



Case Study I

HR/OD Intervention Focus: Strengthening the CSI & Program for Learning and Development

Realising the Commission's Vision - CSI as the Catalyst

The Civil Service Commission's vision was clear from the onset: "To become Asia's leading centre for strategic Human Resources and Organisation Development (HROD) by 2030." The Commission was primarily counting on the Civil Service Institute (CSI), its training and research

arm, to propel the entire organisation towards turning this vision into reality. Understandably, CSI initially found this mission daunting.

"We already knew what we wanted to do. We knew where we wanted to go, but we needed some help from other organisations and people," admits Maricar Aquino, Director III of CSI. Director Aquino adds, "We were not that prepared, [and] the people were not that competent. There were a lot of things that needed to be done. We needed help."

Timely help came when the Government of Australia through the Philippines Australia Human Resource and Organisational Development Facility (PAHRODF) got involved. It seemed like the Commission and PAHRODF had a meeting of the minds, as the latter conducted two fully-funded intervention programs for the commission's research and training arm: 1) Strengthening the CSI from February 2012 to January 2013 and 2) Learning and Development from early 2013 to June 2014. According to Director Aquino, "It's a blessing that PAHRODF came into the picture. Little by little, the things that we've dreamt of were given to us, were provided for us by the interventions."

Creating alliances

Sensing the deep concern that PAHRODF has for the Commission, Director Aquino is grateful to PAHRODF for the opportunities provided to her and the entire CSI. She has seen how PAHRODF shares the Commission's vision and wants more than anything to see this come to fruition.

Referring to the relationship with PAHRODF as a "healthy partnership," she singles out the HR Symposia held in 2013 and in April of 2014 as among the notable collaborative efforts CSI has had with PAHRODF. With this, she foresees many more beneficial projects that can be undertaken by the Commission with the assistance of PAHRODF.

Director Aquino also has kind words to say about the Learning Service Providers (LSP), which she credits for being knowledgeable and for guiding them throughout the project, with only CSI's success in mind. She found it easy to deal with both organisations as the people behind them were all friendly and accommodating. Undeniably, the all-out support from PAHRODF

and the LSPs created a conducive atmosphere for learning. As a result, she mentions that participants were highly engaged, enthusiastic and receptive.

From the onset, it was also stressed that this would be for the good of everyone and that success would be measured by how much CSI would have improved after going through the interventions. The entire CSI staff – from the executive directors, directors, division chiefs, and technical support staff – participated in the symposia, so the outcome was eagerly embraced by the entire CSI organisation. Director Aquino explains, “No one was excluded. Everyone was involved. Everyone was consulted so the output of the project is, shall I say, owned by all of us.”

Towards a better CSI

The first intervention enabled CSI to be self-sustaining and profitable by developing a business model that focuses on its value propositions: scholar management, the conduct of learning events, general HROD training services, and leadership and foundational programs. As Director Aquino puts it, CSI now has “a new business model complemented by an interim structure. The business model is composed of the new value propositions of CSI which, in the end, make it a business enterprise.”

The need to have their own distinct branding also became real to the CSI team. With the LSP’s help and after a seminar on branding, the “CSI brand” was born. This meant that even before they started work on their training program offerings, CSI had to first touch on their identity. The CSI look, colours, logo, and tagline were all developed.

Director Aquino proudly explains, “You can see and feel the brand of the CSI from the logo. ‘Orange’ speaks of who we are. We are brilliant. We are bustling with energy, with brightness. We want to implement the quality programs that we have designed for the development of the entire bureaucracy.” Meanwhile, the tagline highlights the organisation’s advocacy. “That, we believe, is what we wanted to do – to ‘shape the servant hero towards public service excellence’ and that is through the civil service,” Director Aquino shares.

Building on that first intervention, the second program on learning and development helped the organisation zero in further on their area of training competence. From the simplest to the complex, the program covered the entire training cycle – from training needs assessment (TNA) to design, delivery, post-training evaluation, and performance consulting.

Director Aquino shares that CSI lacked expertise specifically in training design. They had very little knowledge in this area, and the few who knew how to design training programs were not doing it in a scientific way. Through the intervention, they were given specific training on the right way to design a program – from the crafting of the performance objectives, the designing of the methodologies, and the assigning of modules. According to Director Aquino, this has definitely helped them move forward in the area of customising training programs and providing training solutions for other government agencies.

The intervention also offered them a chance to benchmark against other training institutions, both public and private. This gave the CSI a fresh perspective on best practices they could adapt. Director Aquino narrates, “We went to different training institutions where we also got to see their practices, how they do things especially in the arena of training. We learned so much from that benchmarking. I would like to think that the output of the entire project was because of all that we learned from that exposure.”

After the intervention, Director Aquino then worked on their REAP. The REAP is an integral part of the intervention, meant to utilise participants’ learnings to address organisational gaps. Director Aquino’s REAP focused on the sustainability of the CSI brand. “Apart from giving quality training programs, there’s got to be something that should stick to the minds of stakeholders, and that is the brand. That’s the essence of our Re-entry Action Plan: to maintain the CSI brand which includes not only the logo, the tagline, but everything that goes with the training – beginning from the training collaterals to how the training programs are conducted, from training administration to training design to training delivery up to evaluation. All these comprise the total brand of the CSI.”

Director Aquino also shares that although competing concerns in the organisation may have somewhat delayed the implementation of their REAP, they are slowly but surely working on it. A case in point is the successful launch of the CSI website which entailed careful scrutiny and

effort, particularly with the amount of information and preparation required to ensure that the site is comprehensive and reflective of CSI's quality image. For this, they also engaged an external provider and consulted with other offices such as the Integrated Records Management, which is in charge of the Commission's website.

Despite the many challenges, Director Aquino reiterates that CSI is up to task. "As long as our vision is clear, as long as our mandate is clear, I think we will be able to get there."

ISO-certified

Aside from the excellent feedback CSI has obtained from their training program participants, the recent certification it has obtained from the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) is another clear testament to the CSI brand's commitment to the highest quality and standards in its external training services. Director Aquino directly attributes this success to the two interventions conducted by PAHRODF. "The interventions provided everything that we needed to get that ISO certification. The training, the learnings were all transferred onto the things that we are doing now that are in consonance with the standards of ISO," she says.

Indeed, PAHRODF has truly helped CSI come closer to the attainment of the Commission's vision. "We are grateful that we had these interventions... that really, really helped us be where we are supposed to be," says Director Aquino.

Maricar Aquino, Director III - Civil Service Commission, was one of the participants for the HR/OD interventions on Strengthening the CSC's CSI and Program for Learning and Development for CSC.