



## Changing Mindsets

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It was natural for me to take up a degree in Bachelor in Business Management at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines given that my parents were both business-minded. After graduation I served in the private sector for around ten years before my focus suddenly shifted government work because I was basically just curious as to what this sector holds. I decided to apply and got accepted at the National Mapping and Resource Management Authority (NAMRIA), an attached agency of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). There, I met a lot of professional and highly technical government

employees who made me realize that, indeed, the people here are just as hardworking and industrious and that our work is exciting and a whole lot of fun. Forward many years later, I am now a Human Resource Management Officer III and is Section Chief of the Human Resource Management Section of the HR Department.

When we held an organizational assessment some years back, it was discovered that our department has many weaknesses and challenges and that its role should be transformed from transactional to strategic. Given this type of mindset, I was sent to Australia in January 2008 to take up Masters in Human Resource Management at the Griffith University in Brisbane to further address these issues. During my stay there for almost a year, I had quite an awesome time.

#### **A Host of Firsts**

Staying in another country proved to be a lot of firsts. It was the first time that I experienced going out of the country, the first time meeting both Australian and Filipino friends abroad, the first time that I had to leave my home turf for a long period of time. Overall, the stay there was fun and exciting – but challenging. Aside from dealing with school and its requirements, I also had to deal with homesickness since my children were still small when I left the Philippines. Thankfully, I took advantage of the technology to be in constant communication with my family. When it came to school work, on the other hand, I had to be extremely careful in submitting assignments so I won't be accused of plagiarism. Plus, I had to contend with the fact that I was submitting a lot of papers. During my time in Brisbane, I also kept myself busy by having a part time job as part of a hotel's housekeeping staff.

When I came back home almost a year later, challenges began to surface. Since many of the people at NAMRIA were accustomed to the old routine, it took a while before they were able to adjust and become accustomed with how to improve their work styles. It was all about changing the culture of the sector and their mindset. Transforming the roles from transactional to strategic involved checking the attendance and controlling the leave records to setting programs which are aligned and in support of the achievement of organizational objectives. I admit that my Re-Entry Action Plan (REAP), which is about the enhancement of competencies

of the Human Resource Management Section, may be considered a small win but I believe that it is through this that many more programs were developed.

The Competency Based System (CBS), used to assess the competency level of the employees, was first integrated into the Learning and Development Plan in 2014. Currently, it is being implemented in the Recruitment, Selection, and Placement Systems, and in Rewards, Recognition, and Performance Management. CBS is sustained since the program is aligned with NAMRIA's certification to ISO 9001:2008 and with NAMRIA's Strategic Plan currently with Civil Service Commission's Program to Institutionalise Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management (PRIME HR). I consider this as one of our best practices because many people look at it as effective and efficient.

### **The Road to Success**

While both here in and in Australia, I have learned the importance of collaboration, effective communication, and continual improvement. In the near future, I hope to achieve Level 4 of the PRIME HR and eventually to garner NAMRIA's objective to sustain sufficient and competent manpower thus making our organization the leading employer to map out the future of its employees. I also plan to have a paperless HR in the coming years. I believe that when processes become digital, everything would flow even more smoothly.

The road to this success was never easy; it is always paved with a whole lot of challenges. But I believe that as workers serving in the government, we should never give up and to always align our programs with the organization's business strategy – collaborate, coordinate and communicate. This is also possible through management support and a good rapport with our fellow employees, peers, and other stakeholders because, at the end of the day, I can't do it alone. On my part, I have the passion to do it and consider problems as rooms for improvement.

We are not superheroes. We don't have super powers. We are not politicians who have great influences, nor are we popular and famous celebrities who have a slew of fans. We only have the REAPs. But imagine if all of these are sustained and implemented to improve service

delivery to the public! I'm sure that our country will be a better place to live in – and more Filipinos will live better lives.

*Agnes Radam finished her Masters in Human Resource Management at Griffith University in 2008. Her REAP was all about the enhancement of competencies of the Human Resource Management Section of NAMRIA.*