectations and personal growth, engagement, motivation, recognition, career development and personal job learning. It is important to note that there are other factors and variances that contribute to employee retention. However, they were not explored in this particular study.

Figure 1 represents the list of factors that were analyzed in the interview process conducted with the MOE employees and is further explored through the relevant literature.



Figure 1. Retention Model

The following section discusses the four key concepts presented in figure 1, pertaining to retention.

Job Fit

One of the oldest ideas in psychology is that productivity and satisfaction are directly related to the fit between the characteristics of individuals (Steijn, p. 116). "A fit is where there is concurrence between the norms and values of the organization and those of the person" (Steijn, p. 116). Job fit, as analyzed in the context of the MOE, relates to questions about ministry and personal vision of their employees, their career expectations and their personal growth options. The vision or "the mission is a known entity in the sense that it is defined by law. However, public expectations and an agency's organizational culture expand and refine the mission in less tangible ways. Each executive must then illustrate its meaning in words and actions and renew it in light of emerging challenges. According to Johnson, "a leader can induce employees to consider the holistic needs and potential of clients at the same time they are processing a ten-page form. In so doing, the leader identifies the job with its public purposes and invests it with a value beyond simply earning a salary" (p. 156).

So, what did employees say about the job fit? In general, their skills and abilities matched their job requirements, and there were no significant issues with the person-job fit at first. However, over the years, many employees felt stagnant and sometimes misled. Some expressed their dissatisfaction with the management style; some had issues with the growth opportunities while others simply did not think they were a good fit (mislead with what the job description read and what they were actually doing). The ministry and personal vision in some instances were a fit with the employee – but for many, ministry vision was a complete unknown. According to Mercer and Bradley (Inc., 2011), there are three aspects to the hiring process that should be used:

- 1) The candidate's history and resume**
- 2) The interview where you get your "gut feel"**
- 3) The psychometric evaluation**

The resume will provide a history of a person, the interview will provide certain chemistry and the psychometric evaluation and/or personality traits will provide insight into a candidate's personality, behaviour, likelihood to succeed, and probability of "fit" within an organization. Many organizations have no ability to assess the critical third aspect of the interview process. Mercer and Bradley

argue the third step is an important one. They provide a job fit tool that assesses the critical third component of understanding the candidate's abilities, motivations/interests and personality. They do this through the five-step process:

Step one: Build a Benchmark for the targeted position using the knowledge and understanding from those who know the job well. This is a simple 10-minute exercise online.

Step two: Finalize the Benchmark for the target position. This is a short meeting with the key individuals that know the job well.

Step three: View the short-listed candidates against the Benchmark; learn how they rank against each other and the Benchmark; see their strengths & weaknesses, general abilities, motivations & interests and understand their personality traits.

Step four: Utilize our specific behaviour-based interview questions to conduct in-depth final interviews.

Step five: Hire the best candidate for the role and enjoy more than double your industry's employee retention rate.

Job fit, as such, represents one of the components that contribute to the success of an organization. An employee that understands and supports its organizational mission and vision statement is likely to have a considerate level of satisfaction which tends to lead to engagement, motivation and production. When the personal vision of where they want to be fits with the reality in which they find themselves once employed, and their career expectations and personal growth needs are met, employees tend to engage themselves on a higher level and show inclination to stay with the organization that fulfills those needs. As previously mentioned, however, these elements are inclusive but not exclusive to the success of the organization vis-à-vis a low turnover.

Culture Fit

There are many recognizable cultures and endless combinations. According to BC Jobs, corporate culture is defined as "the total sum of the values, customs, traditions and meanings that make a company unique" (2011). Corporate culture is often called "the character of an organization" since it embodies the vision of the company's founders. The values of a corporate culture influence the ethical standards within a corporation, as well as managerial behaviour.

Uhl-Bien and Marion discuss the adaptive function, an interactive process between adaptive leadership (an agentic behaviour) and complexity dynamics (non-agentic social dynamic) that generates emergent outcomes (e.g.,

innovation, learning, adaptability) for the firm. As is the case with the MOE, the HR department recognized a complex issue in which component parts interact with sufficient intricacy that they cannot be predicted by standard linear equations. They understand that many variables are at work in the system that “can only be understood as an emergent consequence of the holistic sum of the myriad behaviours embedded within (Uhl-Bien & Marion, p. 631)”. Essentially, what they are saying is that the past is co-responsible for present behaviour (p. 639).

Governments cannot simply address the issue from the current state they are in. They need to integrate older employees together with younger employees to deal with future issues (BC Jobs, 2011). They need to understand that if the job satisfaction is going down among workers in the public sector, it will have negative effects on the quality of the services. Not only because lesser motivated workers will deliver services of a lower quality, but also because it will make the public sector less attractive as an employer. This certainly will have adverse repercussions in a tight labour market (Steijn, 2002). Thus, they must address the issues from the past, the present and the future.

In order to understand the MOE culture, the colleague and supervisor support questions were aligned with the culture fit. Potential employees are attracted to organizations based on their cultural reputation; organizations select employees based on a “fit”; the cultural fit; and, employees who don’t fit leave through either voluntary or involuntary attrition. The MOE leadership thus should ask themselves what is the MOE culture and what does it look like from the outside to those potential employees. Do we look attractive, are we reputable and are we the employer of choice? Those are just a few questions that need answering.

To match employees to culture, reports suggest ensuring that the applicant first fits the technical and motivational requirements of his or her job. This will include manager fit and overall cultural fit - this means identifying factors that touch all positions. Most commonly, these include a preference such as innovation, working in teams and being competitive (Social Innovation, 2009). Determining this fit can be even more difficult than most people imagine. It can be achieved through the use of tools available through current consulting agencies (Talent Gage, 2012). This process allows you to determine personal and corporate preferences and compare potential hires ranking suitability. Done right, this kind of survey ensures getting the right people into jobs they will enjoy. Caution should be taken, however, to remember that culture usually tells us very little about job skills. Maximum performance requires measuring both.

Career Fit

Career development is a lifelong process of becoming aware of, exploring and experiencing factors that influence various aspects of a person's life. "The knowledge, skills and attitudes that evolve through this path of discovery enable planning and decision making not only about work exploration and related employment and vocational choices but also about personal management and life/work skills" (CICA, 2012). Career development is part of lifelong learning, in that personal and vocational skills constantly change and expand during a lifetime in response to career changes and emerging opportunities (CICA, 2012).

According to Blessing and White, most employees do not define career goals by traditional notions of advancement (2011). Their research indicates nearly half of all employees are looking for interesting or meaningful work in their next career move. And there's plenty of work to be done to drive the bottom line. When career development processes address career in the context of organizational priorities, everyone is more likely to win.

However, employees can't succeed on their own. Therefore career development initiatives need to be employee-driven, not employee-exclusive. Managers are well positioned to support career development because they are familiar with the organization's changing performance needs and individual team members' talents and goals. Blessing and White explain that employers don't need to have all the answers or be ready to hand over their own job. Rather, they need to support and address individual requests (2011).

Peter Tatham, Executive Director, Career Industry Council of Australia goes even further arguing that "the quality of the career development process significantly determines the nature and quality of individuals' lives: the kind of people they become, the sense of purpose they have, the income at their disposal. It also determines the social and economic contribution they make to the communities and societies of which they are part" (CICA, 2011).

Their report suggests using a competency-based approach to managing employees is essential. Organizations should embrace a competency-based approach to managing employees but not all employees can progress to the top of their respective pay scale. One way managers can help employees advance in their careers is to offer them opportunities to further develop their existing skills and master new ones that will enhance their job performance. Part of this approach focuses on determining which competencies are needed to perform well in a position and then matching these competencies to those of job

applicants. As we have seen, placing employees in jobs that make good use of their skills and abilities is necessary to engage employees (Dewhurst, Mohr, & Guthrie, 2009). The study also found that giving employees the opportunity to improve their skills is important in fostering high levels of employee engagement. As a result of acquiring new competencies, new, and more engaging challenges may be provided for employees. Such challenges include the opportunity to lead teams, participate on special projects, or rotate for short periods to other organizations (BC Stats, 2007). In addition to employees actually receiving opportunities for professional development, this approach can increase employee engagement by demonstrating that the organization cares about its employees and their professional growth (BC Stats, 2007).

Rotating employees to other parts of the organization has many benefits. For instance, employees will be exposed to other parts of the organization, which may increase their understanding of the larger organization. Employees may view this as an opportunity to learn new things and work with different people, and managers will signal that they have an interest in the careers of their employees as they help them to gain a better understanding of the organization and acquire new competencies (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2011).

Engagement and Motivation

The 2003 Towers Perrin Talent Report, based on a survey of over 35,000 U.S. workers in medium to large organizations that spanned the different economic sectors, found that highly engaged employees outperform their less engaged counterparts. Although the report cautions that there are a number of variables that affect business outcomes, they found that there is a clear relationship between increased engagement and improved retention of talent and better financial performance. Companies whose employees exhibited higher engagement outperformed companies that scored lower on employee engagement relative to industry benchmarks. “Whether that’s because they attract more engaged people as a consequence of their superior performance, or whether their superior performance comes from the discretionary effort of their engaged people is, in the end, almost moot. What’s clear is that the two are intertwined and together work to create a ‘virtuous circle’ of enhanced performance” (Towers Perrin, p. 13).

Towers Perrin report states that half of the disengaged employees are open to other opportunities even though they are not actively seeking other employment. This means that organizations could have a large group of disaffected and non-

productive people who may be “adversely affecting performance by spreading their own negative views and behaviours to others” (17).

In 2001, the Gallup organization collected employee engagement scores and profitability, sales, employee retention, and customer satisfaction data for 7,939 business units to determine if units with high engagement scores had better business outcomes than those with lower engagement scores. They found that the “correlation was positive and substantially meaningful to success across different businesses” (. Highly engaged individuals were most often found in the high-performance units. The Gallup results attribute successful business outcomes to many different factors. The large amount of data and the number of different industries and work situations involved supported their statement that this picture of the nexus between engagement and economic performance is robust. Although high engagement does not necessarily guarantee retention, it increases the chances of retaining the very people who are going to be the most attractive to other employers (Talent Map, 2012).

"Productivity is a problem for organizations, especially the productivity of an organization's most expensive resources - human resources (Beatty, 179)". The Dutch government recently recognized this as a problem as well. "Managerial productivity is a problem as evidenced by the outplacement of many executives and managers as a result of the simultaneous impacts of deregulation, global competition and new technology (Beatty, 179). After years of reorganizations, reductions and savings on salaries and other expenses, in early 2000 the Dutch government began to realize they had neglected the workers in the public sector, which was beginning to have adverse effects. Based on research conducted by the Dutch government, among 'mobile' workers, it is argued that 'quality of management' (i.e. lack of) is the most important factor for workers to look for another job. Lack of career possibilities is another important factor to leave a job in the Dutch public sector (Steijn, 2002).

Ulrich believes that not everything sits on the shoulders of the executive team. He suggests that: "perhaps the most we can ask of managers is to make an effort to influence employees to increase rates of quality productivity and reduce the costs of productivity (Ulrich, 124)".

While certain aspects of the organizations can be measured in a numerical sense, there is also a set of strategically related "cultural" behaviours that represent the values of an organization (Ulrich, 1987, Beatty, 1989)). These vary across organizations and may not be linked to the strategic plan, yet are clearly a

part of the organization's success and must ultimately be aligned with strategy. At the Ministry of Environment, the Human Resources department had an important yet limiting role in a selection process of the potential new employees. It is only in recent years that we see a shift in the way ministries review and select potential candidates for the available positions.

BC Stats uses a sophisticated analysis technique, called *structural equation modeling*, to determine which questions or groups of questions have the biggest impact on an engagement. The model is custom designed for the BC Public Service. The model is re-tested with each year's survey results to ensure it accurately represents the work environment experiences of employees. It is worth noting that some of the questions, developed for the interview conducted with the MOE employees, are comparable to those used by the BC Public Agency.

"Increasing discretionary effort is the key", argues Dr. Steijn. In a tight labour market with virtually all employers dealing with cutbacks and financial pressures (i.e., improving organization results with fewer resources), a critical mass of employees who are willing to routinely give discretionary effort can be of tremendous value to an organization (p.5).

Here is a sample from the study conducted by Dr. Steijn. He was interested in learning how many of employees not eligible to retire are likely to leave the agency they work in the next 12 months. The results are presented in the figure 1 below.

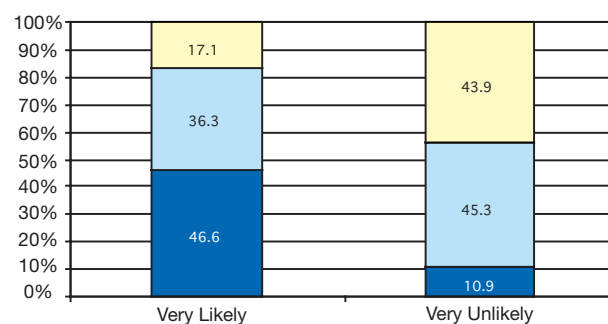


Figure 2. MPS 2005 Question

Source: MPS 2005 question 40 (How likely is it that you will leave your agency in the next 12 months?) and question 42 (Are you or will you become eligible to retire within the next 12 months?). Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Perhaps agencies can withstand this turnover if the 46.6 percent are populated with chronic low performers, but what if the top-rated employees in an agency don't feel engaged by their work? In fact, of the 46.6 percent of not engaged employees who were very likely to leave their agency, 59.1 percent received the highest performance rating (outstanding or equivalent) on their most recent rating of record. It only makes sense that agencies should take steps to engage these top performers who are currently less than engaged before they act on their intention to leave the agency for more engaging employment opportunities elsewhere.

The report suggests that in order to achieve higher engagement employers need to stimulate employee commitment. Public sector will not achieve high levels of employee engagement unless their employees are emotionally committed to their work. Supervisors should strive to engender this emotional commitment by continually highlighting the importance of their employees' work (Herzberg, 1974). Dr. Steijn also highlights this idea in his report. He argue that: "supervisors should tell employees how their work is important, not merely tell them what to do" (p. 14).

A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *The Power of Federal Employee Engagement*, argues that managers need to facilitate the accomplishment of their employees' work. Supervisors should take an active interest in developing their employees and breaking down organization barriers that may keep them from being successful. They need to empower their employees and encourage them to take ownership of their work by trusting them with appropriate decision-making authority and holding them accountable for the results, whether good and bad. For example, staff turnover in Australia usually ranges between 11percent and 13 percent but increased in 2008 to 18.5 percent as employees sought better employment.

The turnover is still somewhat reflective of employee engagement levels because satisfied, motivated, or otherwise engaged employees tend not to look for work elsewhere. If the level dips low enough that they consider changing employers, it probably means that they have been unsatisfied and disengaged for some time (Career Industry Council of Australia, 2011). Statistics such as absenteeism or turnover may be more indicative of long-term or systemic organizational issues. If employers want to proactively monitor engagement, it is recommended that they use some of the early warning signs of engagement such as employee attitudes, behaviour, or regular engagement survey results (p.46).

Human Resource Strategies

There are approximately 30,000 public service employees in ministries and agencies that provide an amazing volume and variety of services to the people of British Columbia. Prior to 2003, BC Public Service Agency, as we know it today, did not exist. In the past, each ministry had its own internal department (Human Resources Branch, which was later changed to People Strategies Branch). Its goal was to provide leadership and services in people management. The idea was to have one centralized organization, which would provide support in the human resource goals to all BC ministries. It was also supposed to provide human resource management policies and frameworks, as well as a variety of human resource services, products and programs.

The Government's approach to human resources had fundamentally changed the way ministries deal with retention over the years. The purpose of one body – through its human resource policies is to enable supervisors, individuals, and human resource professionals to align the recruitment, retention, and development of organization's people resources with the current and future business goals of the administration. The BC Public Service Agency actively reviews and updates all human resource policies to ensure they are clear, modern and relevant (Public Service Agency, 2011). Instead of working on their own internal policies (which used to produce variant results due to discrepancies, this is now a centralized operation. While the Public Service Act is the primary legislative authority in respect of human resource management in the BC Public Service, there are other legislative authorities, collective agreements, and employment contracts that also play a role. In those instances where a policy statement addresses a topic also covered in collective agreements or employment contracts, the policy statements are meant to enhance or provide additional information, but they do not supersede them.

Herzberg (1966) is one of the first who noted the importance of the work environment as the primary determinant of employee job satisfaction. Building upon his work Hackman and Oldham have built a famous model to identify key factors in the work environment determining job satisfaction. Using their model Reiner and Zao (1999) have looked at the importance of five dimensions of the work environment – skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Their study clearly shows that these variables are far more important than individual characteristics – in their study task variety being the most important determinant.

Zhou and George did a study on job dissatisfaction and creativity. They argued that job dissatisfaction does not necessarily have to be a detriment for organizational effectiveness (2001). They suggest: "organization members who are dissatisfied with their jobs are, disconnected with the status quo (Zhou & George, p. 682)." While their theory is plausible, one cannot help but note that job dissatisfaction may not always lead to creativity or can be used in a creative way. In fact, more often, job dissatisfaction leads to turnover, which negates the possibility of creativity. However, what their study focuses on are the conditions under which job dissatisfaction may lead to creativity.

While the common thread always existed between the ministries in the way they dealt with human resource issues, many policies were left up to each ministry to determine, evaluate and ultimately interpret on their own. The common practice today is to answer core competencies questions used by all ministries in the interview process. While we know all this, the question remains; how much has really changed? Are the MOE employees more or less satisfied in 2012? If all ministries follow the common policies, why are some ministries more successful in their retention strategies? These and other questions will be examined in the discussion section.

METHODOLOGY

This research project is a qualitative analysis of why people leave one particular place of employment for another. The focus is on the MOE, and some of the reasons why between the second and seventh year of employment, higher than average number of employees chose to leave this particular organization. The report examines some of the strategies to minimize the turnover rates and provide an opportunity for those who have left to discuss and evaluate the time they spent with the MOE. The research was led by the Echo Approach, which states that: “researchers let themes or categories emerge from the data rather than being led by illustrate hypotheses, previously defined categories, or expectations” (Cunningham, p. 209).

A qualitative approach was adopted in preference to using quantitative techniques for a variety of reasons. A primary reason for qualitative approach was the lack of time and resources needed to interview or survey employees that have left the Ministry. In addition, the client wanted to examine issues that would pertain solely to their organization. Beatty argues that many organizations use numerical targets to measure quantity, quality, and costs, but in many instances the link between performance planning and strategic planning is not accomplished because not all objectives are best measured by quantitative targets (2008). In fact, he explains, organizations are often excessive in the use of numerical measurement because if something can be measured with numbers it is measured with numbers. The Ministry concurs that the copious quantitative studies provide limiting results.

In banking, for example, measures are often kept of statement mailing dates and the number of statement errors. The assumption often made is that improvement of these systems will lead to improved customer satisfaction. What actually seems to increase customer satisfaction is how such incidents are handled once noted by the customer. Consequently, spending money to decrease turnover rates may be less effective than spending money to improve the way employee issues are handled. Some measures can be counted but for staff units, descriptive measures may be more applicable because many employer/employee issues are implicit and difficult to discuss in a public arena. Most organizations today try to capture what they want employees to do (behaviours) as well as what they want employees to produce (results). Narrative descriptions of performance targets (often expected behaviours) are used as performance standards (Beatty, 2008).

Another reason for a qualitative approach was the lack of available quantitative or statistical data on the targeted exit group. There was a need for a qualitative approach as most studies are broad, large scale surveys that are unable to reach specific individuals and are done primarily through the Public Service Agency exit interviews, which in turn, are generic and unable to meet the Ministry's needs. Those employees that have left the Ministry had the story to tell and each story was unique and specific to the unit they worked for. If the Ministry simply conducted another survey, those underlying themes would likely be harder to observe. Although there are some commonalities among former MOE employees and PSES interviewees, the research showed a spectrum of issues that underline the topic of retention in the MOE. Finally, it became evident how a small sample of employees can provide an insight into one organization's culture.

The Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) is a public service-wide survey that provides a snapshot of the views of employees about the organizations and units in which they work. The release of the 2008 PSES results provided an opportunity to engage managers and employees in a discussion about strengths and areas for improvement in people management at all levels of their organization. The results of this survey likely prompted MOE executives to engage their own former employees.

The PSES supports Public Service Renewal by providing information on demographics, skills, career expectations and concerns of public service employees. It enables Deputy Heads to identify emerging human resources challenges and needs in their organizations. However, it does not explain anomalies in turnover rates across different ministries.

Strategy Structure

The research for this project included the following phases:

- Literature review and Conceptual Framework
- Random scan of former MOE employees that exited between the 2nd and 7th year of their employment
- Interview process with a random sample through in-person, via phone and via email interviews
- Other surveys within the BC government
- Review of other comparable programs
- Analysis: Smart Practices for Successful Retention
- Recommendations
- Implementation Plan

Although many different existing studies have been used to analyze retention, the data from other affiliated organizations would not be valid and a comparative analysis would be flawed. Conducting a survey was considered as part of the research design, but it was determined that, given resource and time restraints this exercise was not a feasible option. A survey of a higher number of MOE employees is a potential opportunity for further research.

Sample

The list of 45 potential participants was received from the client. The initial email went out to all the former employees on the list, advising them of the research project, the client and the desire to conduct a 45 minutes interview with those employees who would be willing to speak about their employment years with the MOE. Initially, there was a response from 15 people. Another email was sent to remind potential participants of the previous email and the option to still participate in this project. The 2nd attempt to reach and recruit participants harvested 17 more people. In total, there were 30 participants willing to provide information during the 45 minute long interviews, while 2 declined to participate stating it was “too difficult to talk about something that to this day brings such bad memories”. Some interviewees were unable to meet in person so the interviews were conducted over the phone, while a number of participants were sent interview questions to respond via email.

Many of the existing practices across different ministries are similar to those of the MOE so asking other ministries about the strategies they use to minimize their turnover rates is not very useful when trying to understand how to decrease the MOE turnover rate. If all ministries use similar strategies and procedures, if they use similar hiring techniques, what causes the MOE exit rate to be twice as high? This question will be discussed in the following section.

Comparable Business Plans Review

The goal of the Comparable Business Plans was to review existing plans and programs throughout government to determine “smart practices” that could be applied to retention strategies within the MOE. However, the problem with such broad plans is that they often provide overviews; that is, the plan talks about what the Ministry plans to do. It is broad, and does not necessarily reflect on the true state the ministries are in. Similar People Plans and Business Plans are produced by the MOE but they do not talk about retention issues nor do they highlight any significant problems.

Smart Practices of Successful Employers

To summarize the results of research and develop recommendations, analysis performed for this report identifies several Smart Practices of Successful Employers. This analysis combines recommendations from literature with findings of this report to create a list of key practices that can be the foundation of a program for the MOE that successfully retains its employees. The smart practices identified in this report provide a general summary of findings from the literature review, interviews and comparable business plan review that could be applied by the MOE or any other ministry trying to retain its employees and become an employer of choice.

The following list provides three key concepts that emerged from the literature review but are specifically applicable to the MOE. The concepts have emerged as a result of employee driven suggestions for improvement. Those include:

1. Talent Entry – improve the recruitment process and accelerate productivity with new hires – this process over the years has changed. The MOE needs to ensure a proper employee/job fit within all levels of the organization, especially management.
2. Talent Gage – understand the key drivers of engagement within your workforce and how you compare.
3. Talent Exit – increase retention, understand what changed and monitor your reputation in the job market place. Understand how staff views the organization, how management views the organization, and what are the differences. Every department has a different reputation based on its management style of the section/branch/division executives. The difference in the MOE employee satisfaction varied based on managers they encountered.

Talent Entry is an online process to collect systematic feedback from new hires, internal transfers or acquired employees. The data collected at 30, 90 and/or 180 days is fed back into your organization to improve your recruiting practices.

Talent Gage is a proven, scientifically designed employee survey process to measure and benchmark engagement. Such reports clearly prioritize the organization's drivers of engagement that provide a roadmap to improvement.

Talent Exit is ideal for voluntary leaves, transfers, part-time or co-op/summer students. It is a process to collect systematic feedback from exiting employees. Reports detail why employees leave and what can be done to retain them.

When asked whether the Ministry utilizes such practices, the answer was they often lack time and resources to engage the current and former employees in a continuous dialogue. Perhaps, a review of the high turnover rates on a budget will prompt the executives to take the above practices more seriously.

FINDINGS

The narrative and numerical data collected during the interviews is organized according to six categories: 1) Ministry and Personal Vision, 2) Career Expectations and Personal Growth, 3) Career and Personal Job Learning, 4) Colleague and Supervisor Support, 5) Recognition, 6) Engagement and Motivation.

Employees' responses were initially organized in 6 tables (please see Appendixes) based on interview questions and the frequency of in-person and survey answers. Under "Ministry Vision", there were four types of responses including employees who believed the ministry vision and mission are important; those with no knowledge of the mission/vision; responses where the mission had no influence on their career and responses that show indifference toward ministry mission or goals (please see Appendixes). All participants were asked to think about their beginnings at the Ministry and some of the motivators that contributed to their decision to seek the job with the same.

The responses were further grouped into 3 categories based on their common themes (i.e., level of support provided by the colleagues was grouped with the level of support by the supervisors). The categories are based on how strongly employees felt about the particular issue. For example, one of the questions asks them to rate the level of personal growth with the MOE. They were given a choice of weak, moderate or strong. In the interview process, they rated their level of growth and supported their rating by further explaining the choice they made. The following sections explore those themes in more detail.

Ministry and Personal Vision

From the 30 interviewed and surveyed employees in total, about 50 percent identified a weak connection to the MOE vision (Figure 1). The other half of all participants was proportionally distributed between employees with the strong and a moderate connection to the Ministry vision, with one third going to strong and another third going to moderate connection, respectively.

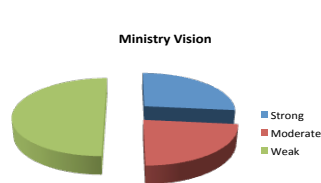


Figure 3. Ministry Vision



Figure 4. Personal Vision

Figure 2 represents the distribution of the 30 interviews by the level of connection to the MOE vision. Figure 3 represents the distribution of the 30 interviews by the level of personal connection to the MOE

All BC Government ministries, including the MOE, have a mission and vision statement. The conducted interviews revealed that employees seldom spend time and energy on learning about the Ministry vision. Rather, their focus is on their personal goals and desires. Several employee statements below illustrate the level of disconnect between employee everyday reality and superficial vision/mission statements. Unless a Ministry makes a serious effort to provide an employee with the knowledge and the understanding of the significance of the Ministry vision and goals (and if in fact the Ministry deems its vision to have a significance), such vision statements often simply remain words on the paper.

To find out whether the vision statement had influenced employees' decision to apply for a particular position, employees were also asked if their personal vision had prompted them to seek employment with the MOE. Figure 2 shows that approximately 25 percent of employees applied for the position in the MOE based on the strong connection to the Ministry vision while 50 percent of all responses exhibited a moderate connection. The correlation between the ministry and personal vision comes as no surprise as most people tend to seek employment based on what they value. This was evidenced in a response by one of the employees (Personal Vision – please see Appendixes) stating: "I wanted to work for the MOE specifically because of their mandate. It feels good to be part of the organization that cares about our air, land, and water. I hope to come back to the MOE in the future." Here is another example: "I did geography in university and always knew I would want to apply my education to my future job. Their mission was relevant to me and it meant I was applying my education directly to my work. That made me happy and it was satisfying" (Ministry Vision – please see Appendixes). Contrary to this response, one third of responses showed a

strong disconnect with everything related to the MOE vision. “I needed a job. I learned about their mission and values later. But, learning and understanding the mission did not have much of an affect on my position.” Furthermore, some employees simply stated that: “the mission was not something we focused on or had too much discussion about.” However, what did matter to them were a job and a culture fit, which played an important part in their job selection process.

Career Expectations and Personal Growth

Figure 3 represents responses related to employee career expectations and the level of interest to build the career with the MOE. Out of 30 employees in total, 20 percent thought of the MOE as an organization where they saw themselves in a long run. One employee explained: “My plan was to stay for a long time. I wanted to grow with the position I was in. However, the Ministry did not have the funds to keep the position because it was highly technical and I was isolated in the role I was in. The position was not high on their priority list and it was easier to outsource in order to manage the security of the system than have me work internally on it.” This employee and others had a strong emotional connection with the MOE and suggested they would return to the MOE if an opportunity arose.

Another 33 percent of respondents described a moderate attachment to the Ministry and their position. “I worked within different departments and honestly never knew where I'd end up. That's the thing with government. It changes all the time.” For virtually all of the participants interviewed (those who planned a long term employment with the MOE and those with no attachment to the MOE) the major cause for leaving the MOE was due to lack of advancement opportunities. The following employee explains: “The job I got was good but as I worked my way through things, I learned about other opportunities and was interested in career advancements. My director and other supervisors were very supportive. Really good team of people - and I'm still in touch with a few of them. They always tried to get me as far as they can in terms of making that new step.”

The following example shows another perspective: “I wanted to work with legislation, and learn as much as possible. But I had very limited opportunity to grow. I came to the Ministry with the law degree and although my first manager was great and supportive and allowed for development and encouraged learning, my manager after that was the opposite and all that stopped. If my first manager stayed, I would have not left.”



Figure 5. Career Expectations



Figure 6. Personal Growth

In addition to dissatisfaction with the growth opportunities, there was dissatisfaction with the work/life balance and nepotism. For example, one employee explained: "if your manager stayed after-hours and worked overtime that day, it was expected you would stay as well or the next day you would find numerous emails in your inbox." A female employee explained she cared about the environment but her expectations were not met "... once I realized that the group I worked with was exclusive to *boys*. They were decent enough to me, but when it came down to making real decisions, the responsibility was always given to one of the guys." Some employees had no expectations and no attachment to the particular Ministry and thus the level of dissatisfaction with this group was nominal.

Finally, in figure 4, employees were asked to rate the importance of growth numerically. The numbers were scaled to strong, moderate and weak. From there, the two predominant viewpoints emerged. Out of 30 employees, 80 percent felt strongly about the need for personal growth. The other 20 percent noted it was somewhat important. Interestingly, no employee suggested they would be compliant with lack of developmental opportunities. These are simple concepts that tell the employer about basic employee needs. Although the factors and conditions that can discourage employees are numerous, a small number of these conditions continues to pop up in interviews and in literature suggesting that both employer and employees have the information available, but whether it gets used, is questionable.

Career Development and Personal Job Learning

The following section explores learning opportunities and development. It looks at where employees wish to be when it comes to their personal growth. Figure 5 shows the questions that focused on opportunities for career learning. Only 30 percent of participants noted they had the opportunity to grow through training

and development. Here is a comment that exemplifies employees' satisfaction: "I was able to take advantage of various training opportunities. Everyone at the MOE was very supportive. I just wish we had more room for growth. But the staff and the management provided a positive experience for me. They exceeded my expectations. I am in a higher position now but I still miss some of my colleagues at the MOE and the working relationship we had. It was a great learning and working environment."

Contrary to this, 33 percent had a weak and 37 percent had moderate growth opportunities. Here are some of employees' comments that show significant dissatisfaction with the MOE opportunities: "They promised they would reclassify my position and they never did. I could have taken every possible course out there, but they just didn't care. I am now in a higher position – where I should have been the whole time." Another employee explained: "I had to ask for training and look for opportunities myself. I asked for things...I was eager to learn and they saw that. At the Ministry of Health is different. They provided a lot of on job/course training without me having to ask for it." Finally, some employees simply lost their will to care: "I used to be interested in learning and personal development but not anymore. I just want to get my work done and go home."

Figure 6 shows one predominant viewpoint; that is, all employees expressed a desire for on the job learning.



Figure 7. Career Learning

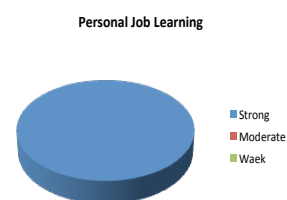


Figure 8. Personal Job Learning

Giving employees the opportunity to provide input, influence decisions and have, at least some, impact, on their job, goes a long way. It minimizes lack of direction while, at the same time, makes them feel valued and in control. It makes them take ownership and provides pride in the work they do.

While questions about career learning focused on opportunities for advancement, personal job learning section was based on a numerical scale, which focused on the level of learning employees wished to have or have had (i.e., weak, moderate, strong). The employee satisfaction level ranged between 1 and 7 – 1 being weak, and 7 being strong. All employees believed that personal job learning was highly important and all respondents stated that personal growth is very important to them. All answers in this section ranged between 6 and 7, creating a solid and unified response. Similar to the findings communicated by the MOE employees, the S. Report notes that they also found that giving employees the opportunity to improve their skills is important in fostering high levels of employee engagement. As a result of acquiring new competencies, new, and more engaging challenges may be provided for employees. Such challenges include the opportunity to lead teams, participate on special projects and so on.

Colleague and Supervisor Support

The following two figures (figure 7 and 8) explore the level of support employees felt by the colleagues and their supervisors at the MOE. Figure 7 identifies a high (57 percent) and moderate (20 percent) level of colleague support. Only 23 percent of employees felt a weak support from their colleagues. This positive trend continued on with supervisor support questions. Over 60 percent of employees felt their supervisors provided them with a strong support. In addition, another 20 percent felt a moderate and only 17 percent felt a weak support by their supervisors.

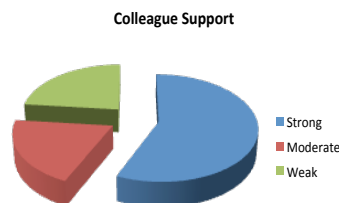


Figure 9. Colleague Support

Figure 10. Supervisor Support

It is worthwhile noting that a number of interviewees had positions that required independent work, so the questions about colleague support were not applicable, or at best, required modification. This made it difficult to determine the specific

impact of the colleague/supervisor support on the employees' satisfaction. Nevertheless, some themes did emerge.

Several employees talked about their working relationship with employees from other ministries/organizations – also known as, stakeholders. Here are some examples: “I was interacting with people from different ministries. My colleagues supported me but the work itself was more tied to other departments so the relationship with those people was more important, or at least it affected my work more.” Another employee explained that: “we worked together but I wouldn't call that support – we had to interact because our jobs demanded it, but it didn't feel natural. Most people kept to themselves.” Interestingly, those employees with comments such as “great support – my last director was well respected and a great person to work with – I think we all enjoyed working with him”, continuously praised their leadership for a positive team environment. Such leaders modeled and demonstrated organizational values, provided staff with social events, networking opportunities, and team-building activities. Finally, as one employee summed it up: “it all comes down to good communication and none of that micromanaging.”

A number of employees had more than one supervisor and over their work cycle at the MOE were more or less satisfied with various managing personalities. One example in particular showed the seriousness of the situation when the employee explained that their office had “too much gossip and too much drama. It was like working with children. It got so bad that, at one point, management decided to have a meeting on proper office behaviour. We were told what kind of conversation we can have; we had “safe” words, a list of inappropriate topics that were not to be discussed during work hours and so on. We had a rule for everything – how loud we can be, how long we can chat and no personal chat was to occur during work hours, outside our lunch or coffee breaks. I have never seen anything like it.”

Clearly, a significant number of employees were supported and satisfied with their superiors. Figure 8 demonstrates a high level of satisfaction with the supervisor. Although only 17 percent of employees indicated dissatisfaction with their supervisor, they were vocal about it. “Our management expected more from a few employees and when junior staff figured it out, they just moved on. The rest of us were not sure where to turn to.” Exactly 20 percent of employees felt a moderate support from their superiors. They stated that it was: “kind of hard for superiors to support us when they didn't really have time to get to know us. They were so overworked – it was stressful to watch them.” Other employees

explained that their supervisors were supportive but with no “backbone”. Essentially, they had an open door policy, but were unable to fulfill their employees’ needs.

Recognition

Figure 9 focuses on questions about recognition and employees’ desire to be acknowledged for the work well done. Based on a numerical scale, 50 percent of all employees expressed a strong desire to be recognized while the other 50 percent expressed a moderate need for recognition. No employee had a weak desire for recognition.

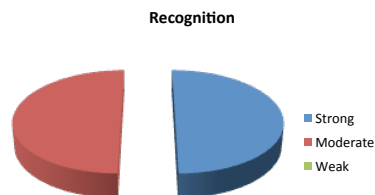


Figure 11: Recognition

In a conversation that led post answer to the numerical scale, some employees candidly expressed their feelings about the importance of recognition. They argued that many coworkers pretend they have little interest in it but if they do not get recognized, their disappointment is evidenced through lack of engagement and motivation. “Some people simply pout and act like children”, stated one of the interviewees. All employees suggested they need and like to be praised and wish to be recognized for the work they do. The fact that all employees agree they need some form of recognition implies that no matter what employees say about it, whether they deem it superficial or unauthentic, they do crave it and appreciate it.

Engagement and Motivation

Both engagement and motivation were used to learn about staff’s interest in keeping the job with the MOE. These two elements were grouped together as it

is believed that the level of engagement influences the level of motivation (provide a lit source). In figure 10, nearly two-thirds (67%) of all interviewed employees stated they were disengaged while working for the MOE, toward the end of their employment. Among those employees (38 percent – please see Appendixes) are those who were not ready to leave the Ministry but were unable to stay due to reasons beyond their control and unrelated to dissatisfaction with the Ministry. For example, one employee explained that she lived in a small community and once her spouse was relocated, she had to leave the MOE due to lack of job openings in that region.

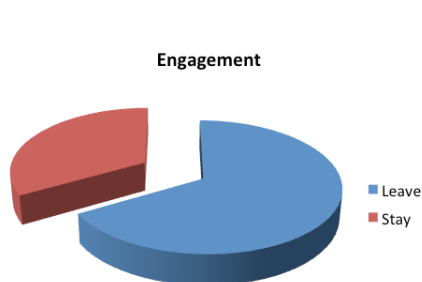


Figure 12: Engagement

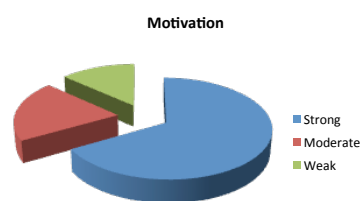


Figure 13: Motivation

When asked to rate the desire to leave their current employer, majority of respondents wanted to stay. One employee stated: “I was always energetic and motivated. But I finally feel like it’s being appreciated and recognized. Now I don’t mind coming to work every day because I know I have no drama and unnecessary stress.” Out of 30 interviews, only 3 respondents were ready to move on to another organization. Contrary to what the literature suggests (low engagement indicates a low motivation to stay) majority of employees strongly believed they were motivated at the time when they left the MOE, and continue to be motivated at the current ministry (figure 11). In fact, 26 responses came in at a strong and moderate level of motivation, while only 4 respondents believed they were unmotivated. What does that mean? This suggests that if your employees are not engaged but continue to be motivated they will likely seek another position or organization where their motivation will be better utilized.

DISCUSSION

The following section explores the retention issue in relation to the concepts leading the study (i.e., job fit, culture fit). The following categories, under the conceptual framework were developed in order to guide the research and help analyze the interview results. The list includes:

- Job Fit (related to expectations, skills and interests)
- Career Fit (related to expectations, growth and learning)
- Culture Fit (related to organizational culture, support and supervision)
- Engagement and Motivation (related to the job itself)

These four categories provide a useful but an incomplete framework, as the responses obtained for this report are not particularly surprising. What is surprising is that they already know and understand the value of their employees. Why is it then so difficult to retain them? In the next few sections, the report discusses several underlying themes that may shine more light on this issue.

Job Expectations and Interests

During the interview, the participants were asked to discuss their organizational mission, vision, and how they saw themselves fitting with the job they were given to do. They were asked to rate how their skills and interests fit with the job they were performing. Additionally, they were asked to rate their personal job learning, explaining how important it was for them to be in an organization where they directly and continuously learned from the work they were doing. The majority of participants put a high value on the importance of learning directly from the work they were doing. They were asked to rate the importance from 1 to 7 and were encouraged to give some examples of the learning they did in their former and current positions. The majority of participants scored between medium and high in relation to level of learning at the MOE. Evidently, obtaining additional training was no issue. However, when asked to further elaborate on job expectations employers had of them, their responses significantly varied.

The argument made was that many poor and mediocre performers were never accountable for their job performance (Pheffer, 1998). As the management was often afraid to speak out and hold them responsible for the work they were doing, the job expectations for the star employees rose. Essentially, if you were a hard working individual, and a star producer, you would be given even more

responsibilities in order to compensate for low producers. Such behaviour inadvertently punishes the hard workers and rewards the lazy ones (Robinson, 2005). In addition, it creates the anger and mistrust in the management to do the right thing when faced with difficult situations (Quinn, 2003). If your employees see you are afraid to speak the truth, they will eventually lose the respect, not only for you as a manager, but for the entire organization, deeming it incompetent, disinterested, and incapable to stand up to bad employees and to stop rewarding unacceptable behaviour. Naturally, a star employee will not take too long before they recognize this and seek the employment with another organization (Sheridan, 1992).

Career Advancement

In addition to job expectations, participants were asked to discuss their career expectations prior or when they started at the MOE. The group discussed their personal growth and career learning as well. The majority of former employees had high hopes and were eager to learn as much as possible. But almost all respondents agreed that their expectations were not fully met. Only a small number of participants, fewer than 10 percent, noted that they were satisfied with the experience gained at the MOE and would have stayed at the MOE circumstances permitting.

The issue of career advancement may be more complex and political in nature. What that means is that the Ministry budget is, like in other ministries, dependent on the political climate. Given the dollar value they receive, they may or may not be able to provide significant growth opportunities. Nevertheless, it is the job of the management to effectively articulate this message and seek out alternative solutions.

While it is 2012, some of the responses from the interviews came as a surprise. One in particular, pertains to a female employee, expressing her dissatisfaction with the way the branch she worked for operated. In her opinion, male employees were given "real" work to do. Their tasks were more interesting and challenging, leading her to believe that she was not taken seriously. The "boys club", as she called it, was difficult to get into and she always felt like an outsider. Though this study did not focus on the demographic structure of the Ministry, nor was the information on the number of male and female employees obtained, it would be interesting to examine and compare the positions held by female and male employees within the Ministry. In addition, the turnover of female employees is of concern as women approximate 50 percent of the workforce (Miller & Wheeler, 1992). In a study of turnover patterns, Miller found that the

female turnover rate was nearly 2 ½ times that of their male counterparts. However, when job satisfaction is controlled in the analysis, gender differences disappear. His study concluded that organizations might improve their retention rates of female managers through job enrichment and by enhancing their advancement opportunities (p. 465).

Organizational Culture (Culture Fit)

It was in this segment of the interview where the participants were asked to discuss and rate the relationship between their colleagues and themselves, and between themselves and the supervisor. A majority of participants felt they were highly supported by their colleagues even when their work did not include collaboration. However, when it came to questions about supervisor's support and the level of satisfaction they had with their superiors at the MOE, the results varied.

As one goes to examine the MOE culture, it is important to note the predominant scientific factor ingrained in the core of the Ministry. The MOE is a science-based organization, whose principal employees are biologists, geographers, engineers, data analysts and environmental lawyers. In order for these employees to climb up the promotional ladder, their only option in an organizational structure such as government is to take on the management level positions. Given the history of the education and their background knowledge, one cannot help but wonder: how do people with strong science-based skills, handle people problems? Therefore, it would be valuable to further explore the competencies of the managers and senior executives in the field of human resources. The analysis should include the time and training they were given, in terms of HR issues, in their respective positions. Some studies of employee retention suggest that one of top priorities of every organization should be making the managers, supervisors and team leaders better at their job (Flex Execs, 2012, Beatty, 1989).

Sheridan explains that it is not only the organizational culture that matters when it comes to effective fit between the job performance and organizational culture. The most "parsimonious explanation of employee retention may simply be that an organizational culture emphasizing interpersonal relationship values is uniformly more attractive to professionals than a culture emphasizing work task values" (p. 1052). Essentially, even though the Ministry is scientifically driven, its employees may be more effective in the climate where social interaction takes precedent over methodical, systematic and logical tasks.

During the interviews, most participants were pleasantly surprised to see an effort being made by the Ministry, in relation to this study. The responses ranged from “Wow, they actually care to hear what I have to say”, to “why are they doing this, is this for real”, and “it is honestly nice to know that someone will put some effort into learning what we think”. Former employees were enthusiastic about sharing their opinions about retention and what can be done better or differently. Needless to say, some employees were sceptical of the Ministry efforts and were cautiously optimistic. However, they all believed the Ministry was taking a step in a right direction. They suggested the Ministry continue to ask questions and consult with employees, if possible, immediately after they leave. This could prove to be one of the inexpensive yet effective strategies in the employee retention, if set-up as exit interviews, and enforced by a standardized policy.

Some other ministries are also demographically similar to the MOE (i.e., Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Health), so it would be useful to further explore their retention strategies and how they compare to the MOE.

Engagement and Motivation

Under the section on engagement and motivation, the participants were asked to discuss and rate their desire to stay or leave the organization they are with now and their desire to stay or to leave (additionally providing examples of things that made them want to leave) the MOE. Further, they were encouraged to provide examples of things that made them want to leave or stay with the current or former organization. In the final segment of this section, participants were asked to rate their motivation level when they worked for the MOE and now. The final part of this section encouraged them to candidly speak about their thoughts on how to enrich people’s jobs, what they believe motivates employees and to give an example of a motivated worker or a group that is motivated because of their job. Although each interview covered the same topics, the researcher sometimes deviated from the standard questions in order to explore areas of special interest (as noted by the interviewee). The set of prepared questions was there solely to guide the discussion and not limit. The procedure is similar to that reported in research by Isabella, 1990.

Employee engagement is not a science, but the development of survey tools and questionnaires allow levels of ‘engagement’ within an organization to be measured. Exactly what aspect of engagement these questionnaires analyze will vary. Some describe the level of engagement within the organization on a scale, or as a percentage. This can enable a comparison between different parts of the same organization - engagement levels between different branches of the same

bank for example - and can enable benchmarking of results against significant external databases, often for the same organization. Some enable the identification of the prime drivers of employee engagement for an organization through regression analysis. The nature of the engagement with the job, with the team, with the organization, can also be identified.

They can then discuss the results with their manager, or a person assigned to them by the organization, and action plans are put into place to close any gaps between importance and satisfaction. Data gleaned from engagement surveys should be good enough to allow organizations to address their identified issues - for example where the scores might be lower than expected - and analyze the factors behind their success, for example increased scores year on year, within the context of their organization's strategy and goals. The most important thing is for an organization to be able to arrive at a shared definition in the context of their business, and for this to translate into action.

It Correlates With Performance

Levels of engagement matter because employee engagement can, but does not exclusively, correlate with performance (Williams & Livingstone, 1994). There is evidence that improving engagement correlates with improving performance – and this is at the heart of the argument why employee engagement matters. Here are the highlights of some of the findings. Gallup in 2006 examined 23,910 business units and compared top quartile and bottom quartile financial performance with engagement scores. They found that: those with engagement scores in the bottom quartile averaged 31-51 percent more employee turnover, 51 percent more inventory shrinkage and 62 percent more accidents. Those with engagement scores in the top quartile averaged 12 percent higher customer advocacy, 18 percent higher productivity and 12 percent higher profitability.

Understanding Employee Engagement

Tower Perrins carried out a global survey in 2006, which included data, gathered from opinion surveys of over 664,000 employees from over 50 companies around the world, representing a range of industries and sizes. The survey compared the financial performance of organizations with a highly engaged workforce to their peers with a less-engaged workforce, over a 12-month period. The results indicated a significant difference in bottom-line results in companies with highly engaged employees when compared with companies with low levels of employee engagement. Most noticeable was the near 52 percent gap in the performance improvement in operating income over the year between companies with highly

engaged employees versus companies whose employees had low engagement scores.

Companies with high levels of employee engagement improved 19.2 percent in operating income while companies with low levels of employee engagement declined 32.7 percent over the study period. Standard Chartered Bank reported that in 2007 they found that branches with a statistically significant increase in levels of employee engagement (0.2 or more on a scale of five) had a 16 per cent higher profit margin growth than branches with decreased levels of employee engagement.

It Correlates With Innovation

Engagement is strongly related to higher levels of innovation. Fifty-nine percent of engaged employees say that their job brings out their most creative ideas against only three per cent of disengaged employees. This finding was echoed in research for the Chartered Management Institute in 2007, which found a significant association and influence between employee engagement and innovation.

Professor Julian Birkinshaw of the London Business School stated that: "employee engagement is the sine qua non of innovation". In my experience you can have engaged employees who invest their time in multiple directions (such as servicing clients) but you cannot foster true innovation without engaged employees." Kieran Preston echoed his view: "Employee engagement is important as it drives challenge and innovation and keeps the forefront of best practice." Both Sainsbury's and O2, two companies that have recorded significant recent successes, believe that their recent growth has been predicated on a transformation of their approach to their workforce, based on highly developed engagement models. "In our business with almost 150,000 people, engagement is a key concern. "In businesses of our scale, you don't even get started without engagement," noted Justin King, CEO of Sainsbury's.

The Case for Employee Engagement - The Evidence

The growing currency of engagement has generated a large number of studies from academics, consultancies, and organizations that look at the impact of high levels of engagement on outcomes for the business or organization. This research, together with anecdotal evidence, exists across a wide range of industries and suggests there is a strong story to be told about the link between employee engagement and positive outcomes. In particular, there are a number

of studies that demonstrate that private sector organizations with higher levels of employee engagement have better financial performance, and high levels of engagement are associated with better outcomes in the public sector.

One of the first studies of what we now refer to as employee engagement linked customer service to the profit chain, but also investigated what factors were likely to bring about better client service. This study was based on 3 years of work by Anthony Rucci, Steven Kirn, and Richard Quinn (1998) 'The Employee-Customer Profit Chain at Sears', Harvard Business Review. The resulting service – profit chain model was based on then newly developed measurement techniques. The Sears model has been subsequently criticised; however, as one of the first serious attempts to analyze the effects of employee engagement, it sparked much of the subsequent debate.

CONCLUSIONS

Retention has emerged as one of the dominant themes in management studies during the past decade. Although researchers have made theoretical and methodological advances in understanding retention, there has been less progress in comparing retention of employees across public sector organizations. Many high-level public sector reports are broad and do not address the reasons behind retention differences among ministries. Thus, it would be beneficial for future studies to compare and contrast similarities and discrepancies between ministries. The study could also explore how identical policies (all ministries operate under the same framework) across ministries produce different retention results.

The goal of this report was to develop and deliver employee interview and feedback tools that will help the MOE measure and benchmark retention against their closest counterparts in a systematic manner. The report strived to go beyond simple data, to help the MOE identify best practices and implement changes that would drive performance at the MOE.

In addition, the report attempts to provide the MOE with a better understanding of their employees and their needs. Research showed that there is no one specific cause to employees leaving the Ministry. However, the causes that did emerge from the interviews are similar to the ones addressed in the literature and in studies conducted by the US government and the Government of Netherlands. While their reports are much larger scale, the results are comparable to the ones reported by the MOE employees.

It is not surprising that the public sector employees across the globe share the common dilemmas. The employee demands such as good two-way communication, being treated as an individual and having development opportunities are just a few top practices to be mentioned. However, determining retention factors is only the beginning. Most organizations already know and to some degree use these practices. It is their implementation that continues to be the key to the organizational success.

While various sources provide lists of recommendations for how to retain quality workforce, one key idea seems to resurface time again: it's not business, it's personal. Simply put, employees take things 'personally'. Whether it is a cultural, strategic or operational change, it affects employees on a personal level. Sheridan explains: "the most parsimonious explanation of employee retention

may simply be that an organizational culture emphasizing interpersonal relationship values is uniformly more attractive to professionals than a culture emphasizing work task values” (p. 1052). Thus, the commonly cited mechanisms such as communication, open door policy, hiring management with strong human relation skills, providing growth opportunities and consulting with employees, formally and informally, will strengthen the bond with the Ministry, but will not guarantee their loyalty.

Herzberg, through his motivation-hygiene theory suggests that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are produced by different work factors. What makes people unhappy is not what they do but how well they are treated. These treatment factors are related not to the content of work, but to the context of the job (Herzberg, p.18). All these elements have to come together in a form of individual approach. When your employees are happy, they tend to talk about it. They share this information with others, which in turn, makes the organization more attractive (an employer of choice). If the MOE wants to retain quality employees, they need to implement a spectrum of different practices, but above all, they need to show their employees they care about their individual needs. They need to find the way to genuinely articulate the importance of the work employees do, no matter what their position may be.

Turnover rates may rise despite all the efforts an organization makes, so it is especially important for immediate supervisors and the executive team to monitor employee turnover. Furthermore, time is needed before the suggestions and insights can provide business results. One must consider each practice in terms of its effects on the time horizon. This is especially difficult given the political instability of the government. In light of that, policies need to reflect on these limitations. If the MOE puts the same effort into human resource issues as they do in their scientific intelligence, their turnover rates will likely decrease.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Successful organizations have found that they can have the staying power if they focus on their people. The MOE People Plan/Business Plan also states the importance of people, but the organization itself has not been able to achieve the level of retention that other ministries enjoy. Although the practices identified in the literature are referenced throughout the report, the recommendations focus specifically on the MOE framework and the themes that emerged from the interviews conducted with their former employees. Here are the top three recommendations (reemphasized by the former MOE employees as well):

- (i) Recognizing (reorganizing) the MOE Culture
- (ii) Measuring Engagement, Evaluating Retention
- (iii) Job Fit

While the emphasis is on the MOE, the recommendations may also have applications within other ministries, and even the private sector.

Recognizing (reorganizing) the MOE Culture

Understanding where the organization was in the past and what it looked like, where it is presently and where it needs to go in the future, can help the management decide whether they wish to keep the status quo or restructure their organization. Specifically, the Ministry needs to recognize that their top executives may lack the personality fit for the job they are performing. Historically, they come from the highly technical or/and science based backgrounds where the focus on managing people is minimal.

What the interviews showed was that some employees believe managers are afraid to hold the poor performers accountable for their actions (or the lack of) thus punishing the star employees by adding even more responsibilities to their plate. The lack of human resource skills is clearly coming to the surface in management performance. Therefore, it is the recommendation of this report that the Ministry consider providing training opportunities to coach managers how to deal with these and issues alike in order to avoid further loses of the employees that otherwise would have stayed. If the top people in the organization are not spending at least 80 percent of their time managing people rather than tasks, the turnover problem will persist (Flex Execs, 2012). This also includes looking at relationships between people and how they fit within the current organizational culture.

Measuring Engagement, Evaluating Retention

Measuring engagement is a foundation for insights for action. There are endless strategies, survey tools and questionnaires that allow levels of engagement within an organization to be measured. This can enable a comparison between different parts of the same organization – engagement level between different branches of the same Ministry. The nature of the engagement – with the job, with the team, with the organization – can also be identified. The interviews identified that employee engagement varied across different units, branches and even regions of the Ministry.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the report to review engagement levels in different units and compare them. Such a study will enable the identification of the prime drivers of employee engagement based on its demographic and geographical needs. It will also address the issue from a local and overall perspective.

Job Fit

“An organization that loses a disproportionately high number of its good performers would have more cause for concern than one that loses predominantly poor performers (McEvoy & Cascio, p. 745). Thus, it is imperative that the Ministry examine its recruiting strategies. Are the recruiting methods bringing the Ministry more turnover? If the answer to this question is yes, that may mean that the poor hiring strategies contribute to high turnover.

It is further recommended that the Ministry pay close attention to the psychometric evaluation (suggested by Mercer and Bradley) during the hiring process. Many organizations have no ability to assess this critical aspect during the interview. This particular element provides a job fit tool that assesses the candidate’s abilities, motivations/interests and personality. The resume provides a history of a person; the interview provides certain chemistry while the psychometric evaluation provides behaviour, likelihood to succeed and probability of “fit” within an organization.

REFERENCES

- American Customer Satisfaction Index. (2011). Citizen satisfaction with federal government services plummets. ACSI Commentary January 2011. Retrieved February 2012, from http://www.theacsi.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=237:acsi-commentary-january-2011&catid=14:acsi-results&Itemid=297
- Atkins, P. (2008). Leadership as Response not Reaction: Wisdom and Mindfulness in Public Sector Leadership
- Avey, J.B., Wernsing, T.S., & Luthans, F. (2008). Can positive employees help positive organizational change? Impacts of psychological capital and emotions on relevant attitudes and behaviors. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*.44, 48-70. DOI: 10.1177/0021886307311470.
- Batt, R, A. J. (July 2002). Employee Voice, Human Resource Practices, and Quit Rates: Evidence From the Telecommunications Industry . *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 55(4), 573-594.
- Beatty, R. W. (1989). Competitive Human Resource Advantage Through the Strategic Management of Performance. *Human Resource Planning*, 12(3), 179-194.
- Benson, G.S., Finegold, D., & Mohrman, S.A. (2004). You paid for the skills, now keep them: tuition reimbursement and voluntary turnover. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(3), 315-331.
- Blau, G. J. (1987). Locus of Control As A Potential Moderator of The Turnover Process. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 60, 21-29.
- Blessing W. (2011). Employee engagement report 2011. Beyond the numbers: A practical approach for individuals, managers, and executives. Princeton, N.J. Retrieved January 10, 2012 from http://www.blessingwhite.com/eee_report.asp
- BC Jobs. (2012). *Are Your Hiring and Retention Efforts Balanced?* Retrieved January 29, 2012, from BC Jobs: <http://www.bcjobs.ca/re/hr-resources/human-resource-advice/recruitment-and-retention/are-your-hiring-and-retention-efforts-balanced>
- BC Stats. (October 2007). *Exploring employee engagement in your work unit*. BC Public Service Agency.
- BC Stats. (July 2008). *Making the Most of the Model: An Employee Engagement User Guide for the BC Public Service*. BC Public Service Agency

- Bordia, P., Restubog, S.L.D., Jimmieson, N.L., & Irmer, B.E. (2011). Haunted by the Past: Effects of poor change management history on employee attitudes and turnover. *Group & Organization Management*, 36(2), 191-222
- Branham, L. (2005). *The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave: How To Recognize the Subtle Signs and Act Before It's Too Late*. New York: AMACOM.
- Branham, L., & Hirschfeld, M. (2010). *Re-Engage: How America's Best Places to Work Inspire Extra Effort in Extraordinary Times*. New York: AMACOM.
- Dewhurst, M., Guthridge, M., & Mohr, E. (2009, November). *Motivating People: Getting Beyond Money*. Retrieved November 10, 2011, from McKinsey Quarterly : http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/Motivating_people_Getting_beyond_money_2460
- Furnham, A. (2005). *The Psychology of Behaviour At Work: The Individual in the Organization*. New York: Psychology Press
- Goffee, R., Jones, G., & Livingstone, S. (1999). *Harvard Business Review on Managing People*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Government of Canada. (2009). Social Innovation: What Is It? Who Does It? *Social Policy Research Brief*, 1-4.
- Griffeth, R. H., Hom, W. P., Gaertner S. (2000). A Meta-Analysis of Antecedents and Correlates of Employee Turnover: Update, Moderator Tests, and Research Implications for the Nex Millennium. *Journal of Management*, 26(3), 463–488
- Griffith, J. (2004). Relation of Principal Transformational Leadership to School Staff Job Satisfaction, Staff Turnover and School Performance. *Journal od Educational Administration*, 42(3), 333-356.
- Herzberg F, F. (1974). Motivation-Hygiene Profiles: Pinpointing What Ails The Organization. In F. Herzberg, *Organizational Dynamics* (pp. 18-29). Ohio: Elsevier Science Publishing Inc.
- Hewitt Associates. (2009). What makes a company a best employer? Retrieved May 10, 2011 from http://www.aon.com/attachments/thought-leadership/pov_Best_Employer_Position_Paper.pdf
- Hom, P. W., & Kinicki, A. (2001). Toward A Greater Understanding Of How Dissatisfaction Drives Employee Turnover. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(5), 975-987.

- Inc. (2012). *How to Improve Employee Retention*. Retrieved February 23, 2012, from Small Business Ideas: <http://www.inc.com/guides/2010/04/employee-retention.html>
- Isabella, L. A. (1990). Evolving Interpretation As A Change Unfolds. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(1), 7-41.
- Jamrong, J. (2004). The Perfect Storm: The Future of Retention and Engagement, *Human Resource Planning*, 27(3), p. 27.
- Jay J., Caughron, Shipman, Beeler, Mumford. (2009). Social Innovation: Thinking about Changing the System, 191, 7-32.
- Johnson, W. C. (2008). *Public Administration: Partnerships in Public Service*. Illinois: Waveland Press Inc.
- Lee, H. T., Barry, G., Ingo, W., & Charlie, T. (2008). Understanding Voluntary Turnover: Path-Specific Job Satisfaction Effects And The Importance of Unsolicited Job Offers. *Academy of Management Journal*, 51(4), 651-671.
- Lee, T. W., T.R, M., Lowel, W., & Steven, F. (1996). An Unfolding Model of Voluntary Employee Turnver. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 39, 5-36.
- Lochhead, C., & Stephens, A. (2004). *Employee Retention, Labour Turnover and Knowledge Transfer: Case Studies from The Canadian Plastic Sector*. Retrieved November 29, 2011, from Canadian Labour and Business Centre: <http://www.cpsc-ccsp.ca/pages/index/index.php>
- Marusarz, T., Kao, T., Bell, A., Veres, R., & Bakos, R. (2009). What makes a company best employer? Hewitt Associates LLC. PM---1106---001---EN. Retrieved January 15, 2012 from http://www2.hewittassociates.com/Lib/assets/EU/en-EU/pdfs/pov_best_employers.pdf
- Miller, G. J., & Kenneth, W. (1992). Unraveling The Mysteries of Gender Differences in Intentions to Leave The Organization. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13, 465-478.
- Mayes, B. T., & Daniel, G. (1988). Exit and voice: A test of hypotheses based on fight/flight responses to job stress. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 9, 199-216.
- Merit Systems Protection Board. (2008). The power of federal employee engagement: A report to the President and Congress of the United States. Washington, D.C. Retrieved January 26, 2012 from <http://www.mspb.gov/netsearch/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=379024&version=379721&application=ACROBAT>.

- McEvoy, M. G., & F., C. W. (1987). Do Good or Poor Performers Leave? A Meta-Analysis of The Relationship Between Performance and Turnover. *Academy of Management Journal* (30), 744-762.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. *Human Resources and Succession Planning*. Retrieved September 13, 2011, from http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/Agriculture_Plan/3_innovative_profitable.html
- Ministry of Environment. (2012, February). *2012/2013 - 2014/2015 Service Plan*. Retrieved February 29, 2012, from Ministry of Environment and The Environmental Assessment Office: <http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2012/sp/pdf/ministry/env.pdf>
- Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. (2012, February). *2012/2013 - 2014/2015 Service Plan*. Retrieved February 29, 2012, from Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure: <http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2012/sp/pdf/ministry/tran.pdf>
- Moore, M. (2005). Public sector absenteeism costs £4.1bn. *The Telegraph*. Finance. Retrieved December 12, 2011 from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/2915498/Public-sector-absenteeism-costs-4.1bn.html>
- Murphy, M., A. B.-M. (2005). *The Deadly Sins of Employee Retention*. New York: Leadership IQ Press.
- Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer. (2011, June 15). *2008 Public Service Employee Survey*. Retrieved October 19, 2011, from Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat : <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pses-saff/2008/index-eng.asp>
- Pfeffer, J. (1998). Seven Practices of Successful Organizations. *California Management Review*, 40 (2), 96-121.
- Robinson, C. (2005). *Why Great Employees Quit: What You Can Do To Keep Them*. Retrieved January 20, 2012, from Advanced Leadership Consulting: <http://leadershipconsulting.com/why-great-employees-quit.htm>
- Quinn, R. E., R, F. S., P, T. M., & R, M. M. (2003). *Becoming A Master Manager*. New Jersey: John Wiley&Sons Inc.
- Scottish Executive Social Research. (2007). Employee engagement in the public sector: A review of literature. Retrieved September 26, 2011 from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/176883/0049990.pdf>
- Sheridan, J. E. (1992, December). Organizational Culture and Employee Retention . *The Academy of Management Journal*, 35(5), 1036-1056.

- Steel, R. P., Guy, S., & Rodger, G. (1990). Correcting Turnover Statistics For Comparative Analysis. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33, 179-187.
- Steijn, B. (2002). HRM and job satisfaction in the Dutch public sector. Abstract for the EGPA-Conference in Potsdam, study group on Public Personnel Policies. Retrieved May 16, 2010 from <http://soc.kuleuven.be/io/egpa/HRM/potsdam/steijn.pdf>
- Stringer West, J. (2011). Engaged or disengaged? That is the question. Employee survey white paper. National Business Research Institute. Retrieved February 15, 2011 from http://www.nbrii.com/Employee_Surveys/Engaged_or_Disengaged.html
- TalentGage: *Engagement Survey*. (2012). Retrieved January 5, 2012, from TalentMap Engaging Employees: <http://www.talentmap.com/>
- Towers Perrin, (2003). Working Today: Understanding What Drives Employee Engagement, The 2003 Towers Perrin Talent Report, 2-20.
- Towers Perrin. (2008). Closing the engagement gap: A road map for driving superior business performance -Towers Perrin global workforce study, 2007-2008. Toronto. Retrieved December 18, 2011 from <http://www.biworldwide.com/info/pdf/TowersPerrinGlobalWorkforceStudy.pdf>
- Treasury Board Secretariat. (2009). Public servants on the public service of Canada: Summary of the results of the 2008 public service employee survey. Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada. Retrieved January 13, 2012 from <http://www.tbs---sct.gc.ca/pses---saff/2008/report---rapport---eng.asp>
- Trevor, C. O., & Gerhart, B. B. (1997). Voluntary Turnover and Job Performance: Curvilinearity and the Moderating Influences of Salary Growth and Promotions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82 (1), 44061.
- Uhl-Bien, M., & Marion, R. (2009). Complexity leadership in bureaucratic forms of organizing: A meso model. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 631-650.
- Uppal, S. (2011). Work absences in 2010 - Perspectives on Labour and Income. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-X. Retrieved January 15, 2012 from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2011002/article/11452-eng.pdf>
- Ulrich, D. (1998, November). A New Mandate for Human Resources. *Harvard Business Review*, 124-134.
- Wallace, L., & Trinko, J. (2009). Leadership and employee engagement. *Public Management* (June): 10-13.

- Williams, C. R. (1994). Another Look At The Relationship Between Performance and Voluntary Turnover. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37, 269-298.
- Yip, D. (2012). *Employee retention ideas - ideas for retaining top performers*. Retrieved January 29, 2012, from BC Jobs: <http://www.bcjobs.ca/re/hr-resources/human-resource-advice/recruitment-and-retention/employee-retention-ideas--ideas-for-retaining-top-performers>.
- Zhou, J., & George, J. (2001). When Job Dissatisfaction Leads to Creativity: Encouraging The Expression of Voice. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44 (4), 682-696.

APPENDIXES

Retention Strategies

1. Segment turnover by job title, location, level, supervisor, manager, etc. Break turnover down into its component parts. Don't accept broad numbers.
2. Focus your turnover reduction efforts on the things you control.
3. Focus on making your managers, supervisors and/or team leaders better.
4. Look at the relationships between people. Don't accept poor management behaviour. You can't afford it in today's ultra-competitive business environment.
5. Look closely at whom your organization is recruiting. Are your recruiting methods just bringing you more turnover? Poor hiring equals high turnover.
6. Does your high-turnover work site consist of more than 150-200 people? Are you personally above or beyond the familiarity level discussed above? If so, do something about it!
7. Check out the criteria that people use when they vote for best companies (Best Companies in Canada – this list included BC government – what are other ministries doing differently?) Apply their strategies.
8. Find out if the top people in your company spend at least 80 percent of their time managing people or tasks. If the answer is "tasks," you are building a turnover problem.
9. Ask your clients to rate the service they get from new employees versus the kind of service they want.
10. Require that every manager, supervisor and section head compute the cost of turnover in his or her area of responsibility.
11. Require your HR department to compute the Ministry cost of turnover per employee. Then everyone needs to analyze the resulting data. Treat turnover the way you would treat cash flow. What is Ministry's "burn rate"? How long will it take before you are out of people? Think of the turnover just the way you would think of being out of cash. Think about recruiting new people in the same way you think about how to get cash to come in the doorway.
12. Take a close look at who is not leaving?
13. Look at the specific functional areas in your organization to see which ones are doing things "right". Implement those procedures organization-wide.
14. Always look at your own organization in the context of what works for you. Given the trends in the employment marketplace if you never worry about

why people leave, what it costs you and what you can do about it, you will need not only an endless supply of new workers but also new clients and lots of spare cash.

Table 1: Retention Strategies

Raw Data Tables

During the interview process, participants were asked to answer 10 different questions pertaining to their experiences while working for the MOE. From those 10 questions, 4 were selected for further analysis. The questions that were selected included more extensive answers and provided more substantial material for analysis. The answers were typed up and printed off. They were further cut up into cards that were categorized according to their group similarities. For example, the question on MOE’s vision and mission and whether the staff were familiar with it had 30 responses. Once the answers were reviewed in the card format with no other labels, they were grouped into 4 categories (staff that were aligned with the ministry vision, staff that new nothing about ministry vision, staff that new something about the vision but did not think it affected their work in any way, and the group that felt no one ever took the time to discuss the vision with them). All of the answers are provided in the tables available in the appendixes section. To simplify the raw data and make it more understandable, I have further grouped the answers into three categories (strong, moderate and weak).

There are 6 tables in total representing 6 themes that emerged from the interviews. Each table is based on responses from 30 interviewees. Column one represents the section name – that is, it describes, in short, the topic of the interview question. In column two and three, I placed the number of responses under that particular category (i.e., 7 in-person interviews and 1 survey response, which is a response provided to the researcher via email) and the final column provides the sample responses, which I deemed as the most valuable representation of the answer for each topic. In table 1 I have combined ministry and personal vision responses. Similar to all the BC Government ministries, the MOE has a mission and vision statement. I wanted to find out whether this mission statement had any influence on people’s decision to apply for a job with the MOE. Similar to that, under the “personal vision” column, I wanted to see if the personal vision in any way related to the ministry vision. If the two visions correspond it would support the notion of moral and emotional attachment to a particular job/position/ministry.

Table 2: Ministry Vision

Ministry Vision	Frequency Interviews	Frequency Survey	Examples of responses
Group 1 - ministry's vision /mission/goals (mission important)	7	1	1: I did geography in university and always knew I would want to apply my education to my future job. Their mission was relevant to me and it meant I was applying my education directly to my work. That made me happy and it was satisfying. 2: Yes, I care and I know my organization’s mission. It is very important that it fits

			with my personal beliefs and values.
Group 2 - nothing about ministry's vision/mission	8	4	1: No, I knew nothing about vision/mission/values. I liked my job though. 2: I had no clue about the organization's mission. I wanted to get into government to have a stable job.
Group 3- ministry's vision/mission but did not feel it affected them in any way	4	3	1: I could not give you the exact definition that is on their website but it must be about protection of environment. To be honest, I never really paid attention to it. 2: I needed a job. I learned about their mission and values later. But, learning and understanding the mission did not have much of an affect on my position.
Group 4 -did not discuss what the ministry was about/its mission or its goals	2	1	1: The mission was not something we focused on or had too much discussion about. 2: We never formally discussed it. I do care about the environment so I know it aligns with my moral values but that's all I know.
Personal vision	Frequency Interviews	Frequency Survey	Examples of responses
Group 1 – looking for stability	6	2	1: I was in a private sector and was looking to make a move to the public sector. 2: I was interested in public sector positions and had applied prior to getting the job with MOE to other ministries as well.
Group 2 – aligning their education with career expectations	4	1	1: My degree was very much in line with what I wanted to do and where I wanted to be. I had a strong commitment to my ministry. 2:

			I wanted to do work related to groundwater. MOE seemed like a good fit.
Group 3 – no vision or specific goals	5	2	1: I certainly didn't have any long-term plans. I never really wanted to work for government but my friend suggested I try it out as an auxiliary and once I got in I just moved from one position to another. 2: I had no prior vision - wasn't sure what I wanted to do or where I wanted to be. I figured I would learn that as I went along.
Group 4 – career advancement	5	1	1: My goal was to learn from different people and to work in as many offices as possible. 2: My vision didn't have much to do with organizational vision; rather, it was about job promotion and advancement.
Group 5 – impacting people and environment, gaining personal satisfaction	2	2	1: I was looking for meaningful work within any organization - didn't matter which one as long as I liked the work I was doing. I still focus on that - I look for jobs that provide some sense of accomplishment. If I feel I'm doing something that makes a difference, I don't mind coming to work every day. 2: I wanted to work for the MOE specifically because of their mandate. It feels good to be part of the organization that cares about our air, land, and water; about our ecosystem. I hope to come back to MOE in the future. I really liked the work I was doing with them.

Table 1 represents the frequency of interviews grouped according to their association. The table provides sample responses provided by the interviewees in their unedited version. Group 1, Table 1 responses show a strong moral connection with the Ministry vision. Employees' job attachment is less monetary and more moral. Personal beliefs and values based on environmental issues guide the group to create a bond between the job, the work they actually do and their ministry/personal vision.

Under “Ministry Vision”, there are four types of responses including those employees who believe the ministry vision is important; those with no knowledge of the mission; responses where the mission has no influence on their career and responses that show indifference toward ministry mission or goals. All of the participants were asked to think about their beginnings at the Ministry and some of the motivators that contributed to their decision to seek the job within the MOE. While majority of responses represent employees disinterested or unaware of the ministry vision, group 1 (8 interviews in total) viewed the ministry mission statement and vision as an essential part of their decision to work at the MOE. Specifically, their personal values of clean air, water and land translated into their occupation. The group is passionate about the environment and thus seeks out positions that can potentially impact and make a difference locally and globally. This was evidenced in Group 5 (Personal Vision) response stating: “I wanted to work for the MOE specifically because of their mandate. It feels good to be part of the organization that cares about our air, land, and water; about our ecosystem. I hope to come back to MOE in the future.” Contrary to this response, some employees exhibited a disconnected with everything related to the MOE vision.

What was said versus how it was said is always opened for interpretation. Some questions arise from it? Were they disconnected because they did not want to create an emotional attachment to their position or to people working with them? Were they settling for “just another job” and therefore were purposefully unenthusiastic about the position and anything related to it. Some interviewees exhibited signs of anger, distrust, disappointment with the Ministry and the Government employment in general. Did these further influence their attitude and behaviour toward the MOE?

Table 3: Career Expectations

Career Expectations	Frequency Interviews	Frequency Survey	Examples of responses
Group 1 – planned a long term employment with MOE, attached	5	1	1: My plan was to stay for a long time. I wanted to grow with the position I was in. However, the Ministry did not have the funds to keep the position I was in as it was highly technical and I was isolated in the role I was in. The position was not high on their priority list and it was easier to outsource in order to manage the security of the system than have me work internally on it. 2: I wanted to work with legislation, and learn as much as possible. But I had very limited opportunity to grow. I came to the Ministry with the Law Degree and although my first manager was great and supportive and

			allowed for development and encouraged learning, my manager after that was the opposite and all that stopped. If my first manager stayed, I would have never left.
Group 2 – no attachment, focus on career	9	1	1: It was really important that I learn as much as possible and that they provide room for growth. I was not interested in doing the exact same job for the rest of my life. 2: The job I got was good but as I worked my way through things, I learned about other opportunities and was interested in career advancements. My director and other supervisors were very supportive. Really good team of people - and I'm still in touch with few of them. They always tried to get me as far as they can in terms of making that new step.
Group 3 – focus on keeping a job with BC government	4	1	1: I was primarily after getting a job – any job, but I did care about the environment and that made me motivated enough to pursue a career within the same ministry. However, my expectations were not met once I realized that the group I worked with was exclusive to “boys”. They were decent enough to me, but when it came down to making real decisions, the responsibility was always given to one of the guys. 2: The traditional career expectations simply didn't work in my case. Every time I got a position, the government did major layoffs and I was stuck searching for work. I have moved way more times than I expected or wanted to.
Group 4 – work/life balance, overall satisfaction	1	4	1: Networking, learning about our clients, their needs. I was interested more in the fieldwork. I ended up working at the desk way more than I liked to. Not as much travel as it was first suggested. There was no opportunity for lateral move. 2: I had a number of different expectations but

			I'm sure so did the management in my organization. The idea was to be able to achieve work/life balance, which, at the time, was not supported in any way. If your manager stayed afterhours and worked overtime that day, it was expected you would stay as well.
Group 5 - no expectations	3	2	1: I worked within different departments and honestly never knew where I'd end up. That's the thing with government.. It changes all the time. 2: I had no expectations - just hoped to keep the job.

Table 2 represents 30 responses related to employee career expectations and the level of interest to build the career with the Ministry. The table is grouped in 5 rows, according to type of career expectation and attachment. Out of 6 people in total within Group 1, 20 percent thought of the MOE as an organization where they saw themselves in the long run. In group 1, the interviewees describe an attachment to the Ministry and their position. It appears that both group 1 (planned a long term employment with the MOE) and 2 (no attachment to the MOE – career advancement), although with different levels of attachment (Group 1 with maximum attachment and group 2 with nominal attachment), were unable to stay due to lack of advancement opportunities. The interview samples clearly show a high level of dissatisfaction with the opportunities for growth within the Ministry. In addition to lack of growth, there was a significant level of dissatisfaction with the work/life balance opportunities and nepotism. Finally, group 5 had no expectations and no attachment to the particular Ministry and thus the level of dissatisfaction in nominal. It is important to note that 86 percent of participants state they would have stayed with the MOE if their needs for growth and work/life balance were met.

Table 4: Personal Growth and Personal Job Learning

Personal Growth	Frequency Interviews	Frequency Survey	Examples of responses
Group 1 – low, not important	0	0	N/A
Group 2 – medium, somewhat important	4	2	N/A
Group 3 - high,	17	7	N/A

highly important			
Career Learning	Frequency Interviews	Frequency Survey	Examples of responses
Group 1 – couldn't think of any examples, indifferent about learning	5	2	I used to be interested in learning and personal development but not anymore. I just want to get my work done and go home.
Group 2 – dissatisfaction with management	3	0	I was able to take some communication courses, team building courses, various workshops and some technical courses - but it was all superficial. I could never move up – I was an outsider and management did nothing to help me out. It was a time of turmoil.
Group 3 – satisfied, provided solid examples and felt they learned a lot	5	4	I was able to take advantage of various training opportunities. Everyone at the MOE was very supportive. I just wish we had more room for growth. But the staff and the management provided a positive experience for me. They exceeded my expectations. I am in a higher position now but I still miss some of my colleagues at the MOE and the working relationship we had. It was a great learning and working environment.
Group 4 – no formal training provided, had to train on their own	6	3	I had to ask for training and look for opportunities myself. I asked for things... I was eager to learn and they saw that. At the Ministry of Health is different. They provided a lot of on job/course training without me having to ask for it.
Group 5 – couldn't move up, issues with nepotism	2	0	They promised they would reclassify my position and they never did. I could have taken every possible course out there, but they just didn't care. I am now in a higher position – where I should have been the whole time.
Personal Job Learning	Frequency Interviews	Frequency Survey	Examples of responses
Group 1 - low	0	0	n/a
Group 2 – medium	0	0	n/a
Group 3 - high	21	9	n/a

(Personal growth, career learning and personal job learning) – this section is about learning, development and where employees wish to be when it comes to their personal growth. All employees expressed a desire for on the job learning, while career learning was more about opportunities for growth provided while on the job. While questions about career learning focused on opportunities for advancement, personal growth and personal job learning sections focused on the level of learning employees wished to have or have had (i.e., low, medium, high). All employees believed that personal job learning was highly important and almost all respondents stated that personal growth is very important to them. Under career learning, there are 5 different groups; with group 4 being the most satisfied one with the learning opportunities. In general, majority of participants expressed a solid level of satisfaction with training and learning provided.

Table 5: Recognition

Recognition	Frequency Interviews	Frequency Survey	Examples of responses
Group 1 - low	0	0	N/A
Group 2 - medium	10	5	N/A
Group 3 - high	11	4	N/A

In table 4, I have used questions about recognition and employees desire to be recognized for the work well done. Group 1 – with low or no desire to be recognized had zero responses. Group two with medium level of desire to be recognized had 16 responses, which makes it 50% of all responses, noting the 10 responses under in person interviews and 5 responses in online questionnaire. Finally, group 3, expressed high desire for recognition and they constitute as well 50% of all responses. In group 3, 30 percent of interviewees suggested they need to be praised and wish to be recognized for the work they do. 33% of employees agreed they need some form of recognition. The fact that all employees agree they need some or high level of recognition suggests that no matter what employees say about formal or any type of recognition being superficial or fake even if people complain about it and say it's not authentic they still at the end of the day appreciate it and crave it.

Table 6: Colleague and Supervisor Support

Colleague Support	Frequency Interviews	Frequency Survey	Examples of responses
Group 1 – well supported	11	5	<p>1: great support. My last director was well respected and a great person to work it. I enjoyed his managing style very much - none of that micromanaging. I think we all enjoyed working with him.</p> <p>2: all of my supervisors recognized my potential but one. I had a good working relationship with all and was not afraid to ask questions, I could ask anything. I have a great relationship with my current management as well.</p>
Group 2 – no support	7	1	<p>1: too much gossip and too much drama. It was like working with children. It got so bad that, at one point, management decided to have a meeting on proper office behaviour. We were told what kind of conversations we can have; we had "safe" words, a list of inappropriate topics that were not to be discussed during work hours. We had a rule for everything - how loud we can be, how long we can chat and no personal chat was to occur during work hours that was outside our lunch or coffee breaks. It was an unbelievable behaviour. I have never seen anything like it.</p> <p>2: you had to ask for support.. I knew what I wanted, I'm a problem solver but the rest - they all had secrets, just like in grade 1. It's a sad but funny place. Supervisors' fingers are in all pies, no allocation, had to have control of everything. It's a highly dysfunctional workplace. It's all about nepotism and politics. When I left, everything remained status quo. It was like that for 8 years.</p>
Group 3 – positions that required solo work	4	1	<p>1: I was interacting with people from different ministries. My colleagues supported me but the work itself was more tied to other departments so the relationship with those people was more important, or at least it affected my work more.</p> <p>2: There was no support. We all worked</p>

			independently. We were civil enough to each other. There was no problems, well, none that I know of.
Group 4 – indifferent, no particular opinion	0	2	1: I was satisfied with the interaction we had. I would not say that anyone went out of their way to help out but they were all decent enough. 2: We worked together but I wouldn't call that support - we had to interact because our jobs demanded it, didn't feel natural. Most people kept to themselves.
Supervisor Support	Frequency I	Frequency S	Examples of responses
Group 1 – low	3	2	1: no support on any level, the level of pressure was unbelievable... 2: I had couple of managers, I had a great relationship with the first one, but then this person left. Organization broke down and the new manager was horrible. I'd rate that relationship 1 out of 7. The first manager recognized my potential; the second did nothing. Management expected more from a fewer employees and when junior staff figured it out, they just moved on. We were not sure where to turn.
Group 2 – medium	4	2	1: kind of hard for superiors to support us when they didn't really have time to get to know us. They were so over-worked; it was stressful to watch them. 2: supportive but with no backbone. He would hear you out and do nothing about it once you left his office. 3 - yes, she was supportive, in her own way. If you had any special requests she was not very open to that. But she did appreciate hard-working staff.
Group 3 – high	14	5	1: Yes, supervisor recognized my potential. He trusted my expertise to do the work. Now, also great 7 out of 7. I work independently but most recognition comes from people I work with. 2: great support. My last director was well respected and a great person to work with. I enjoyed his managing style very much - none of that micromanaging.

Colleague support and Supervisor support

When I was crafting the following group of questions for the interviewees, I wanted to know if they felt supported by their colleagues and their supervisors at the MOE. Since I was a former employee of the MOE, I had my own thoughts about the colleague support and supervising style. However, I wanted to let other voices guide these questions and to try to minimize my predisposition about the MOE. First, I was surprised to learn about a number of different positions which required independent work so the questions about colleague support were not applicable to some of the positions. On the other hand, some staff had more than one supervisor and over the years of work for the same Branch/Ministry, they were at different points of their work cycle less or more satisfied with various managers. Thus, it made it difficult for me to determine the impact of the colleague/supervisor support on the employees' satisfaction. However, some themes did emerge. Clearly, a number of employees were supported and satisfied with their superiors. Table 5, group 1 shows a high level of satisfaction with the colleagues' and the director at the same time.

Table 7: Engagement

Engagement	Frequency Interviews	Frequency Survey	Examples of responses
Desire to Leave/MOE	13 – leave 8 - stay	7 – leave 2 - stay	N/A
Desire to Leave/current employer	19 – stay 2 - leave	8 – stay 1 - leave	N/A
Motivation	Total of Responses for the MOE	Total of Responses for current empl.	Examples of responses
Group 1 – low	4		N/A
Group 2 – medium	6		N/A
Group 3 – high	20		N/A

In graph 7 and 8, I decided to group engagement and motivation because I believed the level of engagement also influences the level of motivation to stay with the same employer. Both engagement and motivation were used to learn about staff's interest in keeping the job with the MOE. The table shows that over 50 percent of respondents expressed a desire to leave the MOE. About 38 percent were not ready to leave their place of employment but were unable to stay for reasons unrelated to dissatisfaction with the Ministry. When asked to rate their desire to leave their current employer, majority of respondents wanted to stay. Out of the 30 conducted interviews, only 3 respondents were

ready to move on to another organization. Contrary to what I thought (if engagement low thus the motivation to stay will be low as well) majority of employees believed they were and are highly motivated. In fact, 26 responses came in as strong and moderate level of motivation, while only 4 respondents believed they were unmotivated. What does that mean? If your employees are not engaged but continue to be motivated they will likely pick another position or organization where their motivation will be better utilized.

Sample Interview Questions

1. JOB FIT (expectations)

Could you tell me something about your view of how your organization's mission is achieved?

Probes:

- What is the mission of your current department?
- Did you know about the mission of your organization?
- Did it matter to you before you were hired?
- Is this mission still relevant to you?
- Can you recall MoE's mission and whether it fit with your expectations?

Vision

Can you tell me about your personal vision of what you wanted to do and where you wanted to be before and when you were hired?

Probes:

- What is your view of the vision of your current organization?
- Is there an articulated vision and do you know about it?
- Do you care about it?
- How successful is your organization in encouraging people to share their vision in this process?
- Are people committed to it?
 - Examples of commitment
 - Examples of lack of commitment
- Did your vision fit with the Ministry's mission/vision?
- Did your vision change? How?

Could you tell me something about the MOE's mission and vision and whether you are familiar with it?

Respondent 1.

My goal was to get a permanent position. The mission and the values of the MOE organization were also important and they fit with my personal values.

Respondent 2.

My job relates to ecology, geography and environment so working for the organization that strives to improve those areas is important to me. I did not really know much about the organizational mission but it just happens that it fits with my personal values.

Respondent 3.

I'm just into my job and not into mission per se. I am not particularly interested in fitting my personal beliefs with the organizational mission. I know something about the mission but I really want to get as much experience as possible so I can move around and learn as much as I can from each position.

Respondent 4.

I know my organization's mission very well. I like where my ministry is going and their values.

Respondent 5.

Yes, I care and I know my organization's mission. It is very important that it fits with my personal beliefs and values.

Respondent 6.

I understood my organizational mission but I didn't care either way.

Respondent 7.

I did not know about the mission of my organization and it didn't really matter to me.

Respondent 8.

I was familiar with the mission and I supported and believed in it very much.

Respondent 9.

I had no clue about the organization's mission. I wanted to get into government to have a stable job.

Respondent 10.

The mission was not something we focused on or had too much discussion about.

Respondent 11.

The mission was never discussed in my unit.

Respondent 12.

I needed a job. I learned about their mission and values later.

Respondent 13.

I was happy to see that my beliefs fit well with the values of the Ministry. I was always interested in protecting the environment and it was very satisfying to be part of something I strongly believed in.

Respondent 14.

No, I knew nothing about vision/mission/values. I liked my job though.

Respondent 15.

I did geography in university and always knew I would want to apply my education to my future job.

Respondent 16.

No, I don't know anything about it. I still don't know much about it.

Respondent 17.

I can't think of it now, but I did look it up at the time I went for a job interview.

Respondent 18.

Yes, I am familiar with the MOE mission and vision. It pertains to leading the Province while protecting the environment. MOE's goals and initiatives were very important to me. I care deeply about this province.

Respondent 19.

I cared about what we did but I didn't memorize the mission or our vision. I had a general knowledge of it all.

Respondent 20.

I don't know anything about it.

Respondent 21.

It's about protecting the environment in a sustainable way, I think. We never formally discussed it.

Respondent 22.

Not sure.

Respondent 23.

My understanding is that it's about clean environment that benefits the people of the province.

Respondent 24.

I never looked it up. It didn't really matter to me. I was happy to have a job.

Respondent 25.

I provided technical support so the Ministry so vision/mission wasn't relevant to what I was doing.

Respondent 26.

Not really sure.

Respondent 27.

I do not know what their vision or mission was.

Respondent 28.

I could not give you the exact definition that is on their website but it must be about protection of environment. To be honest, I never really paid attention to it.

Respondent 29.

We never formally discussed it. I do care about the environment so I know it aligns with my moral standards.

Respondent 30.

I know it's about protecting the environment, but I'm not sure about the specifics of it

Vision

Can you tell me about your personal vision of what you wanted to do and where you wanted to be before and when you were hired?

Respondent 1.

My degree was very much in line with what I wanted to do and where I wanted to be. I had a strong commitment to my ministry.

Respondent 2.

My goal was to further my career. I wanted to advance my career within government.

Respondent 3.

My goal was to learn from different people and to work in as many offices as possible.

Respondent 4.

I did not have anything in mind when I came to my organization. I did not have a particular mission or vision.

Respondent 5.

I wanted my job to have a positive impact on people's lives. In that sense, my personal goals had to fit with organizational vision.

Respondent 6.

I just wanted a position in public service. I was more interested in other areas (less in fish and wild life more in aboriginal issues and tourism).

Respondent 7.

My personal vision had to do with high career expectations. I wanted to become successful and use my skills in whatever position I get.

Respondent 8.

I wanted stability and a possibility to grow.

Respondent 9.

I had no vision in terms of where I wanted to be – I needed a job. That was it.

Respondent 10.

My vision didn't have much to do with organizational vision; rather, it was about job promotion and advancement.

Respondent 11.

I had no real vision. I was looking for any kind of work and my friend suggested I try government.

Respondent 12.

I worked in private sector for years so I decided to try out my luck with the public sector.

Respondent 13.

My degree helped me get a job right after university. It was thanks to co-op I was able to align my personal goals with my employment.

Respondent 14.

I hoped I could get a decent job with decent people. I could do practically anything, but if I don't get along with people I work with, it's really hard to show up to work every day.

Respondent 15.

I was focused on getting a job where I could apply my education and my knowledge directly to the work I was doing. I wanted to be part of the ministry where my skills made a difference and I was not just another paper –pusher.

Respondent 16.

I had no vision – just wanted a job.

Respondent 17.

Well, my decision on applying for a job with MOE was not based on my vision. They had a job posting and I went for it.

Respondent 18.

It was always important to me to have some kind of connection to environment. Getting a job with MOE meant a lot to me.

Respondent 19.

I was an auxiliary and had no idea I would stay there that long. It was when I got my hours that I begin to think about what I was doing and where I wanted to be.

Respondent 20.

I came to MOE by chance. My position was cut and I was placed within MOE.

Respondent 21.

I wanted job security and I felt I would get it if I got in with BC government.

Respondent 22.

Not really sure I had one – just having income security was great.

Respondent 23.

I wanted stability, ability to remain creative and to grow within my organization.

Respondent 24.

Respondent 25.

We were placed where they needed us. Due to reorganization, we ended up with MOE. It was all about getting the work done.

Respondent 26.

I was just looking for more stable opportunities.

Respondent 27.

I had no specific goal or vision at the time.

Respondent 28.

I was looking for meaningful work within any organization - didn't matter which one as long as I liked the work I was doing. I still focus on that - I look for jobs that provide some sense of accomplishment. If I feel I'm doing something that makes a difference, I don't mind coming to work every day.

Respondent 29.

I wanted to work for the MOE specifically because of their mandate. It feels good to be part of the organization that cares about our air, land, water; about our ecosystem. I hope to come back to MOE in the future. I really liked the work I was doing with them.

Respondent 30.

I hoped to get a position that would allow me to learn quickly so I can move up and, to other challenging opportunities.

Personal Growth

Respondent 2.

When I just started, I had hoped to stay in the Ministry for a while, much longer than I did. The people in the Branch were very staff orientated and I had a great relationship with everyone, even directors.

Respondent 3.

I was not really thinking about my career and where I would take it. I was more interested in expanding my knowledge. And that's what I did. I took courses and continuously challenged myself.

Respondent 4.

My goal was to move up slowly. My expectation was met because eventually I moved up in my career.

Respondent 5.

I wanted to work with legislation, and learn as much as possible. But I had very limited opportunity to grow. I came to the Ministry with the Law Degree and although my first manager was great and supportive and allowed for development and encouraged learning, my manager after that was the opposite and all that stopped. If my first manager stayed, I would have never left.

Respondent 6.

I had a great experience at the MOE. The position I got allowed for advancement and moving up. I had learned a lot. The people were great, the experience was great and I loved my job.

Respondent 7.

My goal was at first to get a job. I was not interested in the career. But the problem was to keep it. Just before I reached my 3 years, HR made an attempt to terminate my position. At that time, HR had a bad reputation, in particular, their director who was known to be ruthless and it was so obvious that as the 3 year limit was approaching they begin to work on laying me off right away. I had a battle with HR and had no support in the Ministry from the colleagues or anyone else.

Respondent 8.

I had high career expectations. My goal was not met. I had to move on to another ministry in order to gain further knowledge and to advance my career.

Respondent 9.

My goal was to get a job but I had no emotional attachment to what I was doing and where I was going to be. There was a promise of growth. That was good.

Respondent 10.

I was primarily after getting a job – any job, but I did care about the environment and that made me motivated enough to pursue a career within the same ministry. However, my expectations were not met once I realized that the group I worked with was exclusive to “boys”. They always treated me as an outsider.

Respondent 11.

I hoped to learn more about how the public sector operated.

Respondent 12.

It was really important that I learn as much as possible and that they provide room for growth. I was not interested in doing the exact same job for the rest of my life.

Respondent 13.

I was guided by jobs related to environmental issues.

Respondent 14.

Being able to work with decent people - and I happened to find that.

Respondent 15.

The plan was to get as much experience as possible so I can complete my masters degree.

Respondent 16.

I was hoping to move up - not stay in one position..

Respondent 17.

I had no particular expectations.

Respondent 18.

I worked within different departments and honestly never knew where I'd end up. That's the thing with government.. It changes all the time.

Respondent 19.

To keep on working.

Respondent 20.

The job I got was good but as I worked my way through things, I learned about other opportunities and was interested in career advancements. My director and other supervisors were very supportive. Really good team of people - and I'm still in touch a with few of them. They always tried to get me as far as they can in terms of making that next step.

Respondent 21.

The goal was to roll my auxiliary position into the permanent one, which I succeeded in eventually. It was an uphill battle though.

Respondent 22.

My position is very specific and of technical nature so the MOE seemed like a natural fit.

Respondent 23.

I had no expectations - just hoped to keep the job.

Respondent 24.

No expectations - my goal was met because I still have a job.

Respondent 25.

I got the IT job and once I gained some experience I was able to transfer those skills to other positions. I knew I was never going to stay there forever so there was no hard feelings regarding my transfer.

Respondent 26.

Security was my main concern - but I was really isolated in the position. It was a good job, good experience, it was never about money - I wanted to do good work.

Respondent 27.

Networking, learning about our clients, their needs. I was interested more in the field work. I ended up with too much time at the desk. Not as much travel as it was first suggested. There was no opportunity for lateral move.

Respondent 28.

I had a number of different expectations but I'm sure so did the management in my organization. The idea was to be able to achieve work/life balance, which, at the time, was not supported in any way. If your manager stayed afterhours and late every day, it was expected you would stay as well.

Respondent 29.

I had so much energy and was really eager to go out and give it my all.

Respondent 30.

The traditional career expectations simply didn't work in my case. Every time I got a position, the government did major layoffs and I was stuck searching for work. I have moved way more times than I expected or wanted to.

How important is it for you to be in an organization where you advance in your career?

Respondent 1.

It is very important (6), but the opportunity with the MOE was not there.

Respondent 2.

It is important (5), I was just pushing paper before where now I work with clients. I feel like my new job gives me lots of great opportunities. I am also in the field more which suits me better.

Respondent 3.

It's very important (6).

Respondent 4.

It is highly important (7).

Respondent 5.

It is highly important (7).

Respondent 6.

It is highly important (7).

Respondent 7.

It is highly important. (7)

Respondent 8.

It is somewhat important. (5)

Respondent 9.

It is somewhat important. (5)

Respondent 10.

It is very important. (6)

Respondent 11.

It is important. (5)

Respondent 12.

It is very important. (6)

Respondent 13.

It is highly important. (7)

Respondent 14.

It is very important. (6)

Respondent 15.

It is highly important. (7)

Respondent 16.

It is highly important. (7)

I think every organization should strive to provide those opportunities.

Respondent 17.

It is highly important. (7)

Respondent 18.
It is highly important. (7)

Respondent 19.
It is very important. (6)

Respondent 20.
It is highly important. (7)

Respondent 21.
It is highly important. (7)

Respondent 22.
It is very important. (6)

Respondent 23.
It is somewhat important. (5)

Respondent 24.
It is highly important. (7)

Respondent 25.
It is highly important. (7)

Respondent 26.
It is highly important. (7)

Respondent 27.
It is very important. (6)

Respondent 28.
It is very important. (6)

Respondent 29.
It is very important. (6)

Respondent 30.
It is highly important. (7)

How important is it for you to be in an organization where you are challenged to learn new things? (Provide an example of learning related to your career while at the MOE/at the new organization)

1. Very important. High 7

I learned lots on the job and basically had to train myself. In the new job I train through courses and they have lots of money for travel and personal development.

2. 5/6

I was involved in IT development. It was interesting but our department was too small. There was not enough work for me at the time.

3. High 6

I had no training provided so I had to train myself. It was on the job learning. But this kind of learning allowed me to use the job as a stepping-stone – I moved up fairly quickly. At this job I get more challenges. It's more interesting.

4. High 7

I do a lot of business analysis, data administration and in my former position I did lots of data modeling.

5. Somewhat high 6/7

There was a lot of on the job learning, some courses and a number of learning sessions. I have had similar experiences at my current job.

6. High 7

My main focus is on legislation now. In my former position I had no such opportunities.

7. High 7

Yeah – I was learning all the time at first – it was a new job so everything was new. But then it became repetitive. They provided no real challenges and I was never offered to do anything else. In my new job not only did I learn new things when I first came in but they continuously ask me if I'm interested in doing anything else. It's refreshing to see they trust me and are not afraid to invest in my development.

8. High 7

I was able to take some communication courses, team building courses, various workshops and some technical courses - but it was all superficial. I could never move up – I was an outsider and management did nothing to help me out. It was a time of turmoil.

9. High 6/7

The team was opened to training me and helping me out. It was a great work environment. I would have loved to stay but as I mentioned earlier – had to move due to personal circumstances.

10. Somewhat high 5/6

I learn all the time – can't think of any examples.

11. Medium 4

I'm not sure.

12. 5

No formal learning was ever provided. I had to figure everything out on my own. What really sucked was my manager. Every time I made a mistake she made sure to point it out and let me know how "stupid" I was for not knowing what to do as the task she gave me to do was "so easy" and anyone else could do it much faster.

I am now treated as a human being. I can ask questions and I can make mistakes; it's refreshing.

13. 6

My supervisor had no choice – it was all coordinated from higher up. There was so much nepotism in one place.

14. 5

I used to be interested in learning and personal development but not anymore. I just want to get my work done and go home.

15. 5/6

I work for the Ministry of Forests now and they work hard to keep their staff satisfied. MOE could not come even close to what they have to offer at the MOF. The learning at the new job is continuous..

16. High 7

I was in accounting – trained well and was offered various courses. My manager didn't like me so he made my life a living hell. I lost any interest in the job I was doing – it became hard to focus. I was in survivor mode. I am so much more relaxed now...

17. Medium 4

I can't think of anything at this time.

18. 6/7

They promised they would reclassify my position and they never did. I could have taken every possible course out there, but they just didn't care. I am now in a higher position – where I should have been the whole time.

19. 5

I don't see how this question is relevant.

20. High 7

I was offered to take courses and was provided developmental opportunities. I am able to do the same at my current job as well.

21. 5/6

We had group training and one-on-one training. Our group sessions were great. They allowed us to come together 3 times a year and share ideas, consult and see what others are doing. I miss that in my new job but we still get lots of training opportunities.

22. High 7

No answer was provided (these answers were emailed).

23. High 7

We had a good working relationship across the region so we all helped each other out. I really liked the learning process we had at the MOE. But I've been also able to develop strong relationships in my new job and I found everyone very helpful.

24. 5/6

I had to fight for myself and get my own training in place. I asked for things...I was eager to learn and they saw that. At the Ministry of Health is different. They provided a lot of on job/course training without me having to ask for it.

25. 6

I was mainly exposed to on the job learning with no formal training.

26. 5

The workload I had was ridiculous. There was never enough time for any type of formal learning or training.

27. 6

The person I reported to worried more about making herself look good and less about my professional development.

28. 7

My co-workers were a great source of knowledge. They also empowered me and provided continuous support.

29. 6/7

Not sure - it's important, but I can't think of any examples.

30. 6

I was able to take the advantage of various training opportunities. Everyone at the MOE was very supportive. I just wish we had more room for growth. But the staff and the management provided a positive experience for me. They exceeded my expectations. I am in a higher position now but I still miss some of my colleagues at the MOE and the working relationship we had. It was great learning and working environment.

Other interview questions:

How important is it for you to be in an organization where you directly and continually learn from the work you are doing?

How important is it for you to be in an organization where you are recognized for the work you do?

To what extent did your colleagues support you in your new position once you started work for the MOE?

How would you rate the quality of the relationship in general with your superiors in the MOE?

How would you rate your desire to stay or leave the organization you are with now?

How would you rate your desire to stay or leave when you were with the MOE?

How would you rate your level of motivation at the MOE?