



## Case Study 12

### HR/OD Intervention Focus: Enhancing Performance Management within the Legal Service

#### **Empowered to Level Up**

Empowerment, efficiency and effectiveness – these will remain as corporate rhetoric if not put into action. Seeing how these values need to be strengthened in the Legal and Legislative

Liaison Services department at the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Assistant Division Chief Atty. Gina V. Wenceslao made it her goal to help bring these to the fore. “I’m excited about the fact that in my own small way, in my own humble way, I can contribute to the improvement of the legal service in the department,” she says.

Atty. Wenceslao was the first recipient of Australia Awards Scholarships (AAS) in her department, and she believes that the competencies she displayed and her potential for leadership earned her this honor. She also talks about her vision to make a difference in her workplace, “My intention is to help my employees, my colleagues – to empower them and then give them a perspective of what their particular roles are in relation to the entire mission and vision of the department,”

Having been with DILG since 2010, she returned to the Philippines in September 2013 armed with a master's degree in Public Policy and Management from the Carnegie Mellon University in Adelaide, Australia. Like many other recipients of the AAS, Atty. Wenceslao has developed both personally and professionally as a result of her studies abroad. She believes that through the Philippines Australia Human Resource and Organisational Development Facility (PAHRODF), the Australian Government “helps scholars from the government or private sector so that they return with better competencies from foreign education that can help their respective offices and, eventually, the country.”

“Each one of us is a better version of our former selves. I learned competencies which help me cope with my current position,” Atty. Wenceslao muses. The scholarship has helped her assert her leadership while working with colleagues, immediate superiors, and even top management. She shares, “I learned how to be cooperative without actually jeopardizing the

correct principles that one wants to impart for the further development of the legal service in the department.”

### **A work in progress**

Atty. Wenceslao has been more than eager to share her gained knowledge but is quick to point out that her Re-entry Action Plan (REAP), a plan designed to help her apply her learnings to address organisational gaps at the DILG, "is actually a work in progress" which has gotten off the ground just recently. Her REAP focuses on enhancing the existing performance management routing scheme of her department, but she has also added the development of a balance scorecard to measure performance, a system she refers to as "Balance Work Hard."

Atty. Wenceslao narrates that when she got back, she got caught in the middle of a change in leadership. Hence, she purposely held off working on her REAP until the incoming head had firmly established her governance. "I did not start on it until the legal service had a new leader or head, and that was in March of this year. The previous director who was my mentor resigned sometime in October 2013, and that was a challenge on my part because I had to revise or re-do the REAP altogether to give way, of course, to the new leadership," she shares.

Since then, she has had to expand the coverage of her REAP. While her original REAP only dealt with the refinement of their existing performance management routing scheme, Atty. Wenceslao quickly realised that it was not enough to work on just that and promptly added the "Balance Work Hard" component. "I saw the need for the legal service to have the balance scorecard as a means to empower the employees and emphasize efficiency," she shares.

According to Atty. Wenceslao, "Balance Work Hard" is a planning and performance management tool that looks at performance efficiency and effectiveness. It uses a balance scorecard covering four of the department's areas for improvement: employee empowerment, management relations, work output of the entire legal service, and synchronization of vision among the department's units.

### **Getting it off the ground**

Hoping to launch the system by September 2015, she is currently in talks with consultants who can help develop the balance scorecard and assist her in REAP implementation. "My intention is to establish it before September 2015 and then make a yearly evaluation of the scorecard to determine if we are achieving the identified targets," she adds.

The major challenge for Atty. Wenceslao now is finding the budget to implement her REAP. There are significant costs involved in the design and creation of the balance scorecard, not to mention the work which needs to be done on the existing performance management scheme. She knows that the cost would be substantial, considering that her REAP would entail refining the current performance management routing scheme and holding a three-day seminar to introduce and establish the balance scorecard.

Nevertheless, Atty. Wenceslao remains undaunted especially because the new DILG Legal and Legislative Liaison Service head has been highly supportive of her efforts to develop and empower the department's employees. She likewise finds encouragement in her division chief's and colleagues' enthusiasm towards her REAP.

**Present and future gains**

Although it is too early to tell how her REAP will affect the strategic direction of her department, Atty. Wenceslao believes that once implemented, its impact would be far-reaching. The effective and more efficient legal service resulting from her revised REAP on performance management would not only benefit their main client – the Office of the Secretary – but would also prove beneficial to other stakeholders, especially the general public. “A better and improved legal service would mean a marked improvement in the service of the department to other stakeholders which includes local government units, employees, and the public,” she explains.

When that finally happens, she notes that “it will be a first for the legal service,” as more and more of Atty. Wenceslao's colleagues begin to embody what she hopes to instill in her department: empowered, efficient and effective.

*Atty. Gina V. Wenceslao finished her Master of Science in Public Policy and Management from Carnegie Mellon University Australia in 2013. Her REAP focused on Establishing an Enhanced Performance-Based Tool within the Legal and Legislative Liaison Service of DILG.*