TCRP REPORT 77

TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

Sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration

Managing Transit's Workforce in the New Millennium

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TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

TCRP REPORT 77

Managing Transit's Workforce in the New Millennium

McGLOTHIN DAVIS, INC.
Denver, CO

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

CORPORATE STRATEGIES, INC.
Scottsdale, AZ

SUBJECT AREAS
Public Transit

Research Sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration in Cooperation with the Transit Development Corporation

TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD — NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

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TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

The nation's growth and the need to meet mobility, environmental, and energy objectives place demands on public transit systems. Current systems, some of which are old and in need of upgrading, must expand service area, increase service frequency, and improve efficiency to serve these demands. Research is necessary to solve operating problems, to adapt appropriate new technologies from other industries, and to introduce innovations into the transit industry. The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) serves as one of the principal means by which the transit industry can develop innovative near-term solutions to meet demands placed on it.

The need for TCRP was originally identified in *TRB Special Report 213—Research for Public Transit: New Directions*, published in 1987 and based on a study sponsored by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration—now the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). A report by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), *Transportation 2000*, also recognized the need for local, problem-solving research. TCRP, modeled after the longstanding and successful National Cooperative Highway Research Program, undertakes research and other technical activities in response to the needs of transit service providers. The scope of TCRP includes a variety of transit research fields including planning, service configuration, equipment, facilities, operations, human resources, maintenance, policy, and administrative practices.

TCRP was established under FTA sponsorship in July 1992. Proposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation, TCRP was authorized as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). On May 13, 1992, a memorandum agreement outlining TCRP operating procedures was executed by the three cooperating organizations: FTA, the National Academies, acting through the Transportation Research Board (TRB); and the Transit Development Corporation, Inc. (TDC), a nonprofit educational and research organization established by APTA. TDC is responsible for forming the independent governing board, designated as the TCRP Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee.

Research problem statements for TCRP are solicited periodically but may be submitted to TRB by anyone at any time. It is the responsibility of the TOPS Committee to formulate the research program by identifying the highest priority projects. As part of the evaluation, the TOPS Committee defines funding levels and expected products.

Once selected, each project is assigned to an expert panel, appointed by the Transportation Research Board. The panels prepare project statements (requests for proposals), select contractors, and provide technical guidance and counsel throughout the life of the project. The process for developing research problem statements and selecting research agencies has been used by TRB in managing cooperative research programs since 1962. As in other TRB activities, TCRP project panels serve voluntarily without compensation.

Because research cannot have the desired impact if products fail to reach the intended audience, special emphasis is placed on disseminating TCRP results to the intended end users of the research: transit agencies, service providers, and suppliers. TRB provides a series of research reports, syntheses of transit practice, and other supporting material developed by TCRP research. APTA will arrange for workshops, training aids, field visits, and other activities to ensure that results are implemented by urban and rural transit industry practitioners.

The TCRP provides a forum where transit agencies can cooperatively address common operational problems. The TCRP results support and complement other ongoing transit research and training programs.

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NOTICE

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The members of the technical advisory panel selected to monitor this project and to review this report were chosen for recognized scholarly competence and with due consideration for the balance of disciplines appropriate to the project. The opinions and conclusions expressed or implied are those of the research agency that performed the research, and while they have been accepted as appropriate by the technical panel, they are not necessarily those of the Transportation Research Board, the National Research Council, the Transit Development Corporation, or the Federal Transit Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Each report is reviewed and accepted for publication by the technical panel according to procedures established and monitored by the Transportation Research Board Executive Committee and the Governing Board of the National Research Council.

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The Transportation Research Board, the National Research Council, the Transit Development Corporation, and the Federal Transit Administration (sponsor of the Transit Cooperative Research Program) do not endorse products or manufacturers. Trade or manufacturers' names appear herein solely because they are considered essential to the clarity and completeness of the project reporting.

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FOREWORD

By Staff
Transportation Research Board

TCRP Report 77: Managing Transit's Workforce in the New Millennium assesses the transit industry's workforce needs and prospects for the coming decades. Further, the report provides guidelines to enable employers to assess their own workforce needs, describes best practices for recruiting and retaining employees, and identifies ways to enhance or establish partnerships between management and labor for attracting, training, and maintaining a qualified workforce. Information was obtained from a literature search, surveys, and site visits. The report will be helpful to transit general managers, assistant general managers, directors of human resources, and other key transit officials.

Transit systems in the United States are facing the challenges of delivering service in the twenty-first century. Issues of recruitment and retention of employees coupled with the impacts of labor-market conditions and labor-management relations are of critical significance to the viability of public transit. In an era of transit agency restructuring, downsizing, and re-engineering, tailoring jobs to meet the demands of the industry has become a necessity. Demographic, sociological, cultural, and technological changes in both the industry and the national workforce will also have a critical impact on transit's employment environment.

Given transit's changing workforce needs, research is needed to describe the current status of jobs and the skill sets required to accomplish transit's mission. It is necessary to identify ways to enhance or establish partnerships between management and labor for attracting, training, and retaining a qualified workforce.

McGlothin Davis, Inc., in association with Corporate Strategies, Inc., prepared this report for TCRP Project F-09. To achieve the project's objective of assessing the transit industry's workforce needs, the researchers performed a comprehensive literature search and conducted a telephone benchmarking survey of 50 transit agencies. To identify strategies to attract, develop, and retain a qualified workforce, the researchers conducted 13 case studies, collecting qualitative and quantitative data through site visits, interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis.

The 13 case studies revealed commonalties and differences in how transit agencies respond to challenges in maintaining a qualified workforce, especially in difficult-to-recruit and -retain positions. Case-study findings indicate that in order for transit agencies to achieve a positive return on their recruitment, each agency must pay attention to retention. Further, the case studies revealed that the trend in transit organizations is to view human resources as a critical business function rather than as an administrative necessity and that there is an increased level of partnering between organized labor and management.

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COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAMS STAFF

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We would like to thank all who took time to participate in this project and especially the 13 transit agencies that opened their organizations to the research team's intense inquiry.

MANAGING TRANSIT'S WORKFORCE IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

SUMMARY

The transit industry is experiencing an increasing number of workforce recruitment and retention challenges. The industry must respond to growth in demands for service and to increasingly high consumer expectations about quality of service. Faced with the potential of both diminished quality and a diminished quantity of people available to provide services, the transit industry must address multiple factors that contribute to this dilemma. The rate of change in the past 20 years can be described as cataclysmic. Technological, demographic, cultural, and political changes, while holding great promise, also introduce a host of challenges. Often transit agencies find themselves unable to fill positions because of lack of interest. In addition, retention of employees, especially in the recent period of near full employment in the United States, has become a growing concern.

McGlothin Davis, Inc., with subcontractor Corporate Strategies, Inc., was contracted by TCRP to study the problem of recruitment and retention and to describe for general managers, human-resources (HR) directors, and other officials the current status of difficult-to-recruit and -retain jobs and the skill sets required for these positions. The study also focused on identifying ways to enhance or establish partnerships between management and organized labor for attracting, training, and maintaining a qualified workforce.

The project had three main objectives:

1. Assess the transit industry's workforce needs and prospects for the twenty-first century;
2. Develop strategies to attract, develop, and retain a qualified workforce; and
3. Develop a tool and guidelines to enable employers to assess their workforces and to monitor continually their workforce needs.

RESEARCH METHOD

The project used several sources of data (as reported in Chapter 1). First, the researchers conducted a search of relevant literature to determine current knowledge about the problem. The team found that little research has been reported that directly relates to

effectiveness in recruiting, training, and retaining a quality workforce in the transit industry. Subsequently, researchers conducted three focus groups at the National Transit Institute's Transit Trainer's Workshop in March 2000 to gather information on the relevancy of the literature-search findings. HR professionals participating in these sessions included trainers, recruiters, and managers from throughout the United States and Canada. The groups verified that the preponderance of literature search findings could be generalized to the transit industry.

Using the literature-search results and the NTI focus group results, the team developed a conceptual framework to guide further data gathering and analysis. The framework reflects the research team's knowledge of transit agency HR functions as open systems. By using an open-systems approach, the team took advantage of contemporary thought and research regarding the influence of external and internal organizational factors on the effectiveness of recruitment, training, and retention efforts.

Researchers contacted 50 HR managers or transit managers in small, medium, and large transit agencies and used a telephone benchmarking survey to determine the positions most difficult to recruit for and to retain employees in. Data were provided by 33 agencies, a response rate of 66 percent. From these responses, the team developed a tentative list of benchmark positions.

Bus operators and mechanics were mentioned most often as difficult to recruit and retain followed by information technology professionals, engineers, and customer-relations representatives. Using data from the benchmarking survey, as well as the literature search and NTI focus group results, the team developed the "Managing Transit's Workforce in the New Millennium Survey" (hereafter referred to as the "industry survey") and mailed it to 200 small, medium, and large transit agencies. The purpose of the survey was to capture the experiences of a diverse group of transit agencies in recruiting, training, and retaining employees in the benchmark positions. A total of 53 responses were received, a response rate of 27 percent. Analysis of the survey data produced a list of 15 potential "best practices" case-study candidates for presentation to the study project panel. The case-study candidates were grouped by size and were representative of different geographical regions and modes of operation.

The research team pilot tested case-study data-collection instruments through on-site data gathering at one large transit agency and several telephone interviews with smaller agencies. As a result of the pilot testing, the instruments were revised to adapt to differences in organizational sizes, as well as to nuances inherent in different organizational structures. Additional pilot testing was conducted at the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials National Meeting and Training Conference in June 2000. Researchers asked conference participants to complete a management profile survey focusing on management policies and actions within their agencies that affected recruitment and retention in positions identified in the telephone benchmarking survey as difficult to recruit for or retain employees in. Fifty-eight participants completed the survey.

With the approval of the project panel to conduct 15 case studies, the team collected data to ascertain the experiences of the selected agencies. Two agencies selected for case studies were later eliminated: the first declined to be included, and the second had a change in senior HR leadership that made it an unacceptable case study during the time limits of the research. For the 13 completed case studies, qualitative and quantitative data were collected through site-visit interviews (including focus groups), observations, and document analysis. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics methods and three case-study analysis methods: pattern-matching, explanation-building, and time-series analysis.

MAIN FINDINGS

Study findings (reported in Chapter 2) are divided into three main sections. The first section provides a review of literature of best practices in recruiting, training, and retaining a qualified workforce. The second section presents results from the benchmarking and industry surveys that identified best practices used by 53 responding agencies to recruit and retain employees in difficult-to-recruit and -retain positions. The third section summarizes findings from the 13 case studies as well as the best practices in use at transit agencies not selected as case studies.

Methods for recruiting, training, and retaining a qualified workforce have received extensive attention in recent literature. Some of the more recent research highlights best practices based on surveys of employees and employers in a variety of fields. Demographic changes in the workforce, the economic and political environments, and the changing nature of work influence which strategies work best in maintaining a qualified workforce. Recent economic growth has had a major impact on the availability of qualified workers. The competitiveness that this growth has spun has energized employers to a level at which, in some cases, the marketing of themselves as employers of choice has received as much attention as marketing their products or services. Employers are going to great lengths to attract workers: trying unconventional benefits such as flexible schedules and work sites, concierge services, and pet insurance; paying sign-on incentives and bonuses; and initiating employee-referral programs. Research shows that employees are attracted to work places in which they have challenging work, their contribution will be valued and they will be listened to, they have an opportunity to grow, and, of course, they receive fair compensation.

Research on employee retention shows that the same factors that attract employees help to retain them. One of the realities is that in some fields such as information technology, employees tend not to stay with one employer for extended periods even with the best efforts on the part of the employer. Employees feel connected to organizations in which they sense they are making a difference and in which they are treated with dignity. One of the most striking findings is that many employees leave organizations because of poor relationships with their supervisors. This finding has prompted organizations to begin paying more attention to the types of supervisors and managers they hire and the types of management preparation and accountability required in their organizations.

Findings related to the industry survey are that many of the 53 respondents report effective implementation of recruitment, training, and retention approaches described as best practices in literature. Highlights of findings from the industry survey are described in Chapter 2. Some of the responding agencies that did not meet the criteria for case studies reported exemplary practices, which are included in Appendix B.

The 13 case studies reveal commonalties and differences in how transit agencies respond to challenges in maintaining a qualified workforce, especially in difficult-to-recruit and -retain positions: bus operator, mechanic, data programmer or analyst, engineer, and planner. Larger agencies tend to have difficulty recruiting and retaining employees in more positions than do smaller agencies. Each agency showed how knowing its local marketplace and community helped to traverse uncertain territory brought on by rapidly changing times. The energy shown by these organizations in addressing these issues was synergistic in that most often the total organization was engaged in crafting and implementing workforce solutions. Transit agencies are realizing that in order to achieve a positive return on their recruitment investment, they must pay attention to retention. In addition, these organizations are viewing human resources as a critical business function rather than as an administrative necessity as has been the case in the past.

The number and types of recruitment, training, and retention efforts demonstrate that transit agencies are willing to innovate and to make shifts in thinking, policies, and practices to ensure they have the staffs in place to meet their mission of providing safe, reliable, customer-oriented transportation service to the public. The landscape of best practices is evolving with many seeds of promise just being sown. The case studies and best practices illustrate possibilities for future development throughout the transit industry.

One area of promise is the level of partnering that is beginning to occur between organized labor and management. In most case-study agencies, labor-management committees are standing groups that serve as catalysts for change from a top-down, command-and-control management style to one that involves and values employee contributions to maintaining a qualified workforce.

MANAGEMENT PROFILE

Chapter 3 presents a management profile for maintaining a qualified workforce—a summary of the analysis of the findings presented in Chapter 2. Through the qualitative-analysis processes of pattern matching, explanation building, and time-series analysis, a description of the collective best practices unfolds. The management team must take a leadership role in addressing recruitment, training, and retention as a strategic business priority. The HR function can and does take a leadership role; however, the total management team must embrace a proactive role throughout the employment life cycle from recruitment to termination.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 4 takes the perspective of lessons learned from the research and suggests further study. Much of HR management in the transit industry is in its infancy. Further research can add to the value of people management throughout the United States' diverse transit agencies.

CHAPTER **1**

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH APPROACH

This report uses the results of a comprehensive literature search, a telephone benchmarking survey, and an industry survey mailed to 200 transit agencies to provide 13 case studies that highlight effective approaches for recruiting, training, and retaining a quality workforce. The case studies formed the basis for the development of a human-resources (HR) handbook of best practices and guidelines to enable employers to assess their workforces and to monitor continually workforce needs.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Transit agencies throughout the United States are facing many challenges in delivering quality service to a broad-based constituency in the twenty-first century. Issues of recruitment and retention of employees, coupled with the effects of labor-market conditions and labor-management relations, are of critical significance to the viability of public transportation. In an era of transit agency restructuring, downsizing, and re-engineering, tailoring jobs to meet the demands of the industry has become a necessity. Demographic, sociological, cultural, and technological changes in both the industry and the national workforce are also having a critical effect on transit's employment environment.

To satisfy the study's objectives, the research team completed the following eight tasks:

1. Collected and reviewed pertinent literature and research findings that reflect current practices used in transit and related industries pertaining to recruiting, training, qualifying, promoting, and retaining employees. These data were assembled from published literature, unpublished reports, contacts with transit agencies, other related industries, and secondary sources.
2. Using the Task 1 findings, developed a methodology to do the following:
   – Identify key benchmark difficult-to-recruit and -retain positions: bus operator, mechanic, engineer, information programmer or analyst, and planner.
   – Attempt to develop a demographic profile—including skill level, ethnicity, age, gender, years of service, average retirement age, and other relevant information—with respect to key benchmark positions. (Due to inadequate data or data presented in formats that would have required excessive time commitments, minimal analysis was performed.)
   – Develop a management profile with respect to key benchmark positions. Identify and describe partnering relationships with organized labor for recruitment and training of employees for bus operator and mechanic positions.
   – Develop a random stratified sampling methodology for the benchmarking and industry surveys that provides equal opportunity to participate in the study for small, medium, and large transit agencies across the United States.
3. Developed data-collection instruments, including interview guides for case studies to support the Task 2 methodology.
4. Tested data-collection instruments at representative small, medium, and large transit agencies. Refined instruments based on the test results and project panel comments.
5. Prepared an interim report providing the results of Tasks 1 through 4.
6. Conducted approved data collection and analysis.
7. Based on the findings of Task 6, prepared a freestanding HR guide for transit managers that includes guidelines for partnering with organized labor.
8. Prepared the final report that documents the results of the data collection and analyses.

RESEARCH METHOD

The first step in the research process was to conduct a comprehensive literature search related to recruitment, training, and retention of employees in the transit industry, including the role of labor-management partnerships in these functions. This information was assembled from published literature, unpublished reports, contacts with transit agencies, other related industries, and secondary sources.

As a result of finding little published research specific to the transit industry, the team conducted three focus groups with HR professionals attending the National Transit Institute's (NTI's) Transit Trainer's Workshop in March 2000. The focus group sessions allowed researchers to gather information that

verified the relevancy of the literature search findings to the transit industry. Participants in these sessions included trainers, recruiters, and managers from throughout the United States and Canada. In addition to providing the above information, these sessions resulted in a preliminary list of positions that transit systems have difficulty recruiting for and retaining employees in.

Concurrent with the analysis of data from the NTI focus groups, a second round of transit industry contacts was made with transit system employees to gather information about positions that are most difficult to recruit for and retain employees in. The team conducted a telephone benchmarking survey with 50 HR managers and other transit managers in small, medium, and large transit agencies. In addition to gathering data about specific positions, the survey sought to identify the labor-management partnerships at each responding agency. Overall, 33 agencies provided data, a response rate of 66 percent. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to summarize the distribution of answers to each question. The analysis was integrated into questions included in a broader industry survey mailed to 200 transit systems.

The lists of transit agencies randomly selected for the benchmarking and industry surveys were generated using *Transit Operating Statistics: Service Supplied and Consumed: Details by Transit Agency* (*1*), which the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) uses to determine system sizes for its annual awards recognition. Through the data provided on this list, APTA breaks transit systems into four groups: Group 1 is systems with more than 30 million annual unlinked passenger trips; Group 2 has 4 to 30 million unlinked trips; Group 3 has 1 to 4 million unlinked trips; and Group 4 has 1 million or fewer unlinked trips.

Researchers used a two-step sampling process to determine to which agencies to mail the industry survey. With the target of 200 agencies, the team determined that all 38 systems in Group 1, the largest agencies, would be sampled. This group represents a large amount of ridership; however, it makes up only 19 percent of the pool of the 344 transit systems on the list. The 162 remaining surveys were sent to the other three groups based on each group's percentage of the total list of transit agencies. A random selection process was used to select the systems within each group. For instance, 49 surveys (25 percent) were sent to Group 2 agencies, 75 surveys (38 percent) to Group 3, and 38 surveys (19 percent) to Group 4.

The development of a framework to guide the gathering and analysis of data was a critical step in meeting research objectives. The framework reflects the research team's knowledge of transit agencies and their HR functions as open systems. Every organization has forces within its own structure and forces or factors outside of that structure that it must respond to if it is to continue to provide useful services and products. Public organizations such as transit agencies must exchange information with and adapt to changes in their external environments, which include the riding public, funding agencies, and other stakeholders. Understanding how these external forces affect a transit agency's operations can help to explain some of its internal decisions and behavior. By using an open-systems perspective, the team took advantage of contemporary thought and research regarding the effects of external and internal organizational factors on the effectiveness of recruitment, training, and retention efforts. The open-systems approach guided researchers as they identified interdependencies among interrelated factors and functions that may influence workforce quality. The model presented in Figure 1 illustrates the framework.

At first glance of Figure 1, the external and internal factors, represented by two transit coaches, appear to be operating on two mutually exclusive paths. Further examination reveals that the paths actually intertwine to synergistically influence the quality of the transit workforce. The two types of factors depend on each other for sustainability. External factors consist of the general environment, transit industry values and standards, transit-specific regulatory mandates, labor-market characteristics, contemporary HR practices, and workforce-development resources. Internal factors are transit system strategic orientation; HR philosophy, policies, and procedures; labor-management relations; and overall organizational environment and culture.

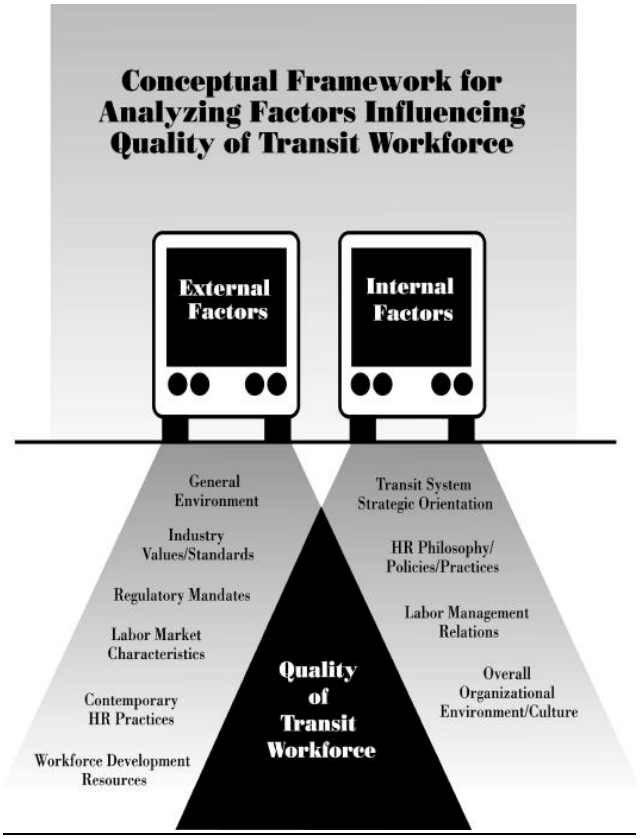

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for analyzing factors influencing the quality of the transit workforce.

Detailed analysis of each of these factors within case-study agencies provided the team with a basis for understanding and describing best practices gleaned during the research. The external factors are described as follows.

- **General environment** represents elements outside of the transit agency that can affect the attainment of agency goals and objectives. It can be described in terms of the amount of uncertainty present in social, technological, economic, and political forces. The more uncertainty in the general environment, the more difficult it is to design effective HR strategies for recruiting, training, and retaining employees.
- **Transit industry values and standards** represent commonly accepted values within the transit industry, such as providing courteous, reliable, on-time service delivery as well as exceptional customer service. This combination of values can serve as a basis for determining the types of people a transit agency needs to hire and retain. A review of 25 transit agency mission statements provided insight into the prevalence of specific values within the industry. The statements, which were randomly selected from among transit agency websites listed on FTA's website, revealed the most frequently occurring values as shown in Figure 2.

Further analysis of values that are embraced within the transit industry involved the review of awards given annually by two major trade organizations: APTA and the Community Transit Association of America (CTAA). Both associations give annual awards in recognition of agencies that provide safe transportation services that are responsive to customer and community needs.

- **Labor market characteristics** represent the makeup of the current pool of potential candidates, the competition within the labor market, and the changing nature of the labor pool.
- **Regulatory mandates** represent statutory requirements such as the commercial driver's license for vehicle operators and others operating revenue vehicles, as well as physical examinations and drug tests that determine who is employable in safety-sensitive positions.
- **Contemporary HR practices** represent those practices identified in literature as best practices for recruiting, training, and retaining employees.
- **Workforce-development resources** represent myriad sources for potential qualified applicants, including job-service centers; agencies serving people with disabilities; welfare-to-work programs; school-to-work initiatives; and technical schools, colleges, and universities.

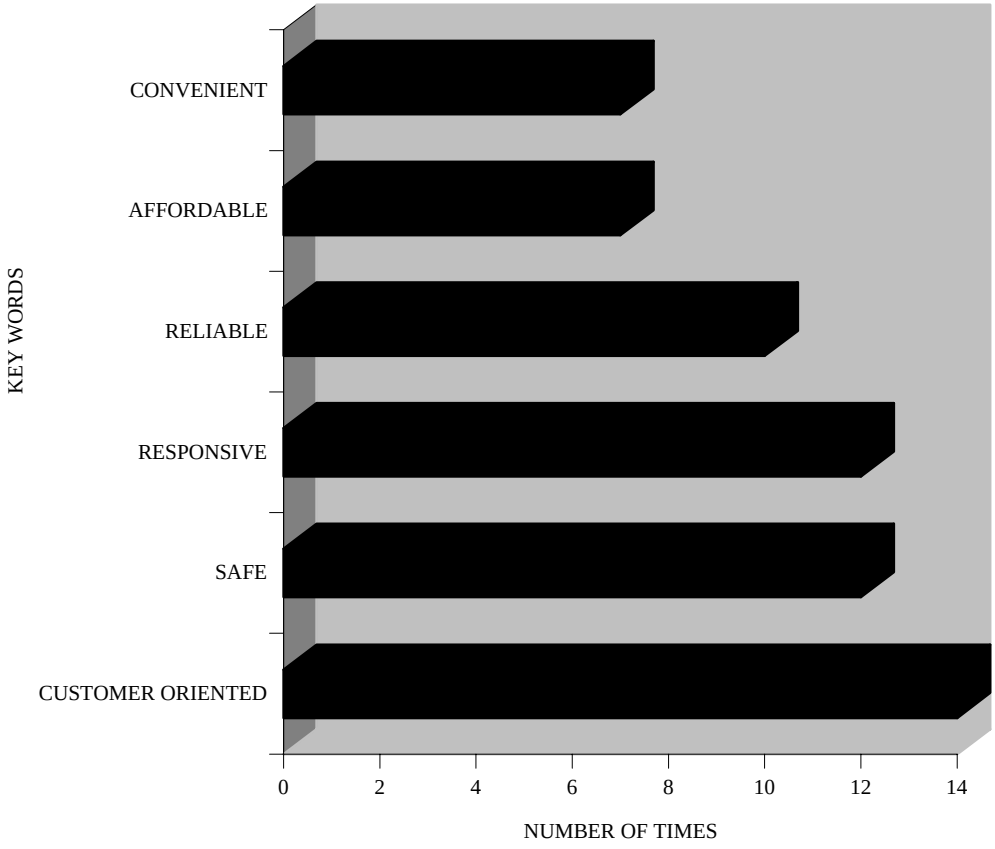

Figure 2. Analysis of key words in transit mission statements.

The internal factors are described as follows.

- **Transit system strategic orientation** represents the agency's mission, goals, and objectives; how it plans to achieve the goals and objectives; and policies that affect HR functions.
- **HR philosophy, policies, and practices** represent the guiding principles and supportive guidelines and actions that ensure that the HR function is in alignment with the agency's mission, goals, and objectives.
- **Labor-management relations** represent the level of commitment and types of interactions and agreements between management and union officials in maintaining a quality workforce.
- **Overall organizational environment and culture** represent the perspective of "how things are done here" including interorganizational support and the willingness of the organization as a whole to ensure a quality workforce.

With the conceptual framework as a guide, the research team designed and mailed a survey to 200 transit agencies in the United States. The purpose of the survey was to capture the experiences of a diverse group of transit agencies in recruiting, training, and retaining employees in the benchmark positions, including agencies' experiences of and practices for partnering with organized labor.

Fifty-three transit agencies responded to the survey, a response rate of 27 percent. Analysis of the survey data resulted in a list of 15 potential "best practices" case-study candidates, grouped by size and representative of different geographical regions and modes of operation, for presentation to the project panel. One of the agencies selected for case study declined to participate. A change in HR management at a second agency eliminated it as a viable case-study candidate.

CASE STUDIES

The research team determined that the best candidates for case studies were those identified through the survey as having implemented and documented multiple actions that help achieve and maintain a qualified workforce. Best candidates also compared favorably in their attention to variables described in the literature search as indicators of best practices. The rationale for identifying these selection criteria was to test the hypothesis that there are identifiable variables that determine whether a transit agency attracts, develops, and retains a qualified workforce.

While preparing the case studies, the team developed management profiles related to the recruitment, training, and retention of employees in benchmark positions. The management profiles provide descriptions of policies and practices that influence the recruitment, training, and retention of employees. To develop the management profiles and, ultimately, case studies, researchers collected qualitative and quantitative data through interviews (including focus groups), document analysis, surveys, and unobtrusive observations. The team used the conceptual framework to categorize and analyze case-study data. The multiple–case study design used in this research is analogous to conducting multiple experiments focused on describing theory as to best practices in attracting, developing, and retaining qualified workforce in benchmark positions. By conducting multiple case studies, team members accessed compelling evidence of those factors that contribute to maintaining qualified employees in these job categories.

Researchers completed two preliminary study activities in preparation for the development of case-study management profiles. During the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials' (COMTO's) National Meeting and Training Conference in June 2000, a management profile survey was conducted to field test potential questions for case-study development. The survey focused on identifying management policies and actions that facilitate or inhibit the recruitment and retention of employees in benchmark positions. Participants were also asked their views on changes that their agencies could make to affect most positively the recruitment and retention of employees in these positions. A second activity was the pilot testing of case-study data-collection instruments with an on-site visit to the Regional Transportation District in Denver, Colorado. Additional pilot testing was conducted through multiple telephone interviews with other transit agencies.

REPORT OVERVIEW

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** presents main findings from the literature search, the telephone benchmark and industry surveys, case-study data collection, and best practices in other transit agencies not included as case studies.
- **Chapter 3** provides a management profile for maintaining a qualified workforce.
- **Chapter 4** presents conclusions and recommendations for further research.
- **Appendix A** is the case studies.
- **Appendix B** is the Human-Resources Guide.
- **Appendix C** is the labor-management bibliography.

CHAPTER **2**

FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the main findings of the research team's search of relevant literature; benchmarking and industry surveys of small, medium, and large transit agencies; and 13 case-study site visits conducted during the research. The findings integrate current knowledge of external factors and internal factors that affect success in recruiting and retaining employees. The chapter also highlights best practices in recruiting, training, and retaining employees in positions identified most often by industry survey respondents as difficult to recruit and difficult to retain.

The general environment that transit agencies find themselves in is one of higher expectations from the public for transit services. According to statistics released by APTA, the U.S. traveling public is increasingly turning to public transportation with about 14 million people using public transportation on a typical weekday—a 20-percent increase since 1995. In the first quarter of 2001, the nation's public transportation systems recorded a 2.8 increase in ridership over the same period in 2000. This quarterly increase builds on the previous year's year-end total of 9.4 billion trips, the highest peak in annual ridership in more than 40 years (*2*).

Public transportation's popularity has been affected by changing social and economic forces. All major modes of public transportation have reported more riders. Reasons for increased ridership include a strong economy, improved customer service, and higher levels of public and private investment in public transportation. Recent research provides a description of how people in a community use public transportation services. According to *TCRP Report 63: Enhancing the Visibility and Image of Transit in the United States and Canada*, 29 percent of those surveyed reported using public transportation at least once in the past month. Regular users, or those who have used public transportation at least once in the past month, accounted for 12 percent of survey respondents (*3*).

The increase in popularity of public transportation services brings about increased attention to the quality and quantity of workers required to provide services. As described in the next section, the same factors that influence increased ridership also impact the ability of agencies to attract and retain qualified employees.

MAIN FINDINGS

Findings are divided into three main sections. The first section provides a review of the literature of best practices in recruiting, developing, and retaining a qualified workforce. The second section presents results from the benchmarking and industry surveys that identified best practices used by 53 responding agencies to recruit and retain employees in difficult-to-recruit and -retain positions. The third section summarizes findings from the 13 case studies and best practices from other transit agencies.

THE LITERATURE

Labor-Market and Employee Characteristics

According to a number of recent publications on workforce characteristics, organizations looking to create a high-potential workforce need a basic understanding of the current demographic shift in U.S. society. The workforce is growing slowly, and this demographic shift will shape the U.S. workforce in years to come (*4*).

Demographic researchers project a tight labor market for the next 2 decades. Predictions include the estimation that of the future entrants in the labor force, 80 percent will be born in the United States and 20 percent will be immigrants. These researchers also predict that service and professional jobs will account for nearly half of all new jobs in 2006 with positions in the computer industry constituting many of the 10 fastest-growing jobs (*5*).

In 1999, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projected workforce trends for the period between 1998 and 2008: the share of women in the workforce will increase from 46 percent to 48 percent, the number of workers ages 44 to 62 will show significant growth, and the youth workforce ages 16 to 24 is expected to grow more rapidly than the overall workforce (*6*). Experts predict that the labor market will continue to shrink over the next decade. In addition, rapidly changing technology has created a skills shortage—for example, the demand for qualified information-technology (IT) workers is growing rapidly (*7*).

Regulatory Mandates

In addition to being a core value of the transit industry, safety is formalized as a requirement by federal mandate. Transit agencies must comply with the requirement that operators of transit vehicles have a commercial driver's license (CDL). In addition, any employee responsible for performing safety-sensitive functions such as a bus operator or mechanic must pass drug and alcohol tests and a physical exam as conditions of employment and must be subject to random testing during employment. Each transit agency must comply with these FTA regulations to be eligible for the federal financial assistance that is critical to the operations of transit services (*8*).

Workforce-Development Resources

Policymakers at all levels of government have discussed workforce development based on two core issues: how to bring fragmented employment services, education, and job training programs into one network and how to ensure that the resulting public system effectively meets the needs of the stakeholders (i.e., employers, employees, and job seekers). Two pieces of recent legislation hold promise. The Workforce Investment Act authorizes resources for training with an emphasis on low-skill workers. The federal welfare-to-work legislation provides $3 billion for measures to improve retention and advancement of the hardest-to-employ welfare population. With successful implementation, programs initiated under these acts have the capacity to serve as a key resource for business, education, and labor in lifelong learning (*9, 10*).

The Welfare to Work Partnership, a nonpartisan nationwide effort designed to encourage and assist businesses with hiring people on public assistance, found in its December 1999 membership survey that the partnership's members hired an estimated 240,000 former welfare recipients in that year alone, bringing the total number hired between 1997 and 1999 to 650,000; 73 percent of the 500 respondents indicated that they would do so again. Members report that childcare, transportation, and poor interpersonal skills are among the biggest obstacles encountered with Welfare-to-Work employees. Members report that the surest route to success in hiring former welfare recipients is to partner with community organizations to find, train, and help support new workers. The data from this survey show that members are relying on such partnerships more frequently than on government welfare offices as had occurred in the past. Among the hardest to serve are recipients with a past criminal conviction. Employers' fears can be allayed with the right kinds of support for these ex-offenders (*11*).

HR Practices

Recruitment

The literature describes many recruitment sources and strategies, each with various levels of effectiveness. In view of the recent tight labor market, many employees understand that they are in demand and will shop around to identify the best employment opportunities. As a result, employers must be proactive and evaluate what is important to all team members and must structure programs that attract the best employees and reward performance, loyalty, and direct contribution to the employer's bottom line. If these programs are not a "win-win" situation for both the employer and the employee, employees often leave the organization, contributing to poor morale and distrust within the organization (*12, 13*).

Recruitment sources are receiving increased attention in the literature. One research study reanalyzed data from 28 previous studies involving 38,871 employees to see which recruitment sources were more likely to yield long-term employees. The study findings suggest that employees who come from inside sources such as former employees, people who are referred by current or former employees, and internal job postings are more likely to stay employed longer. Researchers concluded that people who have inside sources are more likely to know what it is really like to work in an organization, including the ups and downs (*14*).

Referral programs, in which an employee receives money if a person he or she referred is later hired, are gaining in popularity. The Society for Human Resources Management's 2001 Employee Referral Program Survey results, which were based on responses from 586 HR professionals, revealed that nearly two-thirds of respondents said their organizations had some type of employee-referral program for both exempt and nonexempt employees. Incentives are offered for referrals that result in new hires. Respondents indicated that the most effective strategy to improve a referral program would be greater promotion of the program followed by an increased cash reward and a program online (*15*). Approaches to setting up employee-referral programs vary; however, most employers offer a cash bonus ranging from $500 to $2,000. Payments are often made in installments after the new hire has been with the organization for a designated period of time (*16*).

One unconventional approach to recruiting new talent is to use church-based job-placement services. Religious centers can be effective sources because they can give an employer first crack at newly relocated families. Congregations also may provide access to workers who are otherwise hard to reach such as new immigrants, persons changing careers, and retirees (*17*).

One research study addressed how recruiters need to tailor recruiting messages to career life cycles. Researchers at the University of Wisconsin found three employment career stages: career-establishment, family-building, and closure. According to their findings, employees have different motivators at each stage. Typically, recent graduates fit into the career-establishment stage and are motivated by salary, training, and corporate culture. In the family-building stage, employees are motivated by the total benefits package including work-life perks, opportunities for advancement, and competitive wages. At the closure stage, employees' major concerns

are with retirement and pension plans, elder care, part-time employment, and personal work interests or avocations. Based on the results of this research, employers who know the career stages of their target audiences can tailor more effective recruitment (*18*).

In recruiting younger workers, employers may need to pay more attention to the quality of their website. In a study conducted by WetFeet.com of 750 undergraduate and business school students, researchers found that one out of two job seekers said the quality of an employer's website was very important in deciding where they wanted to work. These individuals spent an average of 4 h surfing corporate websites during their job search. Two of the frequently cited shortcomings of websites were failure to make the employment section easy to find and over-reliance on information written for the customer, not for the job searcher (*19*).

Retention

Employee turnover is costly to the productivity of a work unit and to the reputation of the organization and, ultimately, is costly financially. Unplanned turnover can cost as much as three to five times the annual salary of the individual involved. Research shows that employees seldom leave because of one dissatisfier—those things that compel employees to voluntarily terminate their employment. Dissatisfiers include the inability of employers to communicate their strategy, to recognize and reward employees' talents, to keep their promises, to incorporate the values and principles held by employees, and to listen to them (*20*).

One article reporting on retention strategies valued by employees cited a 1999 Gallup poll that named the lack of opportunity to learn and grow the top reason for employee dissatisfaction. The most successful IT companies spend 7 to 10 percent of payroll on training compared with the standard 2 to 3 percent spent by other companies. A software-consulting firm cut turnover 35 percent by sitting down with employees at the time of hire and helping them determine a realistic time frame for their career-advancement goals. The company also offered career-development discussions several times during an employee's first year (*21*).

The HR Benchmark Group's 2001 retention benchmark study, which was based on responses from 745 employees and 118 HR professionals, found that turnover is greatest for IT employees and that younger workers are more likely to voluntarily leave their jobs than are older workers. In addition, the study found that voluntary turnover rates are almost twice as high for nonmanagement positions. The cost of replacing an employee ranges from 29 to 46 percent of the person's annual salary; turnover costs the average organization more than $27 million per year. Almost one-half of participating organizations have no formal strategy for addressing retention. Many organizations simply accept their current turnover levels and focus on other business needs. Employee respondents gave top ratings to three factors: (1) the quality of relationship with supervisor or manager, (2) the ability to balance work and home life, and (3) the amount of meaningful work—the feeling of making a difference (*22*).

Numerous writings cite the need for nontraditional approaches to retention of employees. One author states that in today's marketplace, organizations must begin with the assumption that "long-term across-the-board employee loyalty is neither possible nor desirable" (*23*). Findings from one study reveal that 97 percent of emerging workers believe that job loyalty is not about tenure, but contributions employees made while employed. Seventy-nine percent of respondents expect a job that allows them to think creatively, and 78 percent measure their success based on job responsibilities and personal accomplishments rather than on salaries or titles (*24*). Findings in another study disclosed that 83 percent of respondents reported that formal orientation programs are effective in retaining and motivating personnel (*25*). Other studies reveal that employees expect to have formal upward communication systems that ensure they are heard, to be involved in carrying out the organization's mission, and to have competent management that creates a culture of inclusion, respect, and appreciation (*23*).

Research conducted involving 2,000 of more than 6,000 North American employees showed that while pay is important, flexibility in the form of flextime, compressed work weeks, and family-leave benefits make a difference in employees' decisions to stay with their current employers. Fifty-one percent state that they prefer a job that offers flexible hours to one that offers opportunities for advancement. Also, 62 percent prefer a supervisor who understands when they need to leave work for personal reasons over one who can help them grow professionally (*26*).

According to 95 percent of respondents in another employee-retention survey, the primary motivator for leaving an organization is an unsatisfactory manager-employee relationship. To ensure that managers are developing the kind of rapport that entices subordinates to stay, the survey author offers a number of recommendations for manager-employee relations: walk around and talk around, catch employees doing things right and reward them for it, do not coddle troublemakers or noncontributors, give employees the opportunity to operate on their own as much as possible, and treat employees the way the employees like to be treated (*27*).

Training

The literature cites the importance of training as both a recruitment and a retention strategy (*28–31*). Results from a 1999 survey by the Society for Human Resource Management show that employers are providing the training that employees want: 94 percent of U.S. companies offer professional development, and 85 percent offer education assistance as benefits. Although technical skills top the list of desirable

training opportunities, employees also want training in interpersonal skills, teamwork, company history, customer service, conflict resolution, business ethics, time management, and leadership skills (*29*).

Research conducted in 1999 with 501 U.S. organizations provided data on formal training activities for the previous year. The average participant was a for-profit organization and employed more than 3,400 people. Responses revealed that spending on employer-provided training continues to grow with total training expenditures increasing from 1.8 percent of payroll in 1997 to 2 percent in 1998. Participants projected a 14-percent jump in training expenditures between 1998 and 1999. Organizations are increasingly interested in bringing training in-house. Training delivered via classrooms is up to 78.4 percent, and technology-delivered training dropped slightly to 8.5 percent. The largest share of training expenditures for 1998 went to technical processes and procedures and IT skills, with each claiming 13 percent of the average training budget. For training in IT skills, transportation and public utilities spent the least. Managerial- and supervisory-skills, professional-skills, and occupational-safety training had the next largest share of training expenditures. The top training practices were employer-supported conference attendance (99 percent) and tuition reimbursement (93 percent). For the third year in a row, researchers found a relationship between an organization's investment in training and its performance in the marketplace: companies that invest in training are reaping richer benefits from the marketplace (*31*).

Increasingly, employers are faced with workers lacking basic literacy skills—reading, writing, and arithmetic—and with managers who lack leadership capability. Research conducted by Robert Half International, Inc., revealed that skill deficits are prevalent in three areas:

1. Basic analytical, communications, and organizational skills necessary for entry-level white-collar positions;
2. Technological skills needed for a wide range of job classifications; and
3. Leadership skills that allow managers to pursue a strategic corporate vision for greater long-term competition (*32*).

Many employers find that partnering with public community colleges is a cost-effective approach to attracting and retaining good workers. Community colleges are stable community-based institutions that offer a broad range of academic and vocational programs taught by experts in their fields. Most colleges offer testing and counseling services critical to assessing students' capabilities, can tap into financial-aid resources, and offer certificate or degree programs much cheaper than do private schools (*33*).

Labor-Management Partnerships

New paradigms encompassing concepts such as reengineering, reinventing, and partnering are widespread in industry. The implications for public transportation and strategies to define how the "political, economic, social, technological, and cultural forces at work" affect public transit and how the industry should best respond were focus areas of TCRP Project J-08A, "New Paradigms for Public Transportation: A Scoping Study" (published as *TCRP Research Results Digest 24*) (*34*). A task force of members from the TCRP Oversight and Project Selection Committee met frequently in 1996 and 1997 to discuss new paradigms for public transportation and the need for relevant research. The task force solicited ideas from a broad range of constituencies, including, but not limited to, transit providers, customers, suppliers, board members, employees, labor representatives, elected officials, public-interest groups, and representatives of other industries that have undergone paradigm shifts.

Another TCRP project—TCRP Project F-02, "Innovative Labor-Management Practices"—found that the nature of labor-management relations in the public transit industry is changing (*35*). The need for changes in management practices, work rules, compensation patterns, and bargaining format are prompted by a combination of factors that have considerably altered the structure of the transit industry. These factors include federal policies, fiscal constraints, changes in demographic patterns and employee expectations, and technological advances. These and other factors present major challenges for the transit industry and demand innovative labor-management solutions. This project identified exemplary labor-management practices that can apply to the transit industry; developed a program to assist in implementing innovative practices; and collected facts and opinions from employees, labor unions, and management as to the feasibility of these practices.

TCRP Report 29: Closing the Knowledge Gap for Transit Maintenance Employees cites the transit industry as one of the most heavily unionized sectors in the United States (*36*). In this study, researchers found that more than 73 percent of maintenance managers reported that mechanics were unionized. Although nearly 50 percent of maintenance managers characterized their relationship with the unions as somewhat or very cooperative, researchers concluded that transit agencies have done little to involve unions in key decisions affecting the workforce. There is recent evidence, however, that labor-management partnerships emphasizing collaboration in retention of employees are gaining momentum.

In a 1994 report, the American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) placed the U.S. labor movement on record as favoring labor-management partnerships. The document's concluding sentence captures this supportive viewpoint: "And the time has come for labor and management to surmount past enmities and to forge the kind of partnership, which can generate more productive, humane and democratic systems of work organization" (*37*).

As early as 1984, James LaSala, then executive and current President of the American Transit Union (ATU), expressed the union's views with respect to labor-management relations. Mr. LaSala framed these relations as ebbing and

flowing at different periods; the situation in 1984, from the unionists' view, was a "down time" for labor. He cited the economic downturn, deregulation, the pool of unemployed, and rapid technological change as affecting attitudes on both sides. LaSala asserted that . . . "the ATU strives to apply common sense and reasonableness in dealings with transit management, aiming to provide the best possible transit service and the best possible price" (*38*). The current labor situation has changed dramatically since 1984, and recruitment, retention, and workplace safety within the transit industry have become areas of focus for labor-management cooperation; however, the ATU remains a champion of labor-management partnering.

Partnering has achieved buzzword status in union-management circles. Much research in this area has focused on identifying forces that encourage and discourage greater labor-management cooperation, as well as on assessing the economic impact of cooperative versus adversarial relations. Research reported in the *Labor Law Journal* in 1999 examined the extent to which labor-management cooperation has been codified in collective-bargaining agreements (*39*). The research focused on content analysis of agreements in the automobile, steel, paper, grocery, telecommunications, and health-care industries. The study provided a useful model for performing content-analysis evaluations of collective-bargaining agreements in the public transportation industry.

An article published in the May 2000 edition of *Mass Transit* highlighted the new labor agreement at the Tampa, Florida, HARTline (*40*). According to Sharon Dent, HARTline Executive Director, this agreement is the engine driving cultural changes in the transit agency. She stated that labor negotiations took 3½ years, but the resulting contract emphasizes growth, continued learning, and rewarding the development of new skills. She observes: "Now, a year into this contract, the interesting phenomena is that the rank and file realizes the world didn't come to an end. There aren't more of them being fired or punished. If they adjusted to the system, they're making even more money than they otherwise would have. Sixteen mechanics have already moved up." During the prior 5 years, only two or three mechanics were able to advance because of the limited number of promotion slots available. Under the new contract, employees are promoted based not on seniority, but on skills, which are attained and demonstrated at the employee's own pace. There is no limit to the number of mechanics in each position.

Metra in Chicago operates a unique apprenticeship program in the commuter-rail field for skilled workers who maintain, repair, and rebuild cars and locomotives. Launched in 1997, the apprenticeship program reflects a mutual labor-management acknowledgement that traditional, unstructured on-the-job training alone cannot keep pace with advancing rail-operations technology. The Metra initiative received the NTI's Transit Trainers' Workshop 2000 Model Program Award for its comprehensive and collaborative approach to meeting agency needs. One unique aspect of the program has been the involvement of organized labor from the start, including 2 years of program development. The success of the program is demonstrated by what Metra calls a true "training culture," with all employees migrating from a "Why me?" to a "When can I go?" attitude (*41*).

Strategic Involvement of HR Departments

Often, HR professionals lament the fact that they do not have a "seat at the table," meaning that they are not included in strategic decisions that affect the workforce. According to one author, getting a "seat at the table" requires a number of things (*42*):

- Recognizing that HR exists to serve the organization, not the needs of the HR department;
- Knowing the business of the organization and industry;
- Acting as an internal consultant in areas of expertise and, if a member of the executive team, acting as a contributor to organizational decisionmaking;
- Using data and other objective information to support input and decisions;
- Knowing how to disagree privately, but agree publicly; and
- Building relationships throughout the organization.

One tool that HR professionals should master is benchmarking: a mechanism for making a measurable difference in aligning the human side of the organization with its strategic business direction (*43*). Benchmarking is an organizational change process directed toward continuous improvement—a focus of much organizational change in the transit industry today. Benchmarking gives HR chances to look at what other organizations are doing, what works, and why it works. Through this process, the HR professional may begin to appreciate the value of what is occurring within his or her current environment while expanding knowledge about how to add value to decisionmaking at the highest levels of the organization.

TELEPHONE BENCHMARKING AND INDUSTRY SURVEYS

Through the Telephone Benchmarking Survey, researchers developed a preliminary list of positions that transit agencies most frequently identified as difficult to recruit and difficult to retain. The survey also sought to determine the extent to which labor-management partnerships are formalized in the responding agencies. For the survey, the team contacted 50 randomly selected transit agency HR managers or other staff members assigned staffing functions; 33 provided substantive feedback for the study. Overall, transit agencies most often identified transit vehicle operators, primarily bus operators, and transit mechanics as difficult to recruit and retain. To a lesser extent, these agencies reported that information systems programmers, customer-service representatives, and

engineers in various disciplines are difficult to recruit and retain.

The benchmark positions—those positions most frequently identified as difficult to recruit and difficult to retain—formed the basis for the industry survey that was mailed to 200 transit agencies. Industry survey responses verified the accuracy of the list of benchmark positions except for that of customer-service representative, which was replaced by the position of planner as difficult to recruit and retain.

Core Skill Requirements for Benchmark Positions

Mechanic

One of the expected outcomes of the study was the development of a core skill set for each benchmark position. Skill demands for transit mechanics were verified in 1998 in *TCRP Report 29* (*36*). The 1998 report documented (1) the rapidly changing skill demands for mechanics and (2) that the pace of change is likely to quicken through 2008 as workers face the introduction of robotic technology, automatic vehicle systems, global information systems, and the institutionalization of the personal computer.

Skill sets required for other benchmark positions have not been codified by transit industry research at the level of detail as have the skill sets for transit mechanics. For the four other positions, researchers analyzed position descriptions provided by industry survey respondents, as well as information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (*44*) in an attempt to summarize core skills and qualifications required for each position.

Bus Operator

Analysis of bus operator–position descriptions revealed common skill-set requirements. Among these requirements are customer service, driving, information dissemination, route and schedule adherence, and report-writing skills. The analysis revealed, however, that there is no unanimity about skills and other qualifications required of successful job applicants. Differences in qualifications include variations in education, age, driver's license, and physical-demand requirements. Differences range from the requirement of a high school diploma or GED in South Daytona, Florida, and Reno, Nevada, to the requirement to demonstrate certain knowledge, skills, and abilities in Madison, Wisconsin. Age requirements vary from a minimum of 23 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to 18 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Some agencies require the CDL at the time of employment; others require the ability to qualify for the license. The language used to describe physical demands differs significantly from being able to lift or move up to 25 lbs in Savannah, Georgia, or up to 75 lbs in Atlanta, Georgia, to having the ability to maneuver 300 lbs (i.e., the weight of a passenger and wheelchair) over a curb and up a typical ramp in Tacoma, Washington. In some instances, position descriptions list no physical demands.

Planner

Transportation-planner positions typically require a minimum of a bachelor's degree in transportation, urban planning, engineering, or a related field from an accredited college or university. With varying levels of supervision and direction, planners perform a variety of planning duties in support of transit agency services and capital programs. Agencies often establish a career progression within the planner classification such as Planner, Planner 2, and Senior Planner. Core skills and knowledge for the entry-level position of planner require knowledge of practices and techniques, concepts of transportation and land-use planning, policies and integration of transit services, and principles of forecasting and estimation. Skill requirements also include effective interpersonal and written communication skills; computer skills needed to use specialized software for analyzing data and preparing narrative and statistical reports; the ability to assist in planning, organizing, monitoring, and controlling capital facility projects; and the ability to meet deadlines. Higher-level planning positions require more complex planning, coordination, and management skills gained either through experience or a combination of additional experience and education.

Engineer

Engineers typically complete bachelor's degrees in the field of specialization from an accredited college or university. Industry survey respondents most frequently rated civil-engineering positions as difficult to recruit and retain. In addition to discipline-specific technical skills required to obtain the bachelor's degree, civil engineers must have highly effective verbal, writing, analytical, and problem-solving skills. Other areas of competency are the ability to read, analyze, and interpret professional periodicals, technical procedures, and governmental regulations. Additional skills gained through experience or a combination of experience and advanced education prepare engineers for more complex assignments and advancement. For higher-level positions, registration as a professional engineer is often required.

IT Programmer or Systems Analyst

In the IT field, IT programmer or systems analyst was most frequently identified as the position most difficult to recruit for and retain employees in. Programmers typically must complete at least a 2-year college or technical school program specializing in computer programming. In these programs,

graduates master skills in planning, developing, testing, and documenting computer programs and in applying knowledge of programming techniques and of computer systems. Skill requirements in specific computer languages vary depending on the programming requirements of the agency. Programmers must possess high-quality oral and written communication skills. Additional skills gained through experience or a combination of experience and advanced education prepare systems analysts for more complex programming assignments and advancement.

Systems-analyst positions, sometimes combined with the programmer function, typically require (1) a bachelor's degree in computer science or a related field and (2) varying years of systems development and support experience depending on the position level. Skills gained in the degree program prepare the analyst to be proficient in systems analysis, design, implementation, and maintenance; in ensuring adherence to agency systems development standards; and in giving advice and assistance with software problem solving. Analysts must possess high-quality oral and written communication skills and the ability to simultaneously manage multiple assignments. Additional skills gained through experience or a combination of experience and advanced education prepare systems analysts for more complex analyst assignments and advancement.

Industry Survey Results

Findings presented in this section focus on the results of the industry survey that was the basis for the selection of case-study agencies. Although factors contributing to challenges in recruiting employees for benchmark positions are both external and internal in nature, external factors—those factors outside the control of the transit agency—were cited most frequently as creating the greatest difficulty. Respondents reported that labor-market conditions were a key contributor to the difficulty. In a number of cases, agencies reported that employees are difficult to both recruit and retain, often for the same reasons. Because employees in high-demand fields frequently leave for more-lucrative job offers, often in the private sector, retention is an ongoing problem. At the time of the study, unemployment in many of the areas serviced by responding transit agencies hovered between 2 and 3 percent, which is reflective of a national trend.

Although multiple reasons were given for difficulty in recruiting employees in benchmark positions, the most frequently given reason (92 percent of answers) for all positions was the "low unemployment rate." As shown in Figure 3, for information-systems programmers, the response rate was 91 percent; for engineers, 88 percent; for bus operators, 80 percent; for planners, 67 percent; and for mechanics, 62 percent.

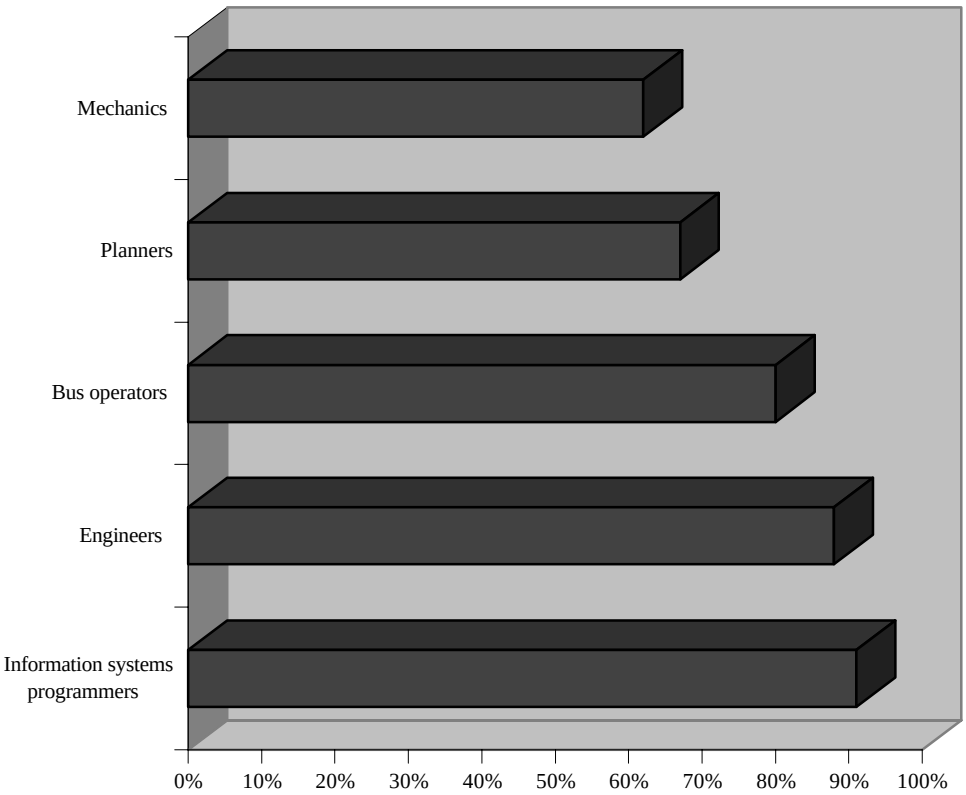

Figure 3. Low unemployment as a factor contributing to difficulty recruiting employees in benchmark positions.

The response "noncompetitive wage and benefit scale" ranked second overall with 77 percent of agencies selecting that reason. As shown in Figure 4, for information-systems programmers, the response rate was 91 percent; for mechanics, 83 percent; for engineers, 75 percent; for bus operators, 68 percent; and for planners, 67 percent. "Low unemployment rate," with a response rate of 39 percent, was the most-frequent response for difficulty in retaining employees.

Demographic Profiles

Industry survey data on the demographic makeup of the current workforce in benchmark positions were often not provided or incomplete. Some respondents indicated that it would take too long to extract the information from their files. Researchers contacted the FTA Office of Civil Rights to determine whether the agency maintains aggregate data on the demographic makeup of employees in transit agencies by job classifications. Although FTA collects data, they are not compiled in aggregate format.

Based on the analysis of data provided by 20 agencies, the following findings were determined for bus operators: the average age is 50.1, the average number of years in the position is 9.7, and the average retirement age is 62.4 years old. The average age for mechanic positions is 46.1 years. There is higher representation of minorities in bus operations as opposed to IT services and engineering, in which Caucasians dominate. Asian Pacific Islanders show a higher percentage of employment in IT services and engineering than in other positions. Gender mix in bus operator positions is 77 percent males to 24 percent females. Women hold very few mechanic positions.

Regulatory Mandates

Twenty-seven percent of transit agencies reported that applicants' and trainees' inability to qualify for the federally mandated CDL is one of the reasons for difficulty in recruiting employees in vehicle-operator positions. A second federal mandate, the Drug and Alcohol Testing Regulations set forth by FTA, may contribute to 46 percent of agencies responding that bus operator "applicants [are] unable to meet internal screening requirements."

Workforce-Development Resources

Transit agencies reported using a number of community resources as recruitment and training sources. Figure 5 shows that links with job service centers (43 percent), agencies serving people with disabilities (43 percent), and partnerships with colleges and universities (31 percent) were

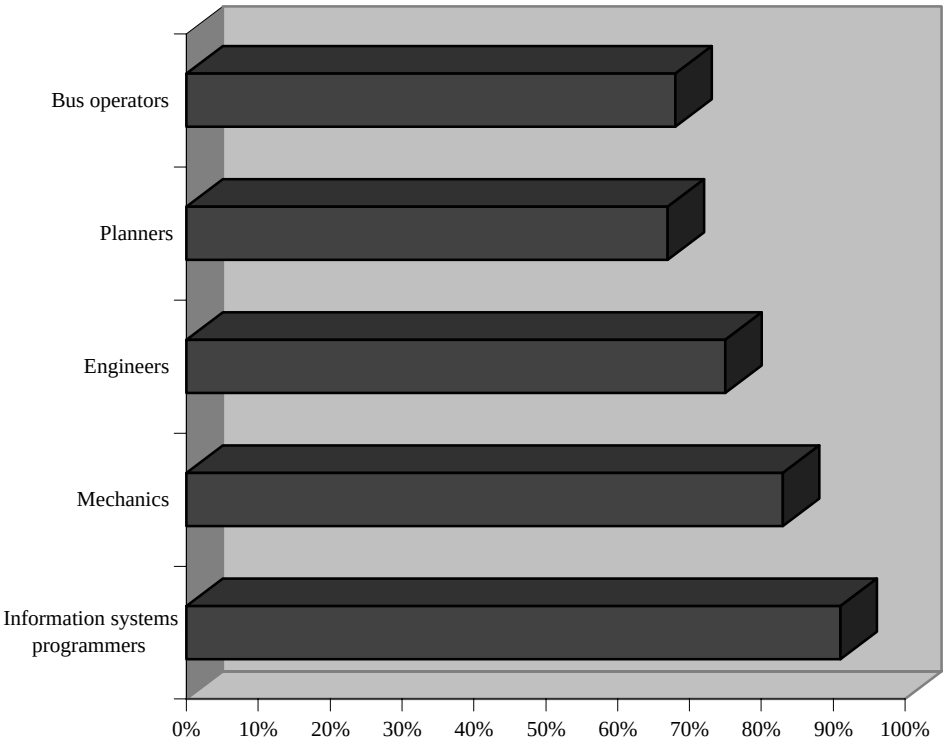

Figure 4. Noncompetitive wages and benefits as factors contributing to difficulty recruiting employees in benchmark positions.

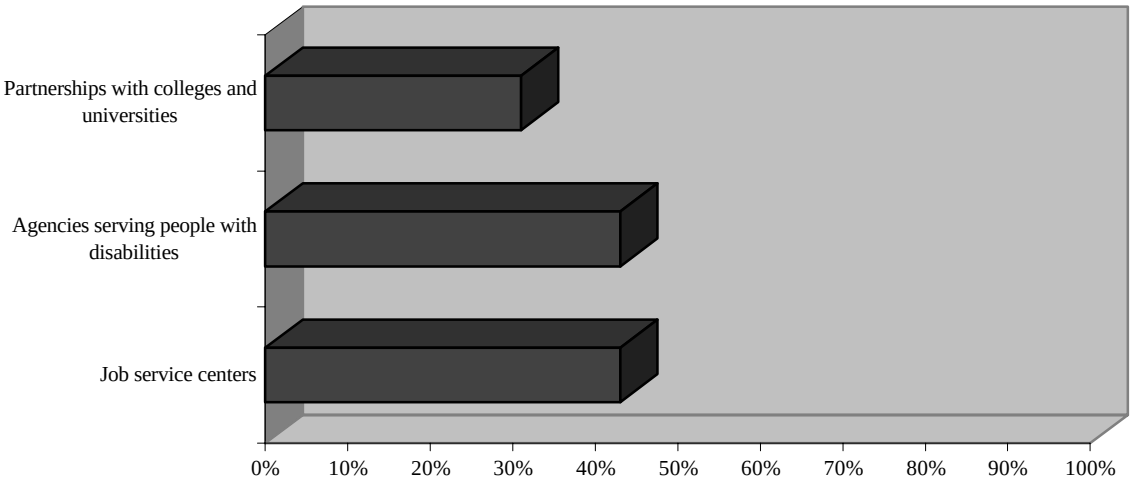

Figure 5. Recruitment and training links with community resources.

rated as effective pre-employment and post-employment workforce-development resources.

HR Practices

Recruitment

Survey respondents reported effectively using a variety of recruitment methods. Using a 5-point scale, agencies rated the effectiveness of each method from 1 to 5, with 1 being low and 5 being high. The recruitment methods reported most frequently as "highly effective" (i.e., a "5") or "effective" (i.e., a "4") were competitive compensation packages (62 percent), newspaper classified advertisements (82 percent), and internal job announcements (94 percent). Figure 6 illustrates the ratings.

Other approaches reported as effective by smaller numbers of respondents include telephone voice ads (20 percent of respondents are using; 60 percent rated it effective); commercial online databases (49 percent are using; 13 percent rated it effective); career fairs (45 percent are using; 18 percent rated it effective); employee-referral incentives (31 percent are using; 20 percent rated it effective); sign-on incentives (14 percent are using; 43 percent rated it effective); and labor-management partnerships (31 percent are using; 13 percent rated it effective). Figure 7 illustrates the ratings.

Retention

The survey revealed that transit agencies have not formalized retention initiatives to the extent that they have formalized

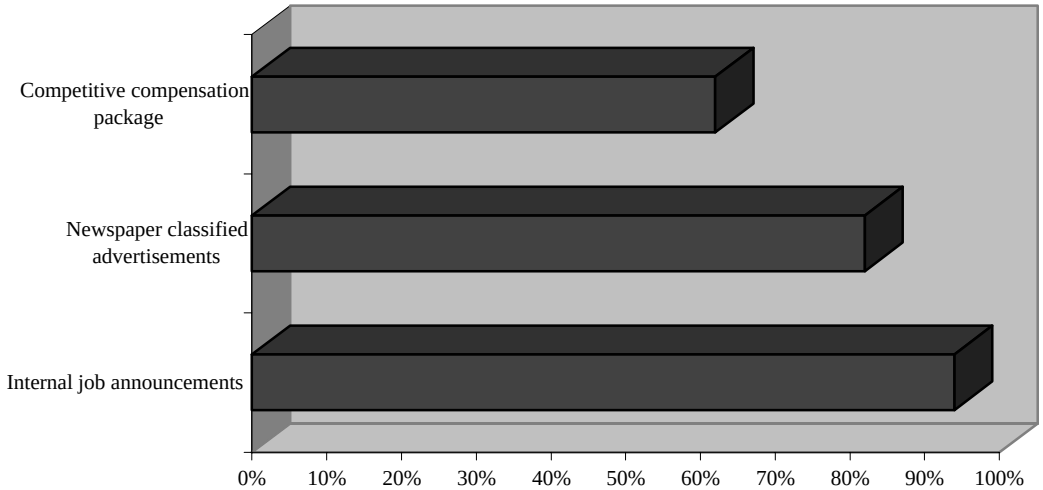

Figure 6. Most frequently cited effective recruitment methods.

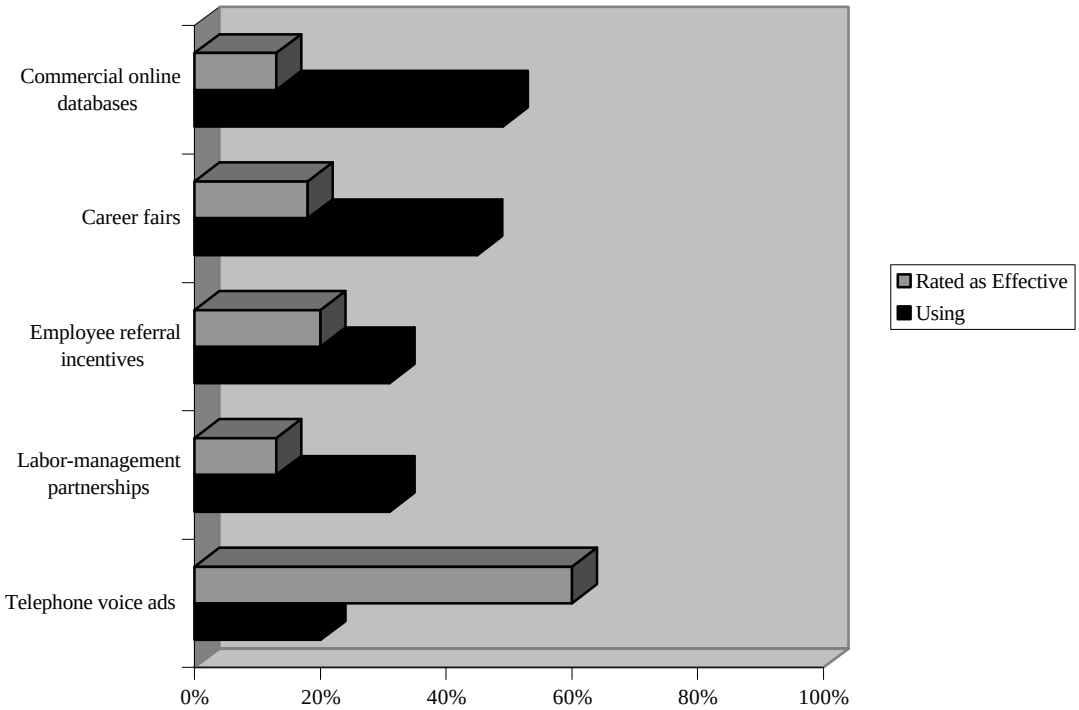

Figure 7. Ratings of emerging recruitment methods.

recruitment efforts. Agencies that reported using effectively a variety of retention strategies tend to focus on new employee orientation, employee involvement and inclusion, and employee development, as shown in Figure 8.

The following retention strategies were reported: 86 percent of respondents reported formal employee-orientation programs, 57 percent reported upward communication and feedback systems, 43 percent reported development of management and leadership competencies, 29 percent reported rewards for high employee involvement, and 18 percent reported planned career pathing. Safety incentives (63 percent) and attendance incentives (43 percent), mainstays of the transit industry especially in transportation and maintenance functions, were also cited as effective retention methods.

Training

The effective use of ongoing performance-based needs assessment, a method for ensuring that training is relevant to job requirements, was reported by 63 percent of responding agencies. Performance-based instruction—focusing on demonstration of skills, observation and practice, then demonstrated mastery—is used by 63 percent. Also effective are classroom lecture and discussion, computer-based trainer-led instruction, and on-the-floor or field instruction; other effective methods are shown in Figure 9. Individualized learning approaches are used in a minority of agencies for positions ranging from bus operator to computer programmer in the form of individualized learning plans (22 percent), self-paced instruction (24 percent), and tutoring (41 percent). Although a small number of agencies allow trainees who are unsuccessful in their first effort to continue their training in a subsequent class of trainees—a practice commonly referred to as "roll over"—those agencies using roll over report that it is a very effective new employee-retention tool (88 percent). Roll over is especially effective with new bus operators (16 percent), as is shown in Figure 9.

Labor-Management Partnerships

Transit agencies were asked to identify partnering relationships—formal, informal, task force, or other—with organized labor for recruitment and retention of employees into positions identified as difficult to recruit and retain. Respondents reported a variety of labor-management partnerships, many in the form of labor-management committees.

The percentage of responding agencies reporting labor-management committees by group size is shown in Figure 10. Fifty percent of Group 1 agencies (the largest agencies) reported labor-management agreements with 40 percent reporting that agreements are codified in labor-contract provisions. Fifty percent of Group 2 agencies reported agreements with 43 percent reporting codified agreements. Twenty-percent of Group 3 agencies reported agreements with 11 percent

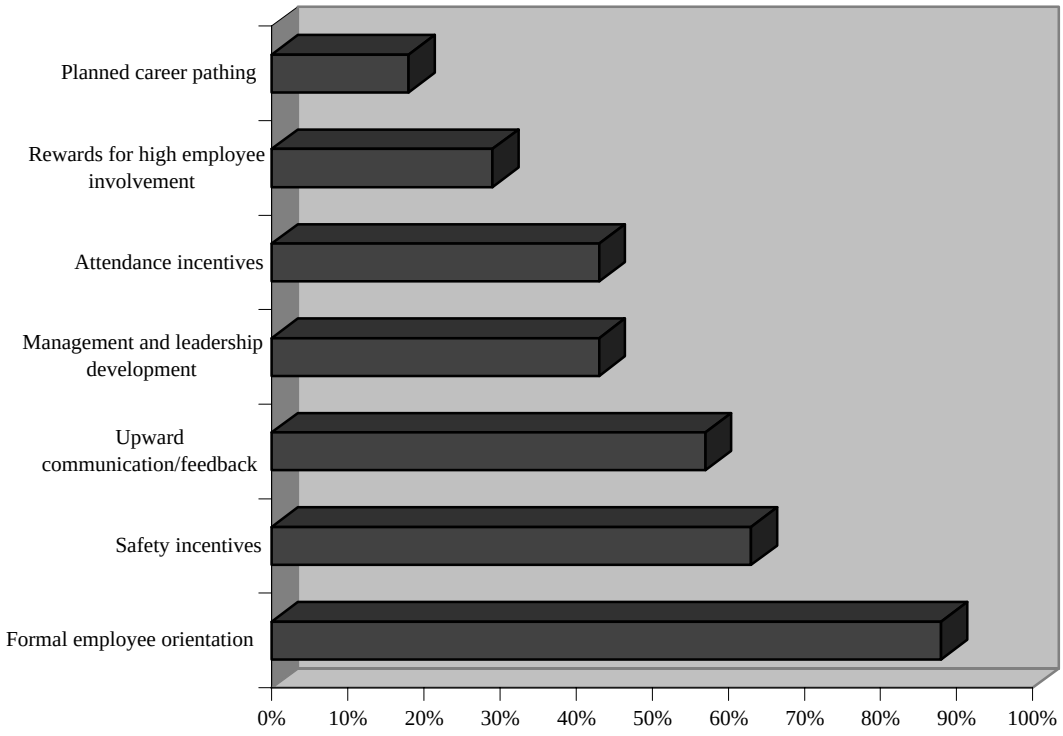

Figure 8. Retention methods.

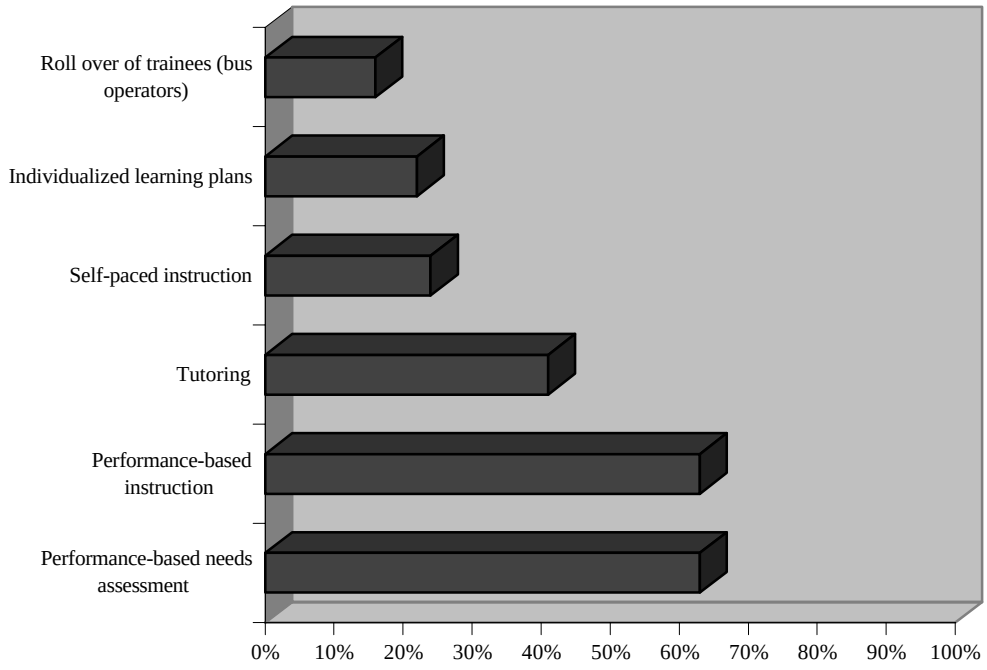

Figure 9. Effective training methods.

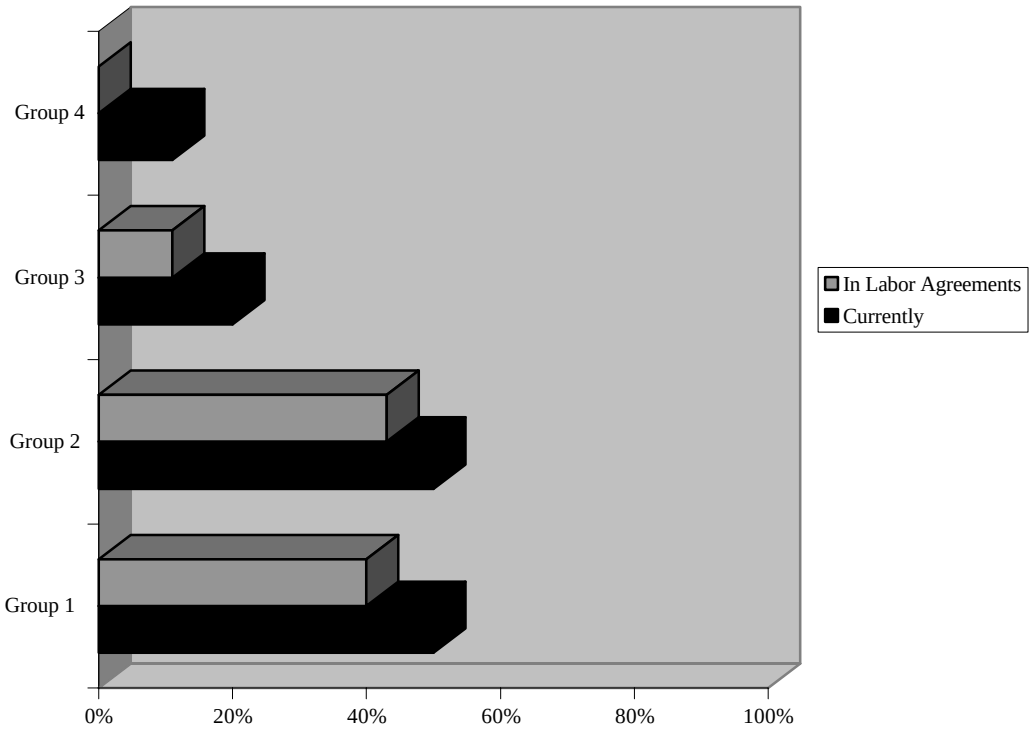

Figure 10. Labor-management committees.

codified. Group 4 agencies, the smallest agencies, reported 11 percent labor agreements with none codified.

Other types of labor-management partnerships are shown in Figure 11. Thirteen percent of respondents in all groups reported contract provisions that outline apprenticeship programs for benchmark positions; however, only 10 percent hire into training programs from a union hall or from union positions for positions identified as difficult to recruit and retain. Six percent listed positions for which unions are involved in the selection of employees, and 16 percent identified an ongoing relationship between the union and management to address new developments in training and new technology.

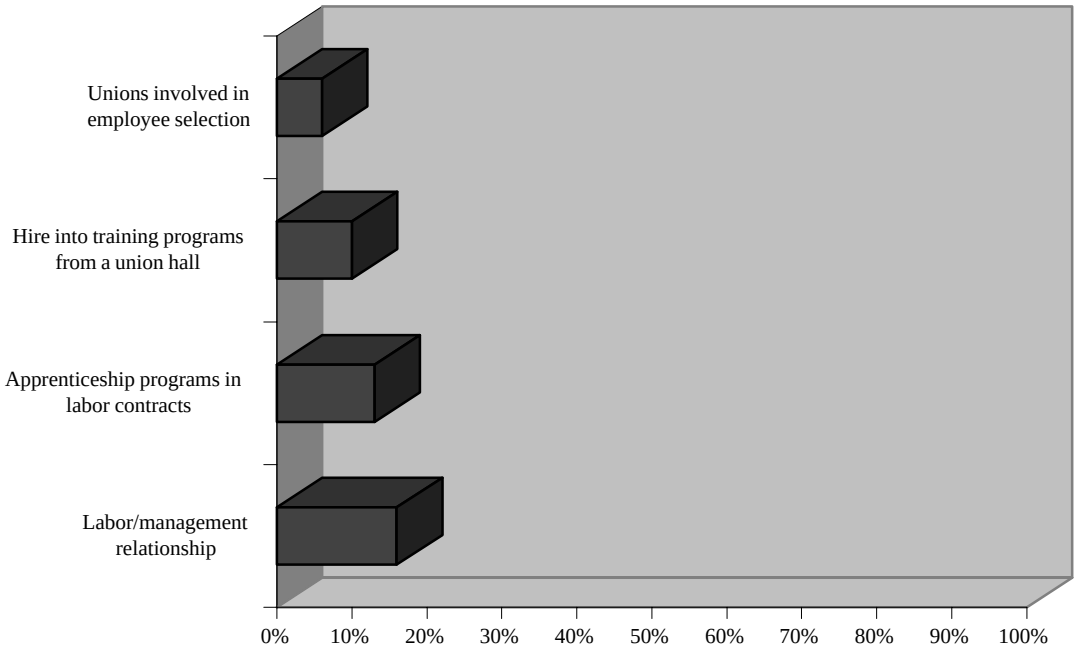

Figure 11. Other labor-management partnerships.

CASE STUDIES

In determining the best candidates for case studies, researchers used the following criteria:

- Agencies must have reported effective implementation of a minimum of six approaches to achieving and maintaining a qualified workforce. The approaches would have to be in at least three of the four areas of focus: recruitment, training, retention, and labor-management partnerships.
- Agencies' reported practices should compare favorably with literature search results as to what constitutes best practices.
- Agencies should, as much as possible, represent a balance by region, mode, and size.

The rationale for identifying these selection criteria was to test the hypothesis that there are identifiable variables that determine whether a transit agency attracts, develops, and retains a qualified workforce. The conceptual framework presented in Chapter 1 provided structure as the research team made an open-systems inquiry into the practices and experiences of each agency.

The list of case-study agencies and their group identification are presented below. Agencies are grouped by the size categories used in the industry survey: the largest agencies in Group 1 and smallest in Group 4.

- **Group 1:**
  - Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) in Baltimore, Maryland
  - Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) in Atlanta, Georgia
  - ATC Phoenix in Phoenix, Arizona
  - Regional Transportation District (RTD) in Denver, Colorado
  - Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) in San Jose, California
- **Group 2:**
  - Pierce Transit (PT) in Tacoma, Washington
  - Sun Tran in Tucson, Arizona
  - Utah Transit Authority (UTA) in Salt Lake City, Utah
  - RTC/Citifare in Reno, Nevada
- **Group 3:**
  - Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) in Duluth, Minnesota
  - SunLine Transit Agency in Thousand Palms, California
- **Group 4:**
  - City of Annapolis Department of Transportation (ADT) in Annapolis, Maryland
  - Berkshire Regional Transportation Authority (BRTA) in Pittsfield, Massachusetts

Findings

Each case study is documented in detail in Appendix A. Highlights of the collective case-study findings are summarized here.

Recruitment and Retention Challenges

The recruitment and retention challenges found within case-study agencies mirror those found in the industry survey. Repeatedly, researchers heard about the challenges of attracting and retaining employees for part-time bus-operator positions or for full-time operator positions in which employees must go on the extra-board for extended periods. Difficulty recruiting and retaining skilled mechanics was also recounted in agency after agency. The challenge of hiring and retaining IT employees was cited consistently as a function of high demand in this field compounded by the high salaries these workers could command elsewhere. Hiring engineers and planners was a challenge because of a shortage of new graduates, the competition from the private sector, and the perception that public-sector work is not as exciting as private-sector work.

Overall Organizational Environment

Case-study agencies tend to view recruitment, training, and retention as processes along a work-life continuum, not as separate entities. Consistent with other research findings about effective organizations, these agencies' clearly defined direction and goals, HR planning, and well thought-out recruitment, training, and retention strategies are all critical elements in maintaining qualified workforces. Effective approaches vary from agency to agency and are influenced by resource availability, creativity, and the commitment of the parties involved.

One characteristic common to case-study agencies is an environment of candor, openness, and employee involvement. Each agency has systems in place not only to keep employees informed, but also to elicit and respond to employee input. The leadership philosophy of the chief executive officer appears to be the driving force in creating an environment in which employees feel welcome, heard, and valued for their contributions. Although it was difficult for researchers to determine whether these practices have been designed as deliberate recruitment and retention strategies, the results speak for themselves. Numerous examples of how the overall organizational environment plays a part in ensuring a quality workforce are described in Appendix A. For example, leadership in ensuring that VTA (in San Jose, California) maintains a qualified workforce starts with the general manager, who makes scheduled and unscheduled visits to facilities, day and night, listening to and showing concern for employee well-being.

The overall organizational environment at BRTA (in Pittsfield, Massachusetts) is driven by a management philosophy of two-way communication with input from and feedback to employees. The relatively small size of the workforce facilitates communication, and management has created a functional open-door environment that rewards employee involvement. At ADT (in Annapolis, Maryland), by using a strategy of developing "one-on-one, personal contact with employees" and soliciting employee buy-in for success, the agency makes the most of limited resources. The agency director states: "We

are creating a culture of understanding to respond to individual employee needs and the needs of the community."

"Open-door" is the watchword at RTC/Citifare (in Reno, Nevada) where employees consistently speak of openness as the organizational norm that sets the stage for an expectation of ongoing candid interactions throughout the agency. At DTA (in Duluth, Minnesota), the general manager describes the management philosophy as "management by listening" and cites several examples of bus operators and mechanics collaborating with managers to make the agency an inviting place to work. At PT (in Tacoma, Washington), maintaining a qualified workforce is dealt with from a total employment-lifecycle perspective with a strategic approach to facilitating quality worklife from the time an employee is recruited to the time of termination.

At SunLine (in Thousand Palms, California), the ATU president states: "We can trust management because they not only include us in developing a solution to the problem, but we are involved with identifying the problem. They are straight shooters and we all want to see the organization succeed." At ATC Phoenix (in Phoenix, Arizona), senior staff members make special efforts to know employees on a first-name basis. The agency's open-door policy allows any employee to voice a concern, offer a suggestion, or have access to immediate problem resolution. Expanded senior staff meetings are open to anyone in the company who wishes to attend. This culture promotes a friendly workforce and lessens the gap between union and nonunion employees.

The development of an organizational vision statement and strategic priorities by the UTA Board of Trustees (in Salt Lake City, Utah) in 1998 marked a turning point in changing the agency's view toward employees as assets. Over the past 3 years (from 1998 through 2001), 1,300 UTA employees have completed the Vision, Individual, Partnering (VIP) Program, an organization- and personal-development initiative aimed at moving the total organization toward the culture changes outlined in the 1998 Board-adopted vision statement (see Appendix A). The 5-day VIP Program, facilitated by an internal organization development consultant, is designed to improve communication about organizational priorities and to foster the development of skills that employees need to help carry out ongoing partnering initiatives. One measure of the VIP Program's effectiveness is UTA's turnover ratio for new bus operators. In 1999, the first year of the program, the turnover rate for operators during the first year of employment was 35 percent. In 2000, the turnover rate decreased to 27 percent, and in 2001, the rate was projected to be less than 20 percent. Initially, bus-operator attrition was seven to nine employees per month; however, as of July 2001, four to five operators left the agency each month.

On a quarterly basis, MARTA (in Atlanta, Georgia) reviews a number of indicators of organizational health to develop the "Organizational Climate Report" (*45*). Data used to compile the report are exit-interview results; retention survey data; turnover rate; recruitment-fill rate; the nature of discrimination complaints; and all other employee complaints whether they relate to grievances, violence, nepotism, or other issues. The report, which is presented at executive team meetings quarterly, is also reviewed to discern trends that may signal the need for changes in programs or policies. For instance, exit interviews revealed that most employees stated they were resigning because of problems with their supervisors; hence, the enhanced attention to supervisor and management training and accountability described in MARTA's case study.

Recruitment Strategies

Revision of Restrictive Policies and Practices

In response to the changing marketplace, several agencies have recently reviewed policies and practices that inhibit the ability to recruit a qualified workforce. These reviews opened up possibilities for creative approaches to attracting employees. In a number of cases, changes required collaboration with the unions that represent employees in affected job classifications. For instance, at Baltimore's MTA, the union agreed to waive several provisions of the wage agreement for a limited time for specific maintenance classifications. Entry-level wages were raised for targeted positions, which resulted in starting rates ranging from 85 to 100 percent of the top wage rates.

In February 2000, in an effort to increase its pool of potential bus-operator applicants, Denver's RTD lowered the age requirement to 19 years old. RTD also conducted an analysis of the bus-operator and mechanic recruitment processes, which revealed the processes to be drawn out and cumbersome, likely resulting in the loss of good candidates. To accelerate the employment process cycle time, HR instituted a 1-day turn-around time for applicants to apply, test, and interview for those positions. The Mountain State Employers Council, a Colorado employer-membership organization, selected RTD as 1st-place winner of its 2001 HR Best Practices Contest for effectively implementing this innovative process-reengineering approach.

In an effort to get more bus operators to volunteer for overtime and to improve the flexibility of work schedules, RTD relaxed work rules using a two-pronged approach:

1. Removing the requirement to vote Monday morning or Friday afternoon in an effort to increase the overall bidding of work; and
2. Allowing part-time operators to select morning or afternoon assignments, or both, and removing the requirement to bid 5 days of work.

According to RTD managers, giving operators more options to select schedules that fit best with their personal and work-related needs were successful because employees perceived that the agency cared about their personal well-being and that they were part of a solution to an organizational problem.

Three years ago, Tucson's Sun Tran discontinued hiring part-time operators, and the quality of applicants increased dramatically. The change to full-time operators also contributed to a decrease in the amount of overtime and in the number of incidents of operator fatigue, thus improving system safety.

In an effort to enlarge its pool of bus-operator applicants, ADT discontinued the practice of disqualifying its retirees from employment. In fact, the agency encourages retirees to apply for part-time positions, increasing the opportunity for advancement of existing part-time operators to full-time status while replacing the promoted part-time employee with a fully trained and certified operator. Combining operator groups in this manner eliminates secondary recruitment, training time, and costs.

As a result of the 1997 labor-contract negotiations with ATU Local 265, San Jose's VTA bus operators were placed on a 54-month progression rate (from a previous 30-month rate) in order to pay for an enhanced pension plan. This action soon became a detriment to recruitment of operators because of the economic boom that occurred in Silicon Valley. In addition, in 2000, a neighboring transit agency agreed to a 24-month progression. In early 2001, VTA made a decision to open negotiations for a new contract 1 year before the term of the agreement ended with a commitment to being the highest-paid transit agency in the Bay Area. Having accomplished this goal, the challenge of recruiting operators lessened.

One mechanism that VTA uses to increase its responsiveness to client departments is to adjust the announcement of some positions to be alternately staffed depending on the pool of applicants. With this approach, the hiring department announces a position at one level, but can hire a person at a lower associate level then train the employee to the point that they are capable of performing the full job. To accomplish this, HR issues two bulletins: one for the higher level and one for a lower level. This career-ladder mechanism prevents the loss of high-quality candidates who may lack the exact position requirements, but who can develop to the level desired. This approach has proved especially valuable for positions such as engineers, planners, and information-systems analysts.

The challenge of filling transportation-engineering positions at VTA required the new approach to recruitment: a collaborative effort between the engineering department and HR. The entire engineering department embraced a strategy of recruiting upcoming university graduates and "growing our own" as their best bet for reducing a 29-percent vacancy rate. Managers and staff engineers, including the department union steward, accepted the challenge to get the word out about available positions, whether through their alma maters or other sources. This approach resulted in a number of successful referrals. Linking with local university engineering departments, the department works with HR to contact graduating students early enough to communicate that VTA is a viable option as the students search for exciting and meaningful work. The group realized that it needed to paint a vivid picture of the diverse opportunities available at an agency with $6 billion in construction money to spend.

In an effort to improve the efficiency of its recruitment, Atlanta's MARTA began using an electronic staffing system that builds an extensive database to acquire quality employees. As a recruitment tool, the staffing system allows HR staff to sift through a massive volume of résumés to match candidates with open positions and to allow recruiters to connect with internal and external applicants, to staffing information, and to each other quickly and easily. According to the recruiting manager, "In HR's role as strategic partner to the core business, skills and experience have become the most important pieces of information to have about a worker. The system is designed to identify those skills and experience and find more qualified candidates electronically, thus reducing the direct costs of organizational staffing and increasing recruiting efficiency." With this system, whenever a position becomes available, the recruiter makes an immediate query as to who in the database may meet requirements. For instance, if the position requires a "team player," the recruiter can type that term into the system and it will access all résumés that list that attribute even if the exact term is not used on a résumé.

One method that MARTA initiated to enhance quality control of individual recruitments is the Recruitment Clock. The clock has timeframes ranging from 30 to 180 days. Each recruiter knows which clock to use as a measure of when a recruitment is to be completed. Clock categories are as follows:

- 30 day—Administrative,
- 60 day—Safety sensitive,
- 90 day—Critical fill and mid-management, and
- 180 day—Police.

On a weekly basis, recruiters submit a status report that indicates where they are on the clock with each recruitment. A major strength of this approach is that recruitments are monitored closely with monthly reports that provide information on defined recruitment targets, tracking, and accountability for results. The effectiveness of the clock process is evidenced by 95 percent of positions being filled "under the clock" period.

Partnering Within the Agency

Espousing a philosophy that recruitment is a constant process, MARTA's manager of recruitment meets quarterly with the budget department and the director of bus transportation to monitor progress toward employment goals and to review future needs. The manager has the authority to recruit bus operators as needed without a job order. When the agency has approximately 30 bus-operator vacancies, the recruiting staff conducts an in-house job fair, which is advertised in local newspapers. When MARTA recruits at military facilities for mechanics, a team made up of HR and maintenance

staff conducts a career fair onsite. The team jointly conducts interviews and aptitude tests on the spot, and if a person is a good match for MARTA's needs, makes a conditional offer immediately pending physical examination and background check.

At MTA, for a recruitment campaign, the administrative services team had three goals:

1. Include all segments of the organization in order to galvanize the agency and expand its resources to achieve MTA staffing;
2. Train a sufficient and qualified group of employees to supplement the HR team and ensure that there would always be interview panels available to select talented applicants; and
3. Design expedited recruitment and hiring procedures and train departments to use them effectively.

In order for VTA to conduct the onsite Great Job Fair that resulted in more than 1,800 attendees in 2000, HR partnered with the marketing department to develop an advertising strategy. In addition, HR managers made personal appeals to individual departments for volunteer staff for the event. The result was so positive that the camaraderie achieved during the event carried over into other day-to-day interactions. Whenever VTA Marketing staff conducts community-outreach meetings, they focus on employment outreach as well by creating an image that the agency is a good employer. Employment staff frequently accompany marketing staff to community meetings.

An enhanced partnering approach at VTA is the assignment of each personnel analyst to specific divisions as long-term project managers responsible for learning staffing needs and priorities within the assigned unit. Working closely with division managers, the analysts learn about staffing needs in a timely way because they learn the business of the division and are aware of what is occurring on a day-to-day basis.

According to the SunLine HR director, ". . . the partnering concept initiated with the strategic plan continues to produce positive results for the agency." The organization's ability to recruit and retain employees while maintaining a turnover rate of less than 3 percent for the entire agency supports this assertion.

Community Involvement and Outreach

Case-study agencies that connect on a personal level with their communities seem to develop lasting relationships that foster cooperation, which facilitates employee recruitment. Tacoma's PT takes pride in being an integral part of the Pierce County community in which it provides hand-painted promotional buses celebrating the area's cultural life. Express bus service to special events such as the New Year's Eve First Night Celebration, Fourth of July festivities, and Martin Luther King Jr. Day observances is part of PT's commitment to the community.

Integrally connected to the Duluth community, throughout the year DTA demonstrates that it is an employer of choice in the Duluth area. Employees, from the general manager to relief bus operators, volunteer to build ramps at the homes of needy residents with disabilities.

Community involvement is such an important organizational value at RTD that it is rewarded as part of the employee recognition program, Champions of Transit. In addition, community outreach is an integral part of RTD's overall recruitment strategy. In 2000, HR regularly faxed job postings to 107 community agencies and conducted weekend job fairs at the headquarters building and at the operations department facilities that featured onsite remote radio broadcasts. Staff also participated in job fairs held in various municipalities in the RTD multicounty service area and at a military base and businesses undergoing downsizing. In order to reach a wider audience with the RTD employment story, HR prepared and mailed a stand-alone recruitment video that features employees in difficult-to-recruit and -retain positions to 70 agencies in the Denver area and surrounding six states.

In 2001, MARTA began partnering with local media to advertise a bus-operator recruitment fair. The communication officer at MARTA, working with two local TV stations, made free public-service announcements that produced 389 candidates in 1 day, including truckers driving to the event from out of state. The success of this effort is reflected in the 89 operators scheduled for interviews over a 2-month period.

When MARTA staff attend offsite job fairs, they go with a "hot list" of positions. If a recruiter makes contact with individuals who seem to fit the requirements of these positions, they engage in focused dialogue on the spot and let applicants know that someone will be contacting them in the next 24 hours to ensure all the information needed is included on the résumés. With this information, MARTA not only focuses on current openings, but also uses the information to build the electronic database for openings that may occur within the next 3 years.

Links with Community Workforce-Development Resources

MTA staff work closely with local technical schools that teach electronic technician maintenance programs, making frequent visits to the schools and presentations to students about MTA as an employer of choice. Pending successful completion of the technical school program, interested students can pre-qualify for entry-level positions by passing screening tests that MTA staff administer at the schools. Students are encouraged to visit MTA maintenance facilities to learn about the work environment and to speak with mechanics about their day-to-day work. Typically, two to three graduates from each class choose to work at MTA.

MARTA maintains an ongoing applicant-referral relationship with the Georgia Department of Labor's Welfare-to-Work (WTW) Program. A number of employees in the maintenance-apprenticeship program have come through referrals from WTW. Initially, the recruiting branch brings WTW participants into the agency on an unpaid-internship basis for 4 to 6 weeks often in the agency's clerical pool to allow HR to assess each participant's work habits and other attributes. Often these individuals have not had work experiences that prepares them to work in a setting such as MARTA and, therefore, can benefit from being coached about acceptable work behaviors. Coaching sessions, if needed, can help the intern become aware how one should present himself or herself at all times—whether in language, nonverbal communication, or dress—and how this presentation can influence hiring decisions. Upon successful completion of the internship, most WTW participants succeed with the agency as regular employees.

The VTA maintains relationships with all of the community-based organizations in Santa Clara County that conduct job training through CalWorks, the welfare-to-work program in California. Through job clubs created as an extension of job-readiness training, VTA staff makes presentations at CalWorks training sites about positions at the agency. To help in responding to the trainees' transportation needs, the VTA manager of selection and compensation served on the initial planning for Santa Clara County's CalWorks efforts.

With an eye on the future, PT has an arrangement with local high schools to bring students to its facilities for several weeks during the summer to acquaint them with the work of mechanics. Students are paired with mechanics to sample segments of work, including how mechanics use laptop computers to diagnose engine problems.

In an effort to tap into a nontraditional labor pool, in 2001, RTD partnered with the Colorado Department of Corrections to establish a pilot employment program for recently released ex-offenders. This initiative was designed to relieve the shortage in entry-level positions and to develop feeder pools for other positions. The structure and screening and orientation processes negotiated at the beginning of this collaboration show promise for successfully transitioning ex-offenders into other RTD positions.

Employee-Referral Programs

One approach frequently cited as a best practice in literature is the use of employees as internal recruitment resources. By establishing employee-referral programs, several case-study agencies have taken advantage of this often overlooked resource. Table 1 summarizes five examples of employee-referral programs.

Training Strategies

Literature repeatedly describes training as a recruitment-and-retention strategy. In many instances, case-study agencies make the most of the "grow our own" philosophy through their training programs. One resource that the majority of case-study agencies uses to help their training staff develop

TABLE 1 Examples of employee-referral programs

AGENCY	POSITIONS	1ST PAYMENT	2ND PAYMENT	3RD PAYMENT	OTHER
ATC PHOENIX	Bus operator/ Mechanic	$100 at end of 6-weeks training	$100 at end of 90-day probation	$100 at end of 1 year	
SUNLINE	All	$25 at the end of 90-day probation period			
MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION	Selected information-technology positions	$500 at end of 90 days	$500 at end of 6 months of service		
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT	Bus Operator/ Mechanic	$200 at end of 120-day probation	$300 at end of 1year		
UTAH TRANSIT AUTHORITY	All	$50 at hire	$100 at end of 90-day probation	$200 at end of 1 year	$10 gift certificate if candidate is interviewed

training skills is the annual NTI Transit Trainers' Workshop, which showcases best practices in transit training. Started in 1994, the workshop also recognizes transit agencies demonstrating exemplary practices in training and development. Several trainers interviewed during site visits cited this experience as one of the most beneficial professional-development activities they participate in each year. The graph shown in Figure 12 is based on data provided by NTI and shows the percentage of case-study agencies whose training staffs have participated in the workshop.

Bus-Operator Training

Case-study agencies have recognized the need to be flexible and creative in training employees in benchmark positions. At PT, new bus operators complete a fairly typical 6-week new bus-operator training program. Aiding greatly in the success of this program is the addition of Increasing Human Effectiveness, a commercially prepared 2-day training unit. Placed within the first week of training, this unit helps employees see themselves as possessing the tools needed to be successful. Because of the high dropout rate during new bus-operator training, VTA determined that it needed to change from a "boot camp" to a supportive learning environment. Examples of changes include individualizing instruction, fast-tracking trainees who already have a required driving license, conducting remedial training to help trainees pass the written tests, and, as needed, offering oral testing instead of written.

ATC Phoenix uses bilingual trainers in the new operator-training program to interpret information and assist with defensive-driving instructions to ensure that Spanish-speaking employees have complete knowledge of vehicles, routes, and customer-service expectations. Several agencies such as RTD and SunLine allow bus-operator trainees additional time to complete the training program and even extend the probationary period if necessary.

In an attempt to retain bus operators who have had difficulty relating to customers, the MARTA technical training branch offers the Enhanced Customer Service Training Program. Produced by MARTA staff, the program includes video clips of customer-relations scenarios that operators frequently confront. MARTA operators and instructors perform in the video, and each segment demonstrates an "incorrect and correct" way to handle a situation. As part of the training, operators are videotaped role playing situations and conduct critiques of their own responses in video-playback sessions.

In Reno, Nevada, Citifare University (CU)—an advanced training program designed primarily to maintain high skill and confidence levels among bus operators—is open to all operations-department employees. Initiated in March 2000, the program is a 4-day training effort aimed at improving the performance of operators. Although voluntary in nature, 90 percent of eligible employees have completed the program—a percentage that is well above the expectations of CU's operations department.

The CU program has facilitated a change in the role of supervisors from transit cop to employee coach, which has resulted in a more accepting view of these individuals and their roles by bus operators. Other outcomes attributed to CU are that since the initiation of the program, preventable accidents have decreased by one-third and passenger complaints have been lowered from 2.2 per 10,000 rides to 1.0 per 10,000 rides.

In addition to making effective use of traditional training methods, UTA's training department makes extensive use of computer programs for skills and defensive-driving training. The group also uses CD-ROM training programs to teach customer relations, prechecking buses, potential road problems, and reporting problems to maintenance. Other computer-based training focuses on the physical and mental well-being of the operator and on driving knowledge and skills.

Mechanic-Training Programs

The continued lack of availability of skilled mechanics has required a number of agencies to start their own training programs, often in partnership with labor unions. Having experienced shortages of skilled mechanics for many years, the PT-ATU Local 758 Apprenticeship Committee initiated a 48-month apprenticeship program in 1985. Likewise, to ensure the availability of a continuous pool of mechanics, UTA and the union formed a Joint Apprenticeship Training Program several years ago for mechanics.

MARTA has mechanic apprenticeship-training programs for internal applicants who pass required aptitude tests. Ap-

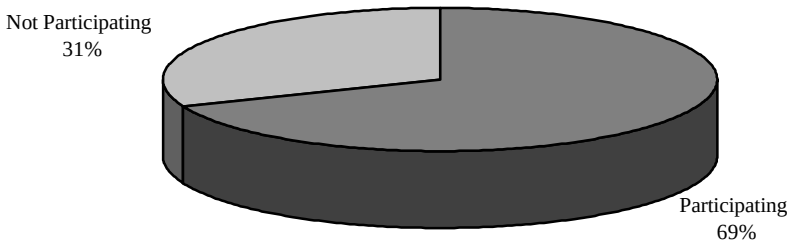

Figure 12. Case-study agencies participating in NTI transit trainers' workshops.

prentices, hired as junior apprentice hostlers, form a pool of applicants who are available to enter diesel-mechanic apprenticeship programs as needed and as training classes are scheduled. VTA's continued inability to attract mechanic applicants was the impetus for implementing a 14-month diesel mechanic–training program. At one point, VTA was so low in mechanics—about 30 mechanics short of the 120 approved positions—that it could not provide bus service in some instances. In a 90-day period, the RTC/Citifare Maintenance Training Group trains a mechanic to perform all aspects of the job from preventive maintenance inspection, to engine tune-up, to major suspension overhaul, to brake repair.

Management-Development Training

In some employee retention research, up to 95 percent of respondents reveal that the primary motivator for leaving an organization is an unsatisfactory manager-employee relationship. Management-development training is one resource for helping managers develop skills needed to make employees feel they are getting the support they need to perform their jobs well. Case-study agencies conduct management-development training in a variety of ways. In a number of instances, management and supervisory training is provided by a combination of internal and external resources. Some agencies offer tuition-reimbursement programs that allow employees to take courses for enrichment or for college-degree programs. In several cases, new supervisor training is a requirement within the first months in this first-line management role. New supervisors at RTD complete the Meet the Challenge training program, which includes topics such as employment law, coaching, interpersonal skills, performance management, equal employment opportunity, diversity, change management, drug and alcohol programs, and policies and procedures. Each new UTA supervisor must complete the University of Utah's six-session Basic Supervisor Program. New managers must complete the university's Basic Management Program. University faculty comes to UTA facilities to offer classes, or employees attend public sessions of these programs.

In 1998, VTA began a partnership with local community colleges wherein the colleges offer evening credit courses at VTA facilities. Most employees enrolled in the 18-month Associate Degree Program take transferable courses that can become part of a bachelor's degree program at a local university. VTA pays the tuition for participating employees. The program is especially beneficial to employees who aspire to advance in the organization or who need additional education to gain the management and leadership knowledge and skills required of managers and supervisors in the agency.

Sun Tran offers a tuition reimbursement program to assist with leadership-skills training and competency development. The agency pays 75 percent of the cost for six credit hours or two courses per semester; the reimbursement is available for fall, spring, and summer courses. Courses can be for professional enrichment or job related. The tuition program also pays for courses leading to a college degree. Management describes the program as effective both as a recruitment strategy and as a retention tool.

MARTA provides an example of an agency with a comprehensive management-development focus. MARTA's supervisor training program—the Frontline Leadership Program—is a six-module program that teaches how to motivate, recognize, and reward employees and how to document performance and identify and address problems early. Individuals in management positions or who want to prepare for future management opportunities complete the Supervisory Management Program, a 10-module training series that includes topics such as strategic planning, managing a budget, recognizing and rewarding employees, and encouraging optimal performance. Executive-level managers complete the eight-module Leadership Development Training, which covers character-based leadership, how to put people first, and business-management applications.

Few case-study agencies use the management-development resources available through NTI. Figure 13 shows the percentage of agencies whose managers have participated in NTI training programs in the past 3 years.

Other Training

The award-winning cultural-diversity program developed and offered at PT has helped the agency make strides in increasing employees' sensitivity to and appreciation for working in a diverse workplace. The goals of diversity training are to encourage and promote harmony, to help employees benefit from the strength that comes from individuals working together, to create an environment in which differences are respected and recognized, and to encourage commitment to growth.

Several agencies have established onsite training programs much like the corporate-university approach to educating the workforce: examples include RTD University in Denver, CU in Reno, and the Accelerated Degree Program in San Jose. In a number of instances, agencies provide training through

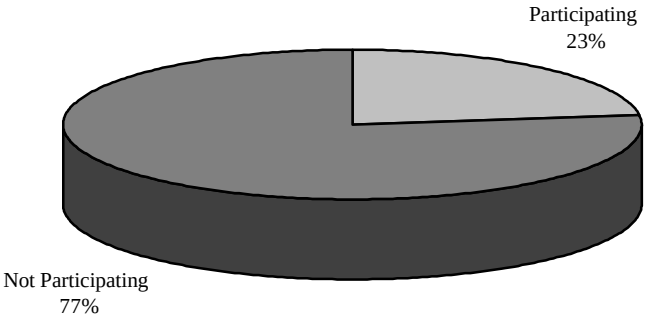

Figure 13. Managers of case-study agencies participating in NTI management training.

partnerships with educational institutions of various types ranging from technical schools to universities. For instance, MARTA collaborates with Georgia State University to customize employee-development courses. PT mechanic apprentices take courses at a local community college. SunLine and Sun Tran partner with the College of the Desert for alternative-fuel training.

The union, employees, supervisors, and managers participate in the design of comprehensive training programs at SunLine. Actions taken by these individuals include the identification of career paths and development methods as positions are created with new technology requirements. This approach encourages employee buy-in rather than creating fear of potential loss of positions because of technology improvements. Because of flexibility built into the labor contract and the agency's diversity of functions, SunLine offers employees many opportunities for cross training. Working within the seniority structure, HR solicits interest in training opportunities outside of employees' regular job classifications. Cross training helps to keep work interesting and, therefore, acts as a retention tool.

Since its inception, RTD has placed heavy emphasis on employee development. Several funding sources are available to support employees who want to upgrade knowledge and skills. Salaried employees can receive up to $2,000 in educational assistance and tuition reimbursement annually. Union employees can receive up to $750. In addition, each department maintains a budget for conferences and other professional-development activities. Budget allocations for department-required education average $45,000 per year. Planners, engineers, and IT employees take advantage of numerous development opportunities each year. In 2000, 25 members of the engineering staff attended training funded by the Professional Development Program, which is administered by HR training staff and by a budget line for job-required training.

Retention Strategies

Most agencies seem to have become aware recently that many recruitment and retention dollars are being wasted because of high turnover. However, each agency has instituted programs or activities identified in literature as best practices for retaining employees.

Importance of First Contacts

In a number of case-study agencies, retention efforts begin before the employee begins work. The initial contact with the agency is typically with an HR representative; therefore, the HR staff has an opportunity to make the employee feel connected immediately. For example, at PT the recruiter gives the bus-operator applicant "The Life of a Relief Transit Operator at Pierce Transit" (*46*), a document describing the worklife of an operator, as part of the employment-screening process. This document, which might be considered truth-in-packaging, demonstrates to the applicant that PT wants them to know about the positive and negative aspects of the job before making an employment decision. Similarly, at RTC/Citifare, the recruiting staff informs prospective employees of the realities of the bus-operator position and the stresses that come with it. At RTD, with the One-Stop-Job-Shop approach in which testing, interviewing, drug and alcohol testing, and physical examination are all completed on the day of application, the staff can immediately create a positive impression with the prospective employee.

Incentive Premiums

Incentive Premium for IT Professionals and Engineers. In addition to making adjustments in hiring salaries consistent with other major employers, RTD pays an incentive bonus of 10 percent of annual salary to IT professionals and engineers annually. This is a temporary preemption because of immediate market conditions. As the employment market stabilizes, this retention incentive may be withdrawn.

IT Personnel Incentive Pay. Several years ago, to address the high level of competition for IT employees, the Maryland DOT (which is the governance agency for MTA) reviewed all positions in this field and developed new classifications and compensation structures. An outgrowth of this analysis was the institution of a sign-on and recruitment bonus program for selected IT positions. The new employee receives a sign-on bonus of $3,000 paid in two lump sums; the first payment is upon satisfactory completion of their first 90 days, and the second payment is upon completion of their first 6 months of service.

Employees in mission-critical IT positions are eligible for annual bonuses of up to $3,000. A mission-critical project is a "defined IT project or IT system which is essential to the accomplishment of an agency's primary mission and key goals or delivery of services to any agency's customers."

Employee Surveys

Two employee-opinion surveys conducted at VTA in the past 4 years have helped to gauge progress toward the organizational goal of employee ownership, a proven retention strategy. The executive team uses survey results to reinforce current strategy or to make adjustments that will move the agency toward its strategic goals.

In the last fiscal year, MARTA conducted a random-sample survey of 10 percent of staff who had more than 5 years of service to find out why people stay at MARTA. The most frequent responses were that employees like what they do, working relationships, the management team, and job security. Employees stated that their greatest source of dissatisfaction was not being appreciated for their contributions.

Rotating Assignments

To retain new engineering employees, VTA implemented several 6-month rotations that allow new employees an opportunity to learn why surveying is important to construction work; to do hands-on construction-inspection work; and to work with a project engineer, reviewing engineering plans. In addition to keeping the work interesting, this strategy gives junior engineers a good foundation for growth and promotion.

Because most agencies have realized that many recruitment and retention dollars are wasted because of high turnover, agencies have instituted programs identified in literature as best practices for retaining employees. Figure 14 shows the range of commonly used retention strategies.

Wellness Programs

Wellness programs as a retention strategy focus on the connection between healthy work and healthy people. Frequently, these programs become part of other employee-involvement activities, in which employees play a large part in managing program activities. The scope of wellness programs found at case-study agencies range from awareness activities such as providing health-related brochures and other materials to full-fledged fitness facilities staffed by wellness professionals.

The RTD wellness program, operational since 1989, includes a fully equipped health facility staffed by wellness professionals and an on-the-job injury rehabilitation clinic. Smaller fitness facilities are available at outlying operations-department facilities. Health education activities, including health fairs and screenings are conducted using a variety of RTD and community resources.

The UTA Wellness Program is a quality-of-life program that has been operational since 1990. Recognized as a model program by other transit agencies, the mission of the program is "to provide wellness opportunities to our valued employees which support and maintain healthy lifestyle choices and promote an overall sense of well being." The 10-page booklet about the wellness program includes a letter of introduction signed by the HR director, the ATU president, and the wellness program administrator. Activities include sports programs, health evaluations for all employees and their spouses, a fitness facility at each worksite, health education, and discount tickets to recreational events in the community. In 2000, a total of 1,017 employees participated in one or more wellness activities.

The wellness program at MARTA is a comprehensive effort aimed at addressing employee health and well-being as a personal and bottom-line issue. Twice-a-year health fairs at facilities as well as monthly massages, brown-bag health education classes, and monthly health-promotion newsletters sent individually to employees are all well received. With fitness facilities at each location, employees can maintain healthy levels of physical activity at their own pace.

Annually, RTC contracts with a local vendor to conduct a health fair for RTC/Citifare employees that includes the option

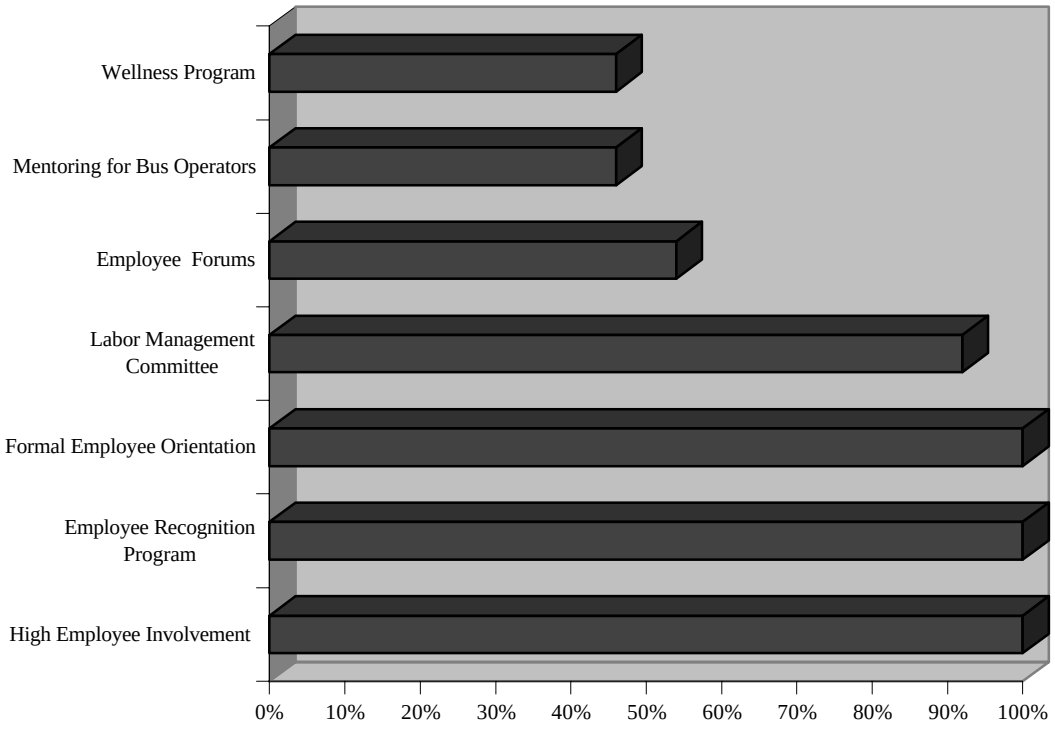

Figure 14. Most commonly used retention strategies at case-study agencies.

of a comprehensive blood-chemistry analysis paid for by RTC. Employees receive a confidential computer printout of results, which identifies health-risk factors and recommendations for lifestyle changes. The agency also offers free health-education workshops.

Highway to Health, a PT employee-committee program, sponsors health education and support aimed at helping employees make healthy lifestyle choices. VTA also provides health education materials and programs throughout the year.

Mentoring for New Bus-Operator Trainees

Several case-study agencies use peer mentoring, a training supplement that aids in retaining new bus operators. In some instances, mentoring is informal; in others, structured mentoring programs are in place. For instance, each new operator at DTA is assigned a mentor—a veteran operator with a good safety and service record who demonstrates aptitude for helping others.

The RTC/Citifare Mentor Program recruits volunteer veteran operators, supervisors, and trainers with superior technical and customer-relations skills to help new operators feel comfortable in their roles and in the agency. Each mentor receives mentoring skills training and a 7-percent increase in pay during the assignment period. The mentor program is credited with contributing to 28 percent fewer preventable accidents in 2000 as compared with 1999 and a 14-percent improvement in the number of accidents overall.

At PT, formal mentoring for new bus operators lasts through the new employee's 6-month probationary period. Mentors complete structured preparation for the role that includes an orientation to mentoring guidelines, checklists, and evaluation forms.

Employee Forums

Consistent open communication—upward, lateral, and downward—is critical to employees' feeling that they are part of the organization. While most case-study agencies disseminate regular written communications such as weekly bulletins and newsletters or have kiosks that run electronic messages available for employee review, the most personal type of communication is open-ended employee forums. For instance, at Sun Tran, the general manager conducts a monthly meeting, Let's Ask/Let's Talk, which is open to all employees. The UTA general manager conducts scheduled face-to-face meetings at all facilities, during which he fields questions and concerns of employees. In early 2001, he conducted 32 meetings in a 2-month period.

Approximately 5 years ago, relationships between management and mechanics at BRTA were so poor that the two groups were not on speaking terms except for absolutely required interaction. To address the discord, the director of maintenance started monthly informal "tailgate sessions" with mechanics. This strategy has paid dividends in improved interpersonal relationships and a more cooperative environment.

Weekly team meetings at ADT provide an opportunity for managers and employees to interact quickly about mutual concerns and discuss approaches for maintaining a quality working environment—for example, bus-operator complaints regarding back problems caused by uncomfortable seating resulted in the installation of new seats. This one action is believed to have contributed to the lack of industrial-injury claims at the agency.

In informal MARTA town hall meetings, HR staff goes to seven field facilities to listen and respond to questions of "employees where they live." Typically scheduled at between-shift times, these sessions give HR an opportunity to inform employees about available services such as the Employee Assistance Program and to discuss topics such as recruitment and compensation. If an employee has a question or concern that cannot be answered on the spot, HR staff gets back to the individual with a response within 3 business days.

Labor-Management Partnerships

The support for labor-management partnerships as a recruitment and retention tool in the transit industry has come from both sides, from both labor and management. Public support by national-level union leaders has played a significant role in helping to change the nature of labor relations through partnering. Labor-management partnerships, some included in labor-contract language or in side letters, others informal, are prevalent in case-study agencies. The typical labor-management partnership is a labor-management committee (LMC), often cochaired by a senior manager and the union president. Each case-study agency with an LMC was able to point to specific improvements in workplace relationships because of the work of the committee.

Sun Tran's 20-member LMC, in place for 20 years, is outlined in the labor agreement. The group uses the "round table" process, which allows each member an opportunity to raise and discuss issues. Typical items of discussion include marketing, operations, facilities, training, and safety issues.

At PT, the LMC has been in place for such a long time that it is now considered a way of doing business. Outcomes of the labor-management partnership include a reduction in grievances: employees filed only five grievances in 2000 compared with an average of 10 per year in 1996 and 1997. The union now supports internships that allow employees to work temporarily in other jobs as a means of preparing employees for future opportunities.

The RTD general manager initiated discussions with ATU leaders about forming the LMC in 1998 as a means of mutually resolving problems and enhancing working relationships between labor and management. In a 3-day off-site workshop in June 1998, the LMC, with the support of a representative

of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, established 17 ground rules, a mission statement, and objectives and action plans for the Relationship-by-Objective Program. The agreement signed by the 22 LMC labor and management representatives states, "We, the undersigned, are fully committed to the improvement objectives and actions developed during the workshop. We also recognize that this action plan is not designed to interfere with, conflict with, or substitute for the Collective Bargaining Agreement" (see Appendix B).

BRTA credits an active LMC with being the most effective retention tool for communication and feedback with employees. The LMC was formed in 1999 to address employee and management issues and to provide a forum for discussion and formal feedback to employees. The general manager describes the committee "as an extension of our open-door philosophy" and states that one of the advantages of the LMC is that it provides a better two-way communication process than the typical memo route. About the LMC, the general manager also states that it gives "management an opportunity to discuss policies and to elaborate detail. All involved develop a better picture and both labor and management own the issue. We deal with all kinds of operations and employees issues in the labor-management committee. It has a direct impact on retention by fostering input from and communication to employees."

The ADT director states that the flexibility adopted by the agency in recruitment, retention, and training strategies could not have been accomplished without the full knowledge and cooperation of the union. With an LMC that meets as needed, ADT enjoys a climate of "few or no grievances or issues."

The DTA LMC, established in 1996 by a side agreement to the collective-bargaining agreement, has as its mission "to create a positive atmosphere by fostering a working environment of trust and honesty, utilizing the strengths of both labor and management with a healthy respect for the teamwork needed to reach common goals, through open communication, problem solving and information sharing." In 1999, the team received an award presented by the Lake Superior Area Labor Management Association in recognition of partnership efforts that led to ". . . satisfied customers and an increase in overall ridership."

In 1995, three unions representing MTA employees entered an agreement to develop a collaborative working arrangement, the Labor and Management Partnership (LAMP), which was formalized as the LAMP Memorandum of Agreement. The agreement identifies that the purpose of the participants is to "establish and sustain a working relationship between the unions representing employees and MTA management that is consistent with, and supportive of the mission, vision and values of the MTA."

The VTA maintains a number of labor-management partnerships that, directly or indirectly, help to maintain a qualified workforce. One of these, the Benefits Committee, composed of five nonrepresented managers and representatives of three collective-bargaining units, began meeting monthly in early 2000. The committee operates under terms agreed to by side letters to establish and maintain a committee that focuses on making recommendations for uniform improvements in employee benefits reflective of the desires of employees.

Employee involvement, a major focus at UTA, has been given the title of "partnering." Partnering has taken place in significant ways over the past 3 years. Bargaining teams for UTA and ATU agreed to spend their first day of labor-contract negotiations in 1998 negotiating a definition of partnering from a labor-management perspective. According to the 1998 UTA-ATU contract newsletter, the parties agreed to the following:

> Partnering means managers are willing to share responsibility for employee interests and the union representatives are willing to share responsibility for running the business in an effective, customer-focused manner. Managers must take the responsibility for considering in good faith, the interests of the employee when making business decisions, while the union must take responsibility for considering in good faith, the business' interest while advocating for the employee.

Several broad organizational improvements have resulted from partnering at UTA. Specifically, structured partnering resulted in improvements in employee pensions, work-scheduling practices, repair-parts availability, employee involvement in the opening of a new division, and acquisition of convenient childcare for employees.

RTC/Citifare has a limited labor-management partnership between management and Teamsters Local Union 533, which represents bus operators. Quarterly, union stewards and management meet to discuss issues that may be of concern. Through the relationship built during the meet-and-discuss process, the agency has successfully initiated programs that offer development opportunities to union members, such as the mentor program, without opposition from the union.

ATC Phoenix management and union officials meet in regularly scheduled meetings to review contractual and non-contractual issues. These open and frank meetings focus on how the agency and the union can continue to build a strong and solid presence in the service area. The strategic partnering that results from improved management practices continues to be a primary by-product of these monthly and quarterly meetings.

A detailed discussion of labor-management partnerships is included in the Human-Resources Guide in Appendix B.

Formal Employee Orientation

Findings in one published research study revealed that 83 percent of the respondents reported that formal orientation programs are effective in retaining and motivating personnel. Although each case-study agency has a formal employee orientation, several identified this as an area that needs improvement if it is to reach its potential as a retention tool.

ADT's retention efforts begin with the new employee-orientation program, which introduces the employee to the culture and the goals of the organization. Beginning with the first week of training, employees are introduced to a working environment that respects their input and involvement, rewards involvement, and insists that each employee share responsibility for customer service.

PT introduces new employees to the organization through comprehensive, consistent means of orienting them to the agency's culture, benefits, and expectations. The program was structured in large part using survey feedback about new employee orientation, which was gained in 2000 from employees hired over a 2-year period. Led by HR staff, the orientation gives the new employee information about responsibilities and benefits and a complete view of the organization through a media presentation that focuses on the mission and history of the agency. The orientation also includes a system bus tour, meetings with coworkers, lunch with the supervisor, department-specific orientation, assignment to a buddy, social time with coworkers, and a formal probationary discussion.

Sun Tran finds that the employee-orientation program is an effective retention tool. The orientation program introduces new employees to a culture that values upward communication and feedback. During orientation, employees are informed of several committees that review and resolve operational issues and are encouraged to "be as involved as they want to be."

ATC Phoenix has an extensive employee-orientation program that assists new employees in becoming familiar with the transit industry, plant facilities, and job expectations. The general manager meets with each group of new employees and reviews his goals, the corporate structure of the agency, and the structure of the city of Phoenix Public Transit Department. Additionally, he highlights benefits of the mentoring program and the agency's open-door policy.

Communication with new MARTA employees begins with a 2-day orientation to the organization's culture. During orientation, senior managers emphasize the agency's vision and mission. The New Employee Sponsorship Program, a component of new employee orientation, matches the new employee with a "sponsor" employee from the same department to provide him or her with essential information and support during his or her first months at MARTA. The program has proven effective in helping to eliminate apprehension new employees may have in adjusting to an unfamiliar environment.

Employee Recognition

According to a number of research studies, employees tend to be more satisfied and stay longer in organizations that recognize and value the employees' contributions. Case-study agencies reported a variety of methods for recognizing employees in formal and informal ways. Table 2 summarizes employee-recognition programs at eight case-study agencies.

High Employee Involvement

Repeatedly, employees responding to surveys on what motivates them and makes them feel good about the work environment report the need to think creatively and to be involved in decisionmaking about their work and quality of worklife. Studies also reveal that employees expect to be heard; to be involved in carrying out the organization's mission; and to work in a culture of inclusion, respect, and appreciation.

According to one member of the ADT management team, "communication is emphasized and we strive to involve drivers in the big picture." Operators routinely provide input into administrative decisions, including recommendations for new bus shelters, signage and route changes, and safety issues. In response, operators assume additional responsibilities such as providing visiting riders assistance with directions and acting as informal tour guides for passengers.

At DTA, the Operations Department Safety Committee is an example of how employees exert influence in day-to-day operations. In January 2000, the committee—composed of managers and bus operators—set out to identify safety issues within operations. The committee identified 5 safety-related issues and made 16 recommendations for change. As a result of one recommendation, the agency developed a line practice instructor job description that requires instructors of new operators to have an excellent work record, a positive temperament, and a willingness to train others.

Throughout the year, employees at PT provide input on decisions that affect their ability to meet the needs of constituents. A series of committees and task forces form the structure by which employees have their say and hold managers accountable for communicating with them regarding the outcomes of their participation. Notices posted requesting volunteers for a work-life activity are quickly filled with volunteer signatures. One employee involvement activity is the Critical Incident Peer Support Team, a group of trained employees available by pager, 24 hours a day, to help fellow employees cope with stress brought about by abnormal situations. Another activity is the Seeking Excellence and Recognizing Coworker Heroes (SEARCH) Committee, which has the motto "Happy workers are more productive!" The committee plans fun and morale-boosting events for coworkers. The SEARCH Committee also has the authority to recognize and reward fellow employees.

At RTC/Citifare, operations-department mentors serve on a variety of committees such as the Planning Committee with RTC transportation planners, in which they provide input into decisionmaking regarding proposed bus stops and service changes. The mentors' experience on the street gives them the background to provide concrete input on the feasibility of requests for changes, including input on safety considerations such as Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) accessibility. In the May 2001 service changes, 10 of 14 changes resulted from operator and mentor suggestions.

RTC/Citifare maintenance employees volunteer for and lead the quarterly maintenance safety committee meetings. A

TABLE 2 Examples of employee-recognition programs

AGENCY	FORMAL	INFORMAL
ATC PHOENIX	• Team of the Quarter • Team of the Year • Annual Recognition Banquet	• Spot Awards: movie or dinner tickets, day off with pay, lunch with general manager, etc.
DULUTH TRANSIT AUTHORITY	• Employee of the Month/Year • Annual Appreciation Breakfast • Safety Banquet	• Annual Barbecue • Annual Picnic/Golf Tournament and Games
METROPOLITAN ATLANTA RAPID TRANSIT AUTHORITY	• Expanded Staff Ceremony	• Martariffic Awards • Thank-you kits • Golf tournament • Annual Holiday Party
PIERCE TRANSIT	• Seeking Excellence and Recognizing Heroes (SEARCH) Program • Perfect Attendance, Safety, Employee of Quarter, Honor Roll	• Employee accomplishments highlighted in agency newsletter • Ice cream social for service awards
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION/ CITIFARE	• Service Awards • Hall of Fame • Employee of the Month • Employee Suggestion Program	• Monthly birthday recognitions • Passenger compliments posted • Features in monthly newsletter
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT	• Outstanding Achievement Award • GM's Award • Service Award • Annual Recognition Celebration	• Dining Dollars • Wellness/Community Service Gift Certificates/Savings Bonds • Annual Picnic
SANTA CLARA VALLEY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY	• Employees of the Month/Year • Manager's Award • Million-Mile Safety Award • Annual Employee Recognition Dinner	• Annual Family Day • Employee Recognition Pizza Parties
UTAH TRANSIT AUTHORITY	• Years of Service Awards • Accident-Free Driving Award • Million-Miler Award	• Employees submit articles to employee newsletter recognizing efforts of others

master technician chairs the safety committee; another technician records and types the minutes on his home computer and posts the minutes on maintenance bulletin boards. As a group, these employees have the authority to make recommendations about such safety matters as types of signage, posting of signs, purchase of safety equipment, and the acquisition of different types of hearing protection.

One of the five areas of focus in the VTA Business Plan is employee ownership: ". . . a personal and conscious level of commitment to enthusiastically support and participate in achieving the goals of the organization." The agency emphasizes employee communication and employee involvement as key components of its strategy to get employees to take ownership for providing quality service delivery. The regular presence of the executive team in facilities demonstrates to front-line managers and supervisors the value of getting and using employee input. What the general manager refers to as the "personal touch," although not comfortable for some individuals, especially those who come from a tradition of autocratic management, is a critical piece of a commitment to encourage employee ownership in all aspects of work at VTA.

Overview of Appendix B: Human-Resources Guide

Appendix B is the stand-alone Human-Resources Guide developed during this research. The guide is a reference tool of best practices that small, medium, and large transit agencies in different geographic locations have found effective in recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce, especially in difficult-to-recruit and -retain benchmark positions. In each case, the best practice has been used for at least 1 year with

positive results. The guide also highlights the role of labor-management partnerships in maintaining a qualified workforce, especially in the study benchmark positions.

Most practices come from agencies that were among the 53 respondents to the industry survey that was mailed to 200 transit agencies throughout the United States. Other practices were identified through a brief survey conducted during an APTA Human Resources Committee meeting. Each practice is identified by transit agency and is described in detail, including background information about what issue the practice was designed to address, who the implementers are, steps in implementing the practice, resources requirements, how the practice was tested, revisions to original practice, how success is measured, management's commitment to practice, and lessons learned.

The guide is divided into three sections. The first section describes 18 best practices, most of which have a single focus of recruitment, training, or retention. Other practices that have two or three areas of focus are categorized as combination practices. Three additional practices that show promise, but have not had sufficient testing to reach best-practices status, are categorized as promising practices.

The second section is the Labor-Management Partnership Guide and is divided into three subsections: (1) transit labor-management partnership case studies, (2) guidelines for establishing a labor-management partnership, and (3) attachments that document labor-management partnership processes at three transit agencies.

The third section, Human-Resources Self-Assessment for Maintaining a Qualified Workforce in Difficult-to-Recruit and Difficult-to-Retain Positions, is a tool that transit agencies can use to assess their difficult-to-recruit and -retain positions and monitor their workforce needs. The tool was field tested with a panel of transit HR professionals to ensure its applicability.

The diversity of practices under each category demonstrates the extent to which organizations have learned to consider internal and external factors in determining how to best respond to the need to maintain a qualified workforce. The recruitment section includes seven practices:

1. Employee referral sign-on bonus program to address the shortage of bus-operator applicants at Citibus in Lubbock, Texas;
2. e-Recruiting to increase the ease with which job searchers can apply at the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority in Washington, D.C.;
3. Partnership established by Dallas Area Rapid Transit in Dallas, Texas, with a private technical school in Wyoming to ensure that the agency consistently meets mechanic-recruitment goals;
4. Partnership established by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority partners with community-based organizations to recruit bus-operator applicants;
5. RTD re-engineering of its bus operator- and mechanic-recruitment processes into a one-stop job shop to increase both the efficiency and effectiveness of the hiring process for these positions;
6. Radio and television advertising at Metro Transit in Minneapolis, Minnesota, implemented by a multidisciplinary team to address the issues of a diminishing pool of bus-operator applicants; and
7. Collaborative efforts of the marketing and HR departments at VTA that resulted in a successful marketing campaign to attract as many applicants as possible, especially bus operators and mechanics.

Best practices at the Transit Authority of River City (TARC) in Louisville, Kentucky, and at the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) in Jacksonville, Florida, demonstrate how two agencies maximized resources to accomplish training goals:

- TARC used a multifaceted approach to enhance the learning of its maintenance staff. Rather than hire an outside consultant to conduct on-site inspections of the new buses, TARC sent a team of maintenance personnel to the plant to learn inspection skills as buses were being manufactured. The agency also implemented performance-based instruction for maintenance staff to fill the gap between existing knowledge and skills needed to repair the new buses.
- At JTA, in an effort to increase employees' capability for advancement, the agency began using a combination of a previously untapped free resource—the city government training courses—and courses of local technical schools, colleges, and universities to prepare employees for future opportunities.

Retention efforts featured include a variety of employee-orientation, quality-of-worklife, and recognition programs:

- Orientation programs at Central Ohio Transit Authority in Columbus, Ohio, and at TARC help new employees feel welcome and part of the organization from their first day of work.
- The high-involvement employee committee structure at PT in Tacoma, Washington, gives employees authority to take actions that make a difference in coworker health and well-being.
- RTD's Champions of Transit Program, an integrated recognition effort, shows appreciation for employee involvement in community-, organization-, and personal-development activities.

Agencies use a combination of practices to simultaneously address recruitment, training, and retention issues, sometimes addressing two of these issues, other times all three. Four combination practices are featured:

1. At ATC Phoenix, in response to awareness that the agency was not attracting and retaining Hispanic bus operators, the agency recruited a bilingual trainer to increase the retention rate and, as a by-product, also to increase the recruitment capability of the agency.
2. The mentor program at RTC/Citifare is a cost-effective practice that enhances the likelihood that bus-operator trainees will successfully complete training and remain employed at the agency. A second practice at the agency is the university, CU, which provides advanced education to operations-department staff and has resulted in a fewer passenger complaints and a change in supervisor behavior.
3. Metro-North Railroad in New York City, in response to difficulties in recruiting and retaining IT professionals, conducted a number of assessments to determine the causes of these difficulties and used these data to design a successful effort that includes recruitment, training, and retention components.
4. With the goal of making San Mateo County Transit District in San Mateo, California, an employer of choice for bus operators, an interdisciplinary team developed a strategy that includes incentive pay, a public-employers job fair, rearrangement of the scheduling structure, and an agency "branding" initiative.

Practices that show promise but have been in operation for less than 1 year include a bilingual training collaboration with a local community college, a career-progression initiative, and customized community outreach:

- In an effort to increase the number of bus operators with Spanish-speaking skills, DART established a relationship with a community college that has an English-as-a-second-language program. The agency gives the college its new bus-operator curriculum to use as a tool for teaching prospective applicants terminology they will need as bus operators.
- The inability of PT to retain employees in technical fields such as IT and planning prompted the agency to institute a career-progression program whereby employees can advance in their salary classification without a position vacancy occurring.
- At San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), the HR staff, in collaboration with all other departments, instituted (in fall 2001) a customized community outreach effort. The effort is (1) to reach out to individuals who may be excellent employee prospects but who have not identified BART as a possible employer and (2) to begin to create an inviting employer-of-choice reputation within each community that BART serves.

In the Labor-Management Partnership Guide section (the second section), descriptions of the labor-management partnerships in place at case-study agencies are detailed. Following the case studies are guidelines for establishing labor-management partnerships that are based on researchers' expertise, best practices cited in literature, and resources from private and public entities that specialize in partnering education and facilitation. Attachments from three transit agencies—the Port Authority of Allegheny County in Pittsburgh, MTA in Baltimore, and RTD in Denver—document labor-management partnership processes at their agencies.

The HR self-assessment tool (the third section) provides transit agencies with a starting point for assessing current workforce needs and for forecasting future needs and workforce resources. The tool requires transit agencies to examine policies, practices, and other factors that may influence their ability to maintain a qualified workforce, especially in difficult-to-recruit and difficult-to-retain positions. The tool is not intended to be all inclusive of factors that can be considered in maintaining a qualified workforce. It does, however, include major categories essential to such efforts. Responding to the tool may require a team effort in that the researchers view recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce from a total-system perspective. The tool includes four categories of assessment:

1. HR mission,
2. Accountability for HR activities,
3. Difficult-to-recruit positions, and
4. Difficult-to-retain positions.

Under each category, a series of questions and instructions guide the development of a map of current staffing in difficult-to-recruit and -retain positions and sheds light on action steps that can be taken to alleviate current shortages and prevent future gaps in maintaining qualified staff in these positions.

CHAPTER 3

MANAGEMENT PROFILE FOR MAINTAINING A QUALIFIED WORKFORCE

Transit agencies struggle with the same workforce shortage and turnover challenges as employers in other industries. Some agencies, especially in urban areas, have a particularly difficult time attracting and retaining employees in a broad range of occupations.

An extensive amount of research data, both qualitative and quantitative, formed the basis for 13 case studies and an HR guidebook of best practices for recruiting, training, and retaining a qualified workforce. As researchers investigated the strategies agencies are using and what has been tried successfully and unsuccessfully, the research team cross-checked and validated among case studies those factors that have the greatest effect on whether agencies succeed in securing and maintaining the workforce they need now and will need in the future. The use of multiple modes of analysis strengthened the validity of the case studies and provided a plausible basis for making the best-practices guidebook a useful tool for transit managers facing similar workforce challenges.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Organizations that view employee recruitment and retention as an organizational priority are the most successful in dealing with the uncertainties of a changing work environment and workforce. Clearly, most case-study agencies fall into this category. Some agencies have focused on internal collaboration for some time; however, with recent turbulence in the economy, the lack of sufficient numbers of qualified applicants, and the tendency for employees to shop around for the best offer, all agencies have had to come to grips with the changing environment. To address the challenges of recruiting employees in the benchmark positions, agencies have made shifts in thinking, policies, and practices related to how to best recruit and retain a qualified workforce.

Transit agencies are beginning to realize that recruitment and retention are complementary components of the employment cycle, not separate issues. Likewise, agencies now understand that recruitment and retention are not solely the responsibility of the HR department—rather, these issues are functions of the HR philosophy of the entire organization. This realization has prompted organizations to start to look at the "what, why, how, where, and when" of recruitment and retention. Case-study agencies are placing increasing responsibility on line managers to be involved in planning for, recruiting, and retaining the workforce they need. The ways in which agencies accomplish this vary; however, in most cases, the senior HR manager is a member of the executive staff. In these instances, this manager participates in strategic direction-setting deliberations. Typically, the HR manager is the individual accountable for internal and external environmental scanning related to the workforce implications of planned service changes, construction projects, or other major organizational changes. This scanning takes a number of forms and often requires a review of current workforce demographics and timelines for projected projects.

Awareness of the interrelatedness of why people come to work at an organization and why they stay or leave has resulted in a number of agencies partnering within departments that were once thought unrelated to recruitment and retention. Marketing departments are now called upon to lend their expertise to recruitment advertising. Department managers are expected to help develop recruitment plans and to make public presentations specifically to help with recruiting employees. Supervisors, trainers, and job incumbents participate in recruitment fairs and on applicant screening panels. Performance appraisals of managers now include sections on employee-development activities the managers have supported during the appraisal period.

Commonalties in Workforce Issues

The workforce issues that case-study agencies face vary from locale to locale, among different sizes of agencies, and based on different types of governance structures. Higher ridership has placed pressures on each agency to recruit and retain bus operators and mechanics—for instance, each agency has a training wage for bus operators that is lower than the post-training wage. Agencies that hire all new operators as part-time employees with uncertain schedules face a particularly difficult time recruiting and retaining employees. Even agencies that hire full-time operators, in most cases as a result of labor-contract provisions that dictate seniority as the basis for assignments, assign these new employees to the extra-board. The long hours and uncertainty of schedules and assignments of the extra-board create stress that often leads to employees resigning or being terminated within the first

year of employment. The revolving door created by this series of circumstances brings to bear pressures on the recruiting, training, and operations staffs. Ultimately, with extremely high turnover rates, service to the public suffers.

Difficulty recruiting and retaining computer programmers and analysts is reflective of a general environment in which IT employees tend to move from employer to employer based on a number of factors. As cited in the literature and borne out by stories told by transit-agency managers and recruiters, these employees expect to be engaged in interesting work using the latest technology. Also, with high demand for their services, IT employees often leave for higher pay within 2 to 3 years. Researchers saw this pattern in each agency that identified IT employees as difficult to recruit and retain.

In the case of planners and engineers, the perception that public-sector work is boring and out of step with current practice is a hindrance to recruiting employees. In addition, agencies find that they cannot compete with private-sector salaries for more senior employees in these fields.

Organizational Structure Implications

In smaller case-study agencies, recruitment, training, and retention functions typically are combined with operations. The transit director or director of operations takes on functions that the HR administrator, director, or vice president has responsibility for in larger agencies. In larger agencies, HR departments typically are subdivided into a variety of functional units. Although the location of the function may differ from agency to agency, focused attention on maintaining a qualified workforce is constant.

In agencies such as BRTA, ADT, ATC Phoenix, and MTA, larger corporate or governmental entities provide HR policies and procedures to guide the function. Although some decisionmaking can be made at the local level, the HR infrastructure is provided by the larger corporate or governmental entity. In these settings, the oversight structures and policies guide decisionmaking in certain functions that affect the agency's ability to make independent decisions about strategies for recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce. In some cases, the oversight is supportive of agency recruitment and retention needs; in other cases, it is a barrier. In one instance in which the compensation structure was so rigid that the agency could not offer competitive wages, best efforts to recruit and retain a qualified workforce were thwarted. In another instance in which policies were flexible enough to allow for independent local action, the agency was able to design a strategy that worked well for the local job market.

Agencies set up as special authorities or districts have more autonomy in responding to the uncertainty in the general environment and labor market. In many cases, making changes in policy is a matter of identifying a need, working collaboratively with stakeholders to make the case for the change, drafting the appropriate language, getting support from the senior management team, and taking the proposed policy to the governing board for action within a matter of a few months. Although this description may appear simplistic on the surface, it requires that the HR department operate from a strong knowledge and influence base. HR managers in case-study agencies typically are college educated, and a number have advanced degrees in public administration, behavioral sciences, or law. In addition, these individuals maintain high profiles in trade organizations in human resources and transportation at state and national levels. In a number of instances, top priority is placed on hiring midlevel HR managers with degrees or currently pursuing degrees. Some agencies provide financial assistance for HR staff to become certified in their area of specialization. One message in these actions is that a higher level of expertise and analytical ability are required of employees responsible for providing leadership in human resources than was the case in the past when the HR function was viewed primarily as clerical in nature.

Partnering as an Organizational Priority

Partnering as a strategy for helping an organization attract and maintain a qualified workforce is gaining popularity in the transit industry. Although UTA presents the most concrete case-study example of an agency that embraces partnering as an organizational priority, each agency demonstrated aspects of partnering in varying degrees. Partnering takes many forms ranging from the executive team becoming strategic partners by providing leadership required to ensure a qualified workforce, to HR partnering with user departments, to HR partnering with marketing departments to "brand" the agency as an employer of choice, to management and union forming labor-management partnerships, to HR partnering with employees as internal recruitment and retention resources, to HR partnering with community workforce-development agencies and educational institutions.

Variations of each partnering approach have reaped positive results. When the executive team works together to clarify organizational goals, values, and competencies, the rest of the organization gets a clear picture of expectations at all levels. The management-competency profile recently developed by Houston Metro, a non-case-study industry survey respondent, illustrates the results of one executive team's partnering efforts to identify values, clusters of competencies, and specific behaviors needed by managers. In the profile shown in Figure 15, in the innermost circle are the core values that every employee in the agency is expected to embrace in his or her day-to-day work. The next circle outlines clusters of competencies required to demonstrate values. The outer circle lists specific behaviors managers must exhibit to demonstrate competencies within each cluster.

Houston Metro has also developed competency profiles at other levels, including the executive level. These profiles now

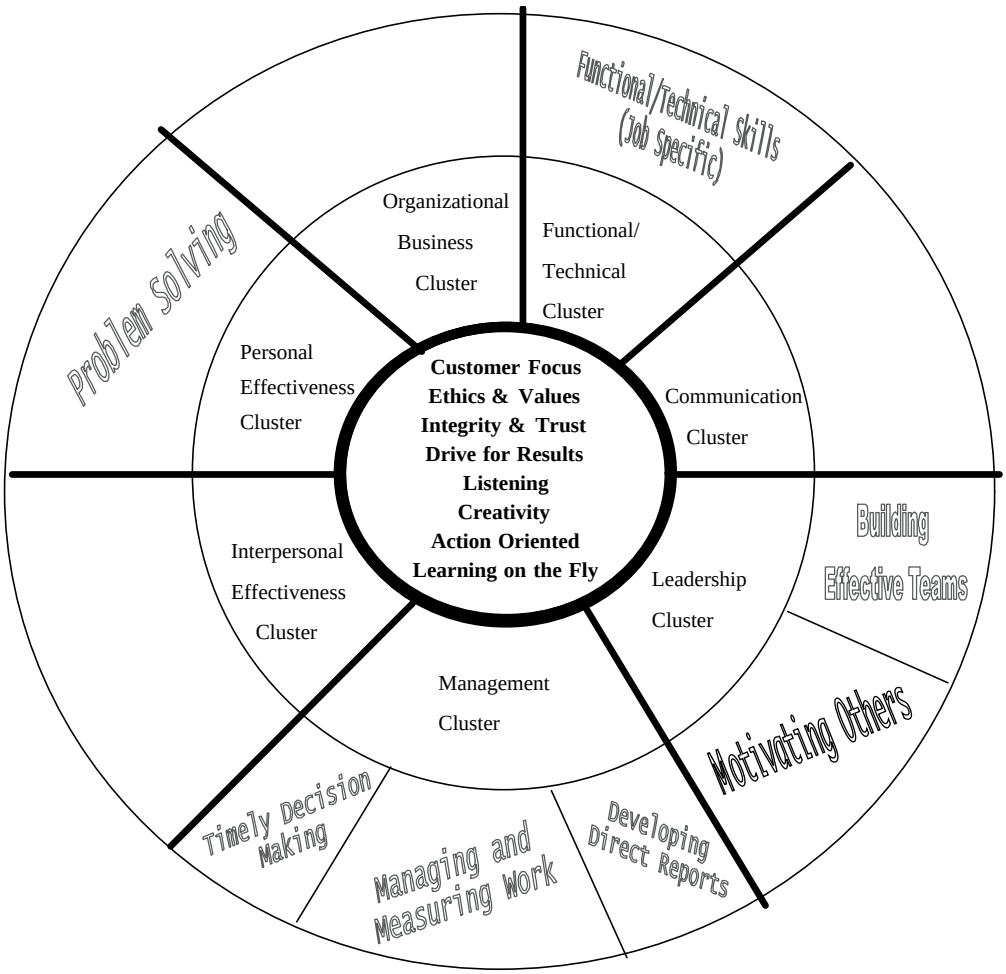

Figure 15. Houston Metro sample management competency profile.

serve as roadmaps for the kinds of skills and employees needed to carry out the agency's values. With this tool, as shown in Figure 16, internal HR consultants have direction about how they are to function to support managers who have frontline responsibility for bringing about the cultural change that will make espoused values real for employees who provide services to internal and external customers.

At UTA, partnering efforts are driven by the strategic direction set forth by its board of directors in 1998. The agency understood the cultural change required and the need to prepare staff to make shifts in perspectives and behaviors. Over a 3-year period, UTA engaged a large portion of its employees in voluntary training that helped participating employees understand the organizational vision and learn problem-solving skills essential to support cultural change. Subsequent involvement of these employees on task teams to work on issues of concern to them resulted in a number of substantive changes. As employees have seen their efforts rewarded by implementation of their ideas, they have become more willing to invest in their futures in the organization and in the transportation future of their community. Although other agencies are beginning partnering efforts, they have not reached the outcome levels evident at UTA.

One of the most successful partnering approaches with employees is the use of employee-referral programs in which the referring employee is paid for each new hire he or she recommends. For a very modest payout of funds, some agencies receive up to 30 percent of new hires from employee referrals. The rationale behind this success is that current employees know the values of the organization and tend to refer people who fit the corporate culture and performance expectations. Another benefit of employee referrals is that data show that internally referred employees tend to remain employed longer than others.

Another popular and cost-effective partnering effort is peer mentoring, especially for new bus operators. Shaped to fit the unique needs of the organization, mentoring programs make use of existing employees with superior customer-relations skills and work records. By pairing a new operator with an outstanding veteran, the agency benefits both parties: the new

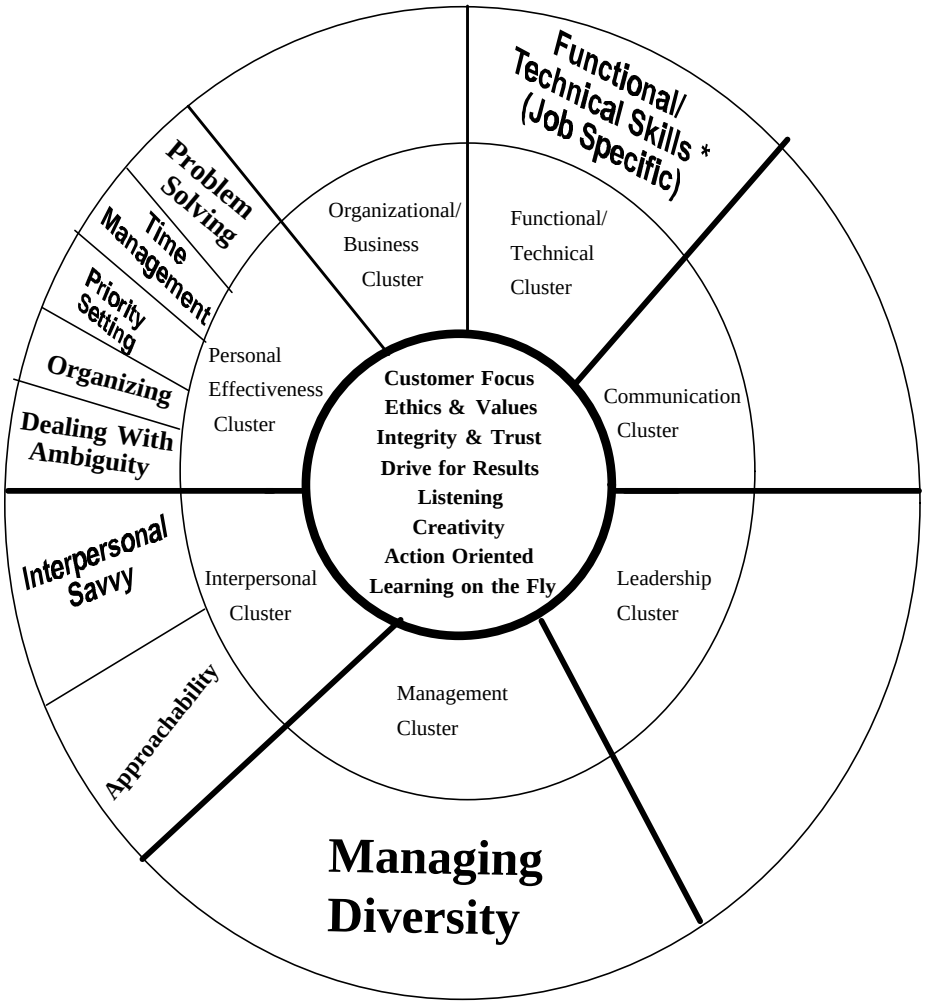

Figure 16. Houston Metro human-resource consultant competency model.

operator has a safe resource for asking questions and receiving support during the first critical months of employment; the mentor feels valued, passes along job knowledge and strategies for operator success, and provides support while receiving compensation and recognition.

Creativity in Recruitment Strategies

One of the areas of greatest creativity in maintaining a qualified workforce has been in recruitment strategies that agencies have implemented to attract new workers. As illustrated in Appendix A, each case-study agency, having experienced some level of difficulty recruiting employees, has gone well beyond the typical advertising of positions in the local newspaper. In some instances, agencies have found that this time-tested approach no longer reaches the populations they want to attract. The reality is that recruitment is not what it used to be: now, it must be grounded in the business strategy of the organization and must consider the unique characteristics of varied target audiences. Transit agencies are recognizing that they must communicate that they are not just providers of transportation services, but that they are also good, stable employers that provide opportunities for career and personal growth. There are a variety of ways agencies can get their employment opportunity messages across: help-wanted television and radio ads; billboard and bus-bench signs; transit station banners; signs inside of, on the sides, and, on the back of coaches; and notices in transit schedules and in church bulletins.

As agencies have become more sophisticated about being in a competitive market, they have drawn upon practices of other employers in local and national markets. The range of approaches for re-engineering the entire recruitment process to make it move faster and more effectively is an interesting mix. Transit agencies now go to career fairs with a list of "hot jobs" for which they want to interview and make job offers on the spot pending background checks. In one agency, applicants apply for bus-operator and mechanic positions and

take the screening test and complete the interview, drug and alcohol testing, and physical exam in 1 day. In other instances, a recruiter is assigned project-manager responsibilities for a department. By maintaining constant contact with the customer department, this individual is aware of anticipated staffing needs and takes proactive steps to develop pools of potential employees sometimes before the formal vacancy announcement.

Recruiter fatigue and increasing recruitment expenses have required agencies to look at what works and what is a wasteful use of resources. Although most agencies do not have reliable methods for determining the return on investments of each type of recruitment effort, some have begun establishing tracking mechanisms. The most common approach is to ask the person at the time of application how he or she learned about the position. With these data, some agencies are revising recruitment strategies to focus on activities that yield the greatest number of qualified applicants. Through analysis of these data, HR staffs are in a better position to make the business case for recruitment-resource requests.

"Grow Our Own" Strategy

The "grow our own" recruitment and retention strategy is frequently used for benchmark positions in IT, engineering, and planning. Often, transit agencies cannot offer competitive salaries for employees in supervisory and project-management positions in these fields. Recruiting new graduates and, in some cases, interns is part of an effective strategy for acquiring and developing qualified staff in these departments. Another part of the strategy is to craft a message that the transit agency has a mission of service that adds value to the community and that these employees will be involved in exciting work using up-to-date methods and resources. This message is particularly important to the age group that will typically be available for entry-level positions in these fields. The message works best when presented in multiple formats including personal contacts, websites, and college placement-office information sheets.

Another component of maintaining qualified staff in these disciplines is to ensure that the promises of interesting work and the use of state-of-the-art technology are kept. These workers also value knowing how they contribute to the bottom line and expect to have say-so on how they make these contributions. Managers who understand this new worker and maintain a flexible posture in relating to and responding to their interests and needs can reap benefits of high-quality work and longer employee tenure.

Training: A Recruitment and Retention Strategy

Increasingly, transit agencies are realizing that training is an essential part of a recruitment and retention strategy. As work requirements change and become more complex, employers are having to reassess the role of training whether in initial preparation or in continuing education of the workforce. The use of technology in every job category is apparent, and current workers or applicants must possess basic skills and, in many cases, must be proficient in the use of technology. In the past, transit agencies have relied on applicants for benchmark positions having needed skills. With the changing demographics of the workforce (i.e., the quality and quantity of available workers), the expanding economy, an increased demand for public transportation services, and increased competition for workers, there are not enough qualified workers to fill positions. In some instances, agencies must provide remedial education in order for workers to qualify for positions. In other cases, because of the lack of training programs in the local community, agencies must operate their own basic and advanced training programs.

Links with Community-Based Workforce-Development Resources

Some case-study agencies have made substantive connections with community-based recruitment and retention resources. Several agencies partner with welfare-to-work organizations and the Job Corps to train workers in a mechanic apprenticeship program. Connecting with such agencies requires ongoing community outreach by the transit agency to determine new workforce-development resources. It also requires openness to unconventional avenues for developing and attracting a qualified workforce. In one instance, when a case-study agency linked with a welfare-to-work skills provider to initiate a program to prepare recently released ex-offenders for entry-level positions, it was taking a long-term view of workforce development.

One of the more common approaches to linking with community workforce-development resources is to partner with local technical schools and community colleges to provide skill-based training. This mechanism, used frequently for mechanic-training programs, fosters a collaboration that benefits both parties. Technical schools and community colleges, especially public institutions, are in the business of serving educational needs of local residents and have occupational education as part of their mission. The schools often need equipment and technical advisors for their programs, both of which transit agencies can provide. Case-study agencies report using these schools to conduct initial assessments of prospective apprentices and to have apprentices take formal coursework that supplements the on-the-job training the agencies provide.

Recently, a number of transit agencies initiated their own "corporate universities" by combining onsite community colleges and university college-transfer courses and other courses. This approach has proved especially beneficial for preparing employees for advancement opportunities by allowing them to test the waters of attending college in a nonthreatening envi-

ronment. As transit agencies raise expectations of managers as partners in recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce, the standards for qualifying for these positions increasingly include some college education. The transit tradition of promoting the best bus operator or mechanic to management positions solely based on experience is fading and being replaced with requirements for formal education in employee and business management. In some cases, new supervisors and managers are required to complete full supervisory or management-certification programs before or immediately following a promotion.

The transit industry received a boost in its workforce-development resources for benchmark positions when the NTI at Rutgers University initiated the annual Transit Trainers' Workshop in 1994. Most case-study agencies use this conference to provide basic education for newly promoted trainers and to prepare them for the changing role of trainers as internal performance consultants. By showcasing transit agencies with exemplary training programs and external consultants who are experts in contemporary and emerging training strategies, the workshop provides training staff with the skills needed to facilitate the education of diverse trainees. Training programs of several case-study agencies have received awards for outstanding quality at the workshop.

The use of tuition reimbursement by agencies is a method for providing initial and continuing education for transit employees. Several agencies allow reimbursement for courses related to the employee's current position, as well as for courses that prepare them for future opportunities. For benchmark positions that require a college degree as an entry-level qualification, providing this benefit is a powerful retention tool. In some instances, the benefit is provided to union and nonunion employees.

Retention Strategies

On the industry survey, case-study agencies rated retention strategies lower in effectiveness more often than recruitment and training strategies. An analysis of the responses revealed that a number of retention activities had been in place for less than 1 year. This finding is consistent with literature-search results that frequently identify retention as a weak link in the employment cycle. Transit agencies, like other employers, have traditionally spent much time and energy ensuring that positions are filled and that employees receive appropriate training. Much less attention has been paid to retaining employees. Retention strategies that all case-study agencies use include new employee orientation, high employee involvement, and employee recognition. Each of these strategies allows the employee to connect with the mission and goals of the organization at a personal level. Agencies that rate these strategies highly tend to have structured programs, and most include involvement in a significant way by the chief executive officer.

One case-study agency has formed an interdepartmental retention committee in the past several months. A second conducted a retention study in early 2001. This agency also uses employee exit-interview data to assess the work place climates of employees who are terminating. Analysis of exit-interview data revealed that the most frequent reason given for voluntary termination was poor supervision. As a result, management training and accountability have been enhanced. All of these actions are valuable starting points.

LABOR-MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS

One of the major research questions in this study related to determining what role labor-management partnerships play in recruiting, training, and retaining a qualified workforce. This question was addressed from four perspectives: (1) factors that contribute to the decision to form a labor-management partnership, (2) forms partnerships take, (3) what makes partnerships effective, and (4) differences in partnerships in large and small agencies. Appendix B provides a detailed analysis of each labor-management partnership reviewed during the study.

Impetus for Labor-Management Partnerships

The team discovered a primary pattern for why labor and management in case-study agencies formed partnerships. The formation of a labor-management partnership was frequently triggered by a sense of urgency brought on by a major organizational change, problem, or crisis. Whether a change in leadership (either union or management), a funding crisis, or a strike, there was a sense of urgency that the unproductive relationship between labor and management needed to change if both parties were to achieve their goals. The attempt at partnering was frequently a method of survival. In a number of cases, the parties initially took a short-term view to overcome the immediate issues. Several examples illustrate this perspective.

At UTA, the hiring of a new general manager was the catalyst for the partnering relationship. The union felt and had convinced the board of directors that it had a serious and ongoing conflict with the former general manager. Also, issues with potential funding shortfalls influenced both parties to focus on survival. The union wanted to take action that would help it develop a better relationship with the new leader.

At SunLine, a new general manager with an ambitious agenda wanted to change the existing bus fleet from diesel to compressed natural gas (CNG). He needed the support of the union because he was requesting funding and technical support from state and federal governments and from California utilities. Coordination of this effort required precision timing and union cooperation. The general manager also wanted to convert the operation to CNG on a 1-day total-fleet conversion. Additionally, he had a growth plan to develop the busi-

ness, which included introducing different types of businesses at the agency. Through partnering with the union, he was able to balance a potential crisis situation of the fleet change with a crisis situation of the union trying to maintain and possibly grow their jobs.

At VTA, the facilitating factor was a new general manager's commitment to labor-management relations moving out of the historical county government adversarial-type relationship to a new open communication atmosphere. At Denver's RTD, efforts to form a partnering relationship since the early 1990s had, for the most part, been fruitless until a new general manager started discussions about a labor-management committee at a time when the union was addressing its own leadership crisis. Clearly, the introduction of new leadership can provide a period of opportunity that, when properly exploited, permits the parties to introduce the partnering concept.

Forms of Labor-Management Partnerships

Most labor-management partnerships in case-study agencies take the form of a formal LMC. Structurally, most LMCs include the general manager or another senior manager and the president of the union, who frequently serve as cochairs. In some cases, if the top leaders of labor or management cannot attend a meeting, it is rescheduled. Other LMC representatives are union members designated by the union, typically union stewards, and managers of major organizational units. Some LMCs are outlined in labor-contract language, others in side letters, and others by informal agreement. As a rule, LMCs hold monthly meetings with agendas set by any committee member bringing forth an item for consideration. Most often, meeting minutes are posted on bulletin boards throughout the organization. Each committee has a tracking mechanism to ensure that items discussed and designated for additional research or other consideration are addressed in a timely way.

Challenges Faced by Partners

Often, the parties in case-study agencies lacked appreciation for the length of time necessary to make a labor-management partnership work or to instill and sustain new behaviors required for cooperative efforts. Members of the LMC between the VTA management and the County Employees Management Association (CEMA), which represents first-line managers and supervisors, report that it took 1 year for the VTA-CEMA committee to begin discussions about substantive issues. The time spent in the interim was focused on trust building and breaking down barriers related to alleged misdeeds of the past.

There is a tendency for parties on both sides to try a labor-management partnership as a quick fix. When positive results do not occur quickly, they get discouraged and revert to a blaming mode of interaction. This occurs most often when the groundwork is not laid for members to understand the requirements of good-faith and long-term efforts. Once relationships are fractured, it takes considerable time and effort for trust and meaningful communication to resume and for the parties to develop new patterns of relating. Frequently with labor-management partnerships, there is a period of testing to see whether this new arrangement is legitimate or a camouflage for old behaviors. Lack of understanding of the change process makes LMC work even more difficult and can cause a setback in the long term if the process is not handled well. At UTA, the partners learned that even with progress, there can be setbacks. The success of the cooperative effort in getting voter approval for a local transportation tax referendum was not enough to sustain a consistently positive relationship. The parties learned that attention to the partnering relationship must be a constant process.

Lack of initial and ongoing effective communication by union representatives with the union members about the LMC process can create distrust among the union members about the credibility of their representatives. In several instances, union representatives shared confidentially that they would not continue on the LMC past their current terms because of suspicion by their peers that they had become too understanding of management's position. At UTA, for a period, the union president pulled back on the level of participation in the VIP Program—the training initiative designed to reinforce partnering throughout the agency—for some of the same reasons. UTA's partnering training by an external facilitator helped to orient individual employees to a team culture. This action changed employee expectations in a way that allowed the union president to take a viable role again in the program.

For partnering to be effective, both sides must work with their constituent groups to ensure organizationwide support for the new approach to labor-management relations. Union leaders must take responsibility for clearly communicating the purpose of partnering and the processes by which the partnership works. Management must prepare managers and supervisors to be supportive of and accountable for performance that supports the new approach. The organization's failure to prepare managers and supervisors at all levels often results in resistance at lower levels. This resistance can sabotage the whole process. Without preparation, there is a tendency for these individuals to use a top-down command-and-control management style. During the study, union representatives spoke of going back to their membership and telling them about agreements made with senior management only to have employees inform them that change is not occurring "on the shop floor."

At VTA, the lack of a communication plan caused the union membership to vote down a pension benefit–related proposal, which would have benefited them in the long term, that their representative brought to them. In the short term, members saw the proposal as a take away and voted it down. The union representative felt that the LMC had failed to do its work in not anticipating the need to do the public-relations

work up front to get the buy-in for the process. He felt that because of the lack of an effective communication plan, he was set up to fail in his effort to persuade the membership that voting for the change was beneficial to them.

What Makes Partnerships Effective?

In agencies in which the relationship building and trust have been established, training and accountability on both sides seem to be key contributors to success. All members of LMCs need to learn new behaviors if they are to be successful in partnering roles. The use of an expert facilitator helps the partners achieve an atmosphere of mutual interest and understanding. The facilitator can also help the group set concrete objectives by engaging them in a number of tasks helpful in breaking down communication barriers. Several agencies used external facilitators to help initiate LMCs. Using this approach helped the parties identify and air issues that, if left unaddressed, would have prevented the partnership from being successful. In these instances, memoranda of agreement, signed by representatives of both parties, describe the LMC's purpose and manner of functioning.

At the MTA, management representatives acknowledged that without a professional facilitator to support their efforts, they would not have moved to a level of cooperation that allows the parties to practice effective new behaviors. When RTD conducted its 3-day workshop to initiate its LMC, although the main themes of difficulty were lack of trust and communication, having a facilitator from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service conduct the sessions allowed the group to come to an agreement signed by all 22 members (see Appendix B).

Goal-directed activities from which employees can see results and for which they are recognized for their contributions seem to fuel the partnering process. For instance, several years ago PT started a quality-improvement effort and human-effectiveness training throughout the agency. As a result, employees expect to be involved in decisionmaking; if decisions are made in which they feel they should have had input, the employees confront the managers responsible for the decision. At UTA, most employees have completed 1 week of VIP training and have been initiated to the task team chartering process. That preparation facilitated the employee buy-in that resulted in the volunteers who helped promote the tax referendum and who helped with the opening of the TRAX light-rail line in 10° weather. At MTA, the initial LAMP work energized a major employee-recruitment campaign (see Appendix B). At RTD, at the height of the bus-operator and mechanic shortage, union employees volunteered to help by staffing recruitment tables at a local flea market.

Some labor-management partnership patterns seem to relate to differences in larger versus smaller agencies. In smaller agencies, an informal process seems to have a greater chance of working than it does in a larger organization. In a smaller agency in which the entire operation often may be in the same building as the administrative offices, people see each other daily. They participate in small talk as well as in identifying issues and solving problems; therefore, they own the process and build relationships. When the general manager or director of operations has only to walk a few steps to go into the operator waiting room, to use the same vending machines as the drivers and mechanics, and to participate in birthday parties, relationships develop on a deeper level. In smaller agencies such as DTA, bus operators identify people who need wheelchair ramps but cannot afford to have them built. On weekends, managers (who get businesses to donate materials) join union members in volunteering to build the ramps.

In larger agencies, by the sheer nature of their size, efforts to maintain anything other than a business relationship are sometimes mired in baggage from the past. Building relationships and trust in these settings can be difficult. Multiple locations, each with its own culture, can create barriers. Physical distance can also detract from the development of positive personal connections. Much more posturing and testing are likely to occur. Coupled with resistant managers and supervisors, an agency has a recipe for friction, especially if the parties have not anticipated likely reactions to the change in culture that must occur if labor-management partnerships are to be an effective alternative to previous unproductive relationships.

CHAPTER **4**

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTED RESEARCH

CONCLUSIONS

This study revealed that the nation's transit agencies, as diverse as they are, maintain certain core values and must have the right staff in the right numbers to provide service that reflects those core values consistently. The challenges agencies face, whether large or small, can be attributed to a number of factors: the changing nature of the work, the changing demographics of the labor force, a turbulent economy, compensation restrictions, and overall organizational HR philosophy. The unique mix of agencies included in the case studies mirrors the variety of ways agencies have successfully tackled problems of maintaining a qualified workforce, especially in the benchmark positions.

The study revealed that although the transit industry has not been the subject of extensive research related to workforce needs and strategies, it has a rich reservoir of success stories of how to use available talent and leadership in responding to the public transportation needs of the nation's communities. Given that the case studies arose primarily out of random sampling of the nation's transit agencies, it is likely that the challenges these agencies face are similar to those found in peer agencies. The wealth of knowledge amassed as a result of 13 transit agencies telling the stories of how they successfully addressed workforce recruitment, development, and retention challenges can be invaluable to other transit agencies. Throughout the industry, agencies can use study results to formally or informally assess their current workforce situation and move forward in a more enlightened way to focus on factors that make a difference in maintaining the workforce they need.

Clearly, there is no one best way to address the issue of maintaining a qualified workforce. The literature search served as a starting point for determining how other industries have addressed this ongoing issue. Even with the recent reversal in the economy that lessened the severity of staff shortages that were pervasive during the data-collection phase of the study, agencies would be wise to use knowledge of these best practices to their advantage. Examples seen in case-study agencies provide benchmarks that any agency can use to craft strategies to make them resilient in addressing future workforce challenges. By taking the first step of making a comprehensive or an informal review of how their agencies compare with peer agencies, transit agencies can prepare to outdistance other employers who may be competing for the same talent. Although recruitment and training strategies are of great importance, the need to pay attention to maximizing the dollars spent on these activities by implementing strong business-focused retention efforts is critical. The loss of resources—both human and fiscal—because of lack of attention to retention, although enormous, is often uncalculated. With limits on funding and on other resources, agencies cannot afford to merely accept employee attrition as an uncontrollable fact of life. Each of these areas—recruitment, training, and retention—can best be looked at as a total organizational challenge and as an opportunity for strengthening the HR function and the organization as a whole.

The study provides a smorgasbord of tools, any of which can be a starting point for a transit agency to use to improve its current staffing situation. By reviewing the case studies, each transit agency will likely see how its current or recent situation mirrors or differs from at least one case study or segments of several case studies—in other words, the case studies can be used as comparison tools. One approach might be to use the case-study format as a model for conducting an agencywide recruitment, training, and retention review. By taking note of best practices cited in literature and of how transit agencies have successfully implemented many of these practices, agencies can expand their view of possibilities for their own organizations. Likewise, the management profile presented in Chapter 3, which summarizes management behaviors that make a difference in transit workforce acquisition and management, can become part of an organizational-assessment process. A tool for self-assessment is the HR assessment in Appendix B. Another resource in Appendix B, the Human-Resources Guide, contains a treasury of proven approaches to recruiting, training, and retaining a qualified workforce in transit agencies. The step-by-step analysis of how transit agencies have created and implemented solutions to stubborn workforce challenges gives agencies ready access to innovative practices and to industry contacts who have implemented the practices. Although going through an assessment can seem tedious, the benefits of conducting a diagnosis of how the organization is functioning in managing its human capital are as valuable as those derived from measuring performance in other areas of transit management.

In the process of conducting their own assessments either formally or informally, agencies can learn how to better identify, develop, and use internal and external resources. Whether linking better with other public agencies or redefining relationships with partners that are used for other transportation-related matters, transit agencies have numerous potential allies. Whatever assessment mix the agency decides to use, it will be critical to involve and recognize the contributions of representative stakeholders from throughout the organization in the assessment and the subsequent action-planning processes. Two axioms can apply: (1) people closest to a problem often have the best sense of its causes and effects and (2) consideration of diverse inputs and perspectives tend to lead to higher-quality decisions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

One of the challenges case-study agencies face is that most do not have a clearly stated HR business strategy. Researchers could sense that each agency intuitively knew the direction it wanted to go but had not set forth a strategic direction for the HR function and, therefore, did not have a clear operational plan for reaching business goals. For the most part, the different pieces of the puzzle fit together once an analysis of ways that an individual agency approached maintaining a qualified workforce was performed; however, the frame for the puzzle was often missing. In addition, in some cases, pieces of the puzzle were missing. Suggestions for research presented below highlight areas for further study.

In Chapter 3, core organizational competencies were discussed briefly. Much has been written in the literature about the importance of identifying organizational competencies. In order for an organization to fully maximize its human capacity, it must know how the people fit into the strategic direction of the enterprise. Starting with determining core competencies for the organization and then determining the work competencies expected of every employee, organizational leaders can create a foundation for attainment of strategic business goals. Research on (1) what steps transit agencies have taken to develop core employee competencies in ways similar to the familiar performance indicators for transit operations and (2) what difference these actions have made in performance would be beneficial to the industry.

A significant gap identified during the study was the difficulty agencies experienced in providing demographic data other than the race and gender of employees. In many cases, even these data were not easy to extract by position title. As a result, the effort to develop a reliable demographic profile for workers in benchmark positions was abandoned. This raise the questions as to how many HR departments conduct short- or long-range staff planning and whether the departments have metrics by which to measure their contributions to their organizations. Analysis of case-study data indicates that few of these agencies have identified a comprehensive set of metrics for each HR function. Research in this area could be combined with core-competency research.

During the benchmarking- and industry-survey process, researchers became aware that a large number of transit agencies do not have staff with expertise in HR management and development. In smaller agencies, the transit director frequently is responsible for HR functions. In some cases, a technician supports the function. Research on core HR competencies needed by any transit agency could help to support the development of industry-specific training and development programs for non-HR professionals charged with HR responsibilities.

In view of technological, demographic, cultural, and political changes, forward-thinking organizations are increasingly using training as a strategy for attracting and retaining qualified employees. These organizations are also giving more attention and resources to bridging the gap between workplace learning and job performance. Transit agencies that desire to be top quality must begin to view training as a business strategy and to focus more on interventions for (1) connecting employee learning to business goals, (2) improving employee performance, and (3) helping trainers acquire new skills and capabilities needed to fulfill this changing role. Because of these changes, training professionals must assume the role of consultant and must be performance partners capable of facilitating learning at all levels. Additional research may disclose the challenges faced by training departments in attracting and retaining professional trainers who must provide tools for employees to develop the skill sets and worker behaviors necessary to stay abreast of rapidly changing technologies and to meet the organizational-performance requirements.

One of the challenges the team faced in trying to get a representative response to the industry survey was that HR staff frequently felt too overwhelmed to take time to complete the questionnaire. Offers to conduct telephone interviews as a means of lessening the time commitment were often met with negative responses. These responses raise a number of questions: How are these individuals spending their time? Are they involved in the activities that will have a real cost-benefit for their organization, or are they still practicing as HR staff did in times past—in clerical rather than in organizational-strengthening roles? Clearly, the HR function as a strategic partner in the transit agency is one that needs further study. Perhaps worthy of pursuit would be an exploratory study on what types of partnering are occurring between HR and line functions, in what form, and with what results.

Transit agencies are just beginning to integrate nontraditional labor pools such as former welfare recipients and ex-offenders into their employee-recruitment and -retention strategies. Exploratory research that documents the experiences of transit agencies with such populations may be beneficial in tapping large segments of the labor pool.

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APPENDIX A
CASE STUDIES

Researchers Mary Davis, Thomas Webb, and Kathleen Gillis conducted case-study site visits.

1. CITY OF ANNAPOLIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

COMPARED WITH YOU

The City of Annapolis Department of Transportation (ADT) provides public transportation in Maryland's capital city of Annapolis. The United States Naval Academy is located in the heart of this small metropolis. The ADT provides fixed route service to an annual tourist population of two million visitors, involving one million annual boardings. In addition, the agency provides service for 50 community special events and supports 200 other events.

The transportation director, who reports to the Annapolis city manager, is responsible for all operations as well as financial, planning, human resource, and regulatory functions. The transit workforce includes 24 bus operators, 20 percent of whom are part-time, and five diesel mechanics. The agency receives federal funds administered through the Maryland Transit Authority. The city provides about 10 percent of operating funds and also funds capital projects approved by the city council. The fare box recovery ratio averages 30 percent of operating revenue.

The small workforce of 29 bus operators and mechanics in a community with special service demands in addition to fixed route service increases the need for flexibility and full staffing levels. Fixed route service fluctuates dramatically based on tourism, and special events require efficiency in operations and maximum utilization of workforce and equipment.

In recognition of ADT's performance, it has received several recent awards, including the *Most Outstanding Locally Operated Transit Services in the Baltimore Region* from the Transit Riders League Citizens Planning Commission in Baltimore, Maryland.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

The ADT identified two benchmark positions, bus operators and diesel mechanics, as difficult to recruit and retain. Factors contributing to ADT's difficulty recruiting bus operators are the requirement for a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) at the time of application and applicants' inability to meet internal screening requirements. Recruitment of employees in both classifications is complicated by the City of Annapolis' proximity to Baltimore and Washington D.C. Transit agencies headquartered in both of these cities offer higher wages and better benefits. In addition, the pay scales and benefit structure, with the exception of retirement benefits, are determined by the city compensation system.

The agency faces a major challenge in retaining employees who, once trained, can leave to work for larger, better paying urban transit agencies. Employees also leave for higher paying positions at local trucking firms and school bus companies. Split shifts and flexible-hour requirements, the length of time required to serve as a part-time operator before advancing to full-time operator, the low unemployment rate, dropout rate during training, and poorly qualified applicants all contribute to retention problems at ADT.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

The recruitment difficulties cited above motivated ADT to modify its hiring standards for bus operators. For example, instead of requiring applicants to have a CDL prior to applying for a position, as had occurred in the past, ADT now provides CDL training for operators. The agency also built into its recruitment strategy the flexibility of being able to waive the requirement of a high school diploma, replacing it with experience and subjective evaluation of an applicant in an oral interview. No longer are applicants who identify themselves as recovering substance abusers automatically eliminated from consideration. Each applicant is evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine the success of his or her rehabilitation.

In an effort to enlarge its applicant pool, ADT discontinued the practice of disqualifying ADT retirees from employment. In fact, the agency encourages retirees to apply for part-time positions, increasing the opportunity for advancement of existing part-time operators to full-time, while replacing the promoted part-time employee with a fully trained and certified operator. Combining operator groups in this manner eliminates secondary recruitment, training time, and costs.

The most successful bus operator referral source at ADT is word of mouth from other bus operators. The agency views its open environment and reputation as a good place to work as a major factor contributing to employees' commitment to act as ambassadors and recruiters.

The operator training program is three to four weeks in length and costs the department approximately $1,500 per trainee. In-house training for mechanics varies with individual experience but averages about six months. ADT uses standard training strategies but demonstrates its commitment to the success of each new employee by maintaining the flexibility to

accommodate the individual learning needs of each trainee. During the training process, "Each new employee is indoctrinated to assume the prevailing department culture of customer satisfaction, community service, and participation in the management/employee communication process."

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Overall Organizational Environment

The single most effective tool used to maintain a qualified workforce at ADT, in the face of a variety of limitations, is employee commitment. By using a strategy of developing one-on-one, personal contact with employees and soliciting employee buy-in for success, the agency makes the most of its resources. As part of an open door policy, high employee involvement and ongoing interaction is expected and valued. This approach provides direct daily contact, exchange of information, comments, and solutions for situations at each level of the organization. The ADT director states, "We are creating a culture of understanding to respond to individual employee needs and the needs of the community." The agency finds that by respecting and addressing employee concerns, it creates an atmosphere that fosters a higher level of customer satisfaction. ADT sponsors employee recognition events such as awards for attendance, safety, and employee birthdays. When accepting invitations to attend community events, the director often takes along an employee as an additional representative of the agency. The business community demonstrates recognition for outstanding customer service by hosting monthly appreciation lunches.

Position-Specific and Complementary Strategies

New Employee Orientation

ADT's retention efforts begin at the time of employment. Once hired, the new employee orientation program introduces the new employee to the culture and the goals of the organization. Beginning with the first week of training, employees are introduced to a working environment that respects their input and involvement, rewards involvement, and insists that each employee share responsibility for customer service. Individual training schedules provide flexibility for the trainee to achieve a smooth transition into the ADT work environment. The agency permits trainees to work more than forty hours when necessary and provides overtime opportunities during the training period.

Compression of Progression Rate

One effective retention strategy at ADT is the compression of the progression rate for new bus operators. For example, the agency created an Operator II position that starts the newly hired experienced employee at a step above the inexperienced operator. The Operator II classification is also used to reward employees who demonstrate increased productivity and those who train less experienced operators. At any time during probation, ADT has the option of waiving the restriction against paying benefits as a way to reward and retain promising employees.

Cooperative Approach with Employees

As a small agency with limited assets and significant scheduling requirements, ADT increases employee responsibility and productivity by a cooperative approach with employees, with the support of the local union. This cooperation takes the form of accommodating the needs of low seniority employees with schedules that work around family and other employment responsibilities. Employees may swap seniority-selected runs to accommodate responsibilities outside of work. The stakeholders (managers, employees and union) also cooperate to provide weekend time off for low seniority employees, especially for family-related responsibilities. Employees may submit requests for sabbaticals for up to one year for advancement of education, an effective retention tool.

Focus on Employee Communication and Ownership

Weekly team meetings provide an opportunity for managers and employees to voice mutual concerns in a timely manner, and to discuss approaches for maintaining a quality work environment. For example, bus operator complaints regarding back problems caused by uncomfortable seating resulted in the installation of new seats. This one action is believed to have contributed to the lack of workers' compensation claims at the agency.

According to one member of the management team, "Communication is emphasized and we strive to involve drivers in the big picture." Operators routinely provide input into administrative decisions, including recommendations for new bus shelters, signage and route changes, as well as on safety issues. In response, operators respond by assuming additional responsibilities such as providing visiting riders assistance with directions and acting as informal tour guides for passengers. Operators also use cell phones to report traffic conditions to local radio stations; assume responsibility for ensuring the cleanliness of their vehicles; voluntarily accept double shifts to ensure coverage of special events; trade schedules; and move between special events and fixed-route service as needed.

Strategic Partnering

Labor-Management Partnership

A positive relationship between labor and management is facilitated by the Labor Management Committee (LMC),

which has an informal structure and meets on an as-needed basis. Details of how the LMC functions are included in the Appendix B, Human-Resources Guide, under the Labor-Management Partnership section.

2. BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

COMPARED WITH YOU

The Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA), with offices in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, was formed in 1974 by seven Berkshire County communities to provide public transportation services for the area. Located in the western-most portion of the state, BRTA has grown to 21 member communities spanning the semi-rural county, from Williamstown in the north to Great Barrington in the south. BRTA, one of 15 regional transit authorities in Massachusetts, is funded by federal, state, and local taxes. The local tax is an assessment levied by Berkshire County member communities. Each member community has a seat on the Transit Advisory Board.

The *Bus Route Maps & Schedules* pamphlet states, "BRTA provides a safe and economical means by which thousands of Berkshire County residents and visitors satisfy their personal transportation needs. Commuters, tourists, students, and shoppers rely on the BRTA." Depending on the community, 15 to 30 percent of the Berkshire population is seasonal, many leaving the area in winter months. There is little industry in the area. One attraction is the beautiful Berkshire Mountains, which provide year-round recreation and tourist activities, and the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood.

The fixed-route bus service portion of BRTA has been managed by ATC/Vancom of Massachusetts, Limited Partnership, since 1982 doing business as the Berkshire Division of ATC, A National Express Company of London, England. ATC operates 18 fixed route buses and one trolley. The Lee Trolley began as a demonstration project in 1998, and continues to provide a link between Historic Downtown Lee and a shopping area located near the Mass Pike. An example of public-private partnership, the trolley-replica bus was donated to the Town of Lee by the Prime Outlets at Lee and leased to the BRTA to offer free service to riders.

Other BRTA transportation services include an "Access to Jobs" program to ensure that transportation is not a barrier to employment for persons transitioning from public assistance. State and federal governments support this service. BRTA provides paratransit service for eligible persons with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). BRTA recorded 512,858 boardings in fiscal year 2000. Many routes service semi-rural areas with low population and density.

The management consists of a general manager, and directors of operations, administration and maintenance, four operations/dispatch supervisors, an administrative assistant, and a parts manager/supervisor. Full-time operators and mechanics are represented by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Local 404.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

BRTA has difficulty recruiting part-time bus operators. Several factors complicate recruitment of part-time operators. Newly employed part-time operators do not receive benefits and are assigned work on an as-needed basis resulting in a sporadic work schedule. The average waiting period for promotion to a full-time position is one to one and one half years. Low turnover in full-time positions causes many applicants to perceive the part-time position as undesirable.

Recruitment of diesel mechanics is a challenge for the BRTA for reasons similar to those at many transit agencies. The wage scale for experienced applicants is not competitive with the local economy and applicants often lack experience or are unable to meet internal screening requirements. Applicants must have a mechanical background and provide their own tools. The countywide unemployment rate that hovers at four percent limits the number of qualified applicants. According to the general manager, "In fact, the lack of a readily available and qualified workforce contributes to limited growth and new industry in the local economy, and factors into the recruitment of experienced diesel mechanics at the BRTA. Comparable jobs in the area typically pay two or three dollars more per hour than the BRTA. Some candidates don't meet internal screening requirements, but the hourly rate is the real problem here." Frequently BRTA has had unfilled diesel mechanic positions for six months or more. The agency does not have an apprenticeship or entry-level training program with the exception of a mechanic helper position, which is identified in the labor contract.

In a tight labor market, some employers reduce certain qualifications or requirements in an effort to fill difficult-to-recruit positions. According to the general manager, ATC/Vancom Corporate however has an ". . . overall philosophy of adherence to standards. We look for quality individuals. We would rather hire with less experience or with no driving experience. There is little flexibility with screening requirements for DUI convictions: we have a no tolerance policy . . . a one-strike approach for drug use and we perform random screening and post-accident testing. Operators must score 75 to 80 percent on the written test or they are not hired. We may retest on borderline scores or allow a second chance on a case-by-case basis."

BRTA reports a 50 percent bus operator CDL training dropout rate for new hires. In response, the agency has increased the length of time for on-the-floor/field instruction to provide adequate training time, as well as reassigning some trainees into subsequent classes to ensure quality. The average training time for operators with little or no experience is 160 to 200 hours. The BRTA discipline policy for preventable

accidents includes mandatory four hours of retraining for operators. The major challenge BRTA faces is that some applicants use the ATC training as a means of obtaining a CDL then leave for employment elsewhere.

BRTA has difficulty retaining part-time bus operators for the same reasons it has recruiting these employees. The lack of benefits, assignments based on an as-needed basis, and lengthy waiting time for promotion to a full-time position all contribute to this ongoing dilemma. With a long-term, stable bus operator workforce, the agency has few openings for new full-time drivers. Between three to six positions will be available in the next two years as older operators retire, which will allow qualified part-time drivers an opportunity for full-time employment.

Retention of experienced diesel mechanics is even more challenging due to the low unemployment rate and higher hourly wages for similar jobs in the area. Higher wage increases for mechanic positions were proposed during 2000 labor negotiations, but the union insisted on equal raises for operators and mechanics. Because there are more operators than mechanics, the proposal failed.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Competitive Wage and Benefits Structure

The employee benefits package is a key recruitment and retention tool at BRTA. According to the general manager, "Full-time operator positions at the BRTA are considered good jobs. Our wage rates are average for the local economy but the benefits package is outstanding; therefore we have low turnover. Full-time employees participate in the Teamster's Health Plan at no cost to them." Another retention tool is the pension program to which the company contributes $1 per hour for every hour worked. At retirement, employees may choose to receive 100 percent of vested balance or monthly payments. Evidence of the success of the benefits plan as a retention tool is the low rate of turnover and the fact that one-third of all operators have more than 10 years of service.

Overall Organizational Environment

The general manager stresses that BRTA takes pride in its mission "To provide good public transportation to as many people as possible within the budget . . . excellent customer service, safety," and in being a good place to work. Management stresses an open-door policy and values partnering with employees to solve issues of mutual concern. Operating in a semi-rural service area with low growth and unemployment rates, recruitment and retention of qualified mechanics and part-time operators are an ongoing challenge.

The overall organizational environment is driven by a philosophy of two-way communication, with input from and feedback to employees. The size of the workforce facilitates communication, and management has created a functional open-door environment that rewards employees for involvement.

Managers use annual employee performance evaluations to recognize employee contributions, assess skill levels of operators and mechanics, address remedial training needs, assist with succession planning, and focus on the agency's commitment to safety. In recognition of its safety record, BRTA received an Outstanding Safety Performance Award from the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) in 1999.

Maintenance Communication Sessions

Approximately five years ago, the relationship between management and mechanics was so poor that the two groups were not on speaking terms except for absolutely required interaction. To address the discord in the garage, the director of maintenance started monthly *Tailgate Sessions* with mechanics. Informal in structure, these sessions serve as a forum for informing employees of current plans and for getting their perspectives, or to discuss anything of concern to them. This strategy has paid dividends in improved interpersonal relationships and has created a more cooperative environment for everyone.

ATC/Corporate Human-Resources Policies and Local Discretion

ATC/Vancom Corporate establishes human-resources (HR) policies and implementation guidelines. The general manager, who is responsible for HR management at the agency, finds the annual ATC/Vancom Corporate managers conference useful for sharing HR strategies and reviewing best practices at other transit agencies managed by the company. As long as recruitment and retention strategies do not conflict with ATC policies and guidelines, the general manager has discretion to make changes and implement procedures and practices. In some situations, a HR planning issue is brought to the labor-management committee for discussion or consensus. For instance, work-rule changes or the need to examine wages and benefits fit under the guidelines.

Variety of Retention Approaches

BRTA uses a variety of retention approaches with success. The Employee Suggestion Program, with cash rewards for implemented suggestions, is popular with employees. The formalized new employee orientation program emphasizes safety and customer service and helps the new employee feel a part of the agency quickly. Another retention strategy is the use of leave-of-absence requests, which are reviewed and granted on a case-by-case basis.

Labor-Management Partnership

BRTA credits an active labor-management committee (LMC) with being the most effective retention tool for communication and feedback with employees. Details of how the LMC functions are included in the Appendix B, Human-Resources Guide, under the Labor-Management Partnership section.

3. DULUTH TRANSIT AUTHORITY

COMPARED WITH YOU

The Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) has a service area that covers municipalities in two states, Minnesota and Wisconsin. The agency provides bus transportation services to residents of Duluth, Minnesota, by statute, and to Proctor and Superior, Wisconsin, on a contract basis. A nine-member board of directors, made up of appointed representatives from its 30-mile service area, governs DTA. The agency provides bus services along 22 fixed routes and dial-a-ride curb-to-curb services for residents with disabilities. Through a contract with the local school district, DTA operates daily transportation services for more than 3,000 secondary students in Duluth. As a result of an arrangement whereby the University of Minnesota at Duluth pays DTA a flat fee, all students and staff at the school receive free bus passes for unlimited bus service.

With a staff of 157 employees, the agency records more than three million boardings annually aboard its 75-bus fleet. DTA receives strong support in the Duluth community as evidenced by the overwhelming approval of the two-million levy increase proposals the agency has put before voters in the past 15 years. Approximately 16 percent of all trips into the downtown Duluth area are made by bus. In the most recent on-board survey, more than 90 percent of passengers stated they were satisfied with bus service provided by the agency.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

The DTA has difficulty recruiting bus operators and entry- and journey-level mechanics. The low unemployment rate in the Duluth area is the primary deterrent to attracting bus operator applicants. New operators are employed in part-time positions that guarantee a schedule of a maximum of 25 hours per week. The employee must make a minimum commitment of three mornings and evenings each week. Operators call in each day to receive their schedule for the next day. Operators are employed at DTA for one to three years before they attain full-time status.

Two factors hamper recruitment efforts: (1) lack of experience of entry-level applicants and (2) perceptions that the position of entry-level mechanic is unattractive. The non-competitive wage and benefit package contributes to difficulty recruiting journey-level mechanic candidates.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

At the time of employment, new bus operators are paid 70 percent of full-time operator rate, with their rate increasing 5 percent annually. After four years, part-time operators' wage rates are capped at 85 percent of the full-time rate. In the past, the difference in wage rates created a status breach between full- and part-time operators. A mentoring program begun in 2000 helps to serve as a bridge for new operators into the DTA workforce and lessens the perception of value differences between part- and full-time bus operators. Each new operator is assigned a mentor, a veteran operator with a good safety and service record who demonstrates aptitude for helping others. The mentor helps the new operator acclimate to DTA, introduces the operator to other employees; serves as a source of information about operational policies and procedures, schedules, vehicles, and agency events; and answers any questions the new employee may have.

New bus operators receive 28 days of training consisting of in-class activities and on-the-road driving instruction. Throughout training new operators are continually evaluated on their ability and willingness to do the job. Those needing additional assistance are coached on an individual basis. Candidates unsuccessful in demonstrating the skills and knowledge required to perform the job safely during the 28-day period are terminated.

Once a new operator completes the training program, an operations supervisor makes contact and provides support on a regular basis. By having ongoing formal and informal contact with the operator, the supervisor is able to create a relaxed coaching relationship. This relationship often makes a difference in how comfortable the new operator feels discussing issues of concern with the supervisor, whether personal or work-related. The relationship also becomes a vehicle for making the new employee feel well-attached to the organization.

Prior to the last union negotiations, the only way to gain employment in the maintenance department was to start on the late shift, performing custodial duties. Changes made in the last collective-bargaining agreement allow the agency to hire mechanic apprentices.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Overall Organizational Environment

The DTA general manager describes the management philosophy at the agency as "management by listening" and cites numerous employee involvement opportunities as evidence that bus operators and mechanics collaborate with managers to make DTA an inviting work environment. Union

stewards representing bus operators and mechanics echo these sentiments.

Each person interviewed at DTA emphasized the stability of employment at DTA as contributing to employee retention at the agency. In the senior management ranks, the general manager has been in that position for 20 years, and the director of operations has been employed at the agency for more than 25 years. Many bus operators retire with 30 years of service. The pension benefits accrued at that level of service are quite attractive. This is seen as influencing newer employees to stay as it communicates that there is value in building a career at DTA.

Position-Specific and Complementary Strategies

Employee Involvement

The Operations Department Safety Committee is one example of how employees exert influence in day-to-day operations. With an eye on improving its nationally recognized safety record, in January 2000 DTA convened a task group to develop safety goals for 2000. Comprised of management staff and operators, the group set out to identify safety issues within operations. Wanting to ensure representation of diverse viewpoints, the agency recruited a mix of male and female operators, with different lengths of service and excellent safety records. Over a period of several months, the committee identified five safety-related issues, the most prominent being deficiencies in the manner in which new operators were oriented to their jobs. The group felt there were discrepancies between what new operators were taught in the formal training program and what they saw practiced by veteran operators serving as line practice instructors. In the view of task group members these discrepancies contributed to safety-related infractions. The group determined that part of the problem was the use of poor role models as line practice instructors. The task group's work resulted in 16 recommendations, including a revision of how line practice instructors are selected. As a result of the recommendation regarding line practice instructors, DTA developed a line practice instructor job description, which requires operators in this position to have excellent records and show positive temperament and willingness to train others correctly.

Another example of employee involvement is the Ad Hoc Scheduling Committee, made up of operators and management staff. The group cites the committee's work on the problem of slumping ridership in the City of Superior in 1998 as one of its success stories. Operators who drove in Superior were asked for their input on actions that could be taken to improve service in that service area. Operators recommended schedules and recovery times tighter and more restrictive than those proposed by management. The operators pointed out that the goal of saving service was more important than operators' personal schedule preferences. Immediately after the committee's recommendations were implemented, ridership and revenues increased. While a few revisions have been made to relax recovery times, for the most part the committee's recommendations remain intact.

Employee Recognition/Appreciation

The DTA recognizes employees for their commitment and contributions in a variety of ways. The Employee of the Month recognition is one in which peers nominate fellow employees for their excellent job performance, personal accomplishment, or service to the community. The employee selected for the month receives a gift certificate to a local restaurant and a reserved parking place alongside the DTA building, quite a perk in a climate where winter temperatures can hover around 30 degrees below 0. The only reserved parking spots at the agency are for the Employee of the Month and the Employee of the Year; the latter is selected from among the 12 employees selected for the monthly honor.

A barbecue in which managers take on the role of cooks accompanies the annual Bus Roadeo, the competition in which bus operators and mechanics vie each summer to represent the agency in state bus driving competitions. The winners of the Roadeo are honored at the annual Safety Banquet. The banquet serves as the major recognition event for a large number of employees, including the Employee of the Year, bus operators and mechanics who have worked accident free for the past year, and employees with perfect attendance for the year.

An agency-wide catered picnic complete with door prizes, games, races, and a golf tournament, is another summer event that DTA sponsors to show appreciation to employees for their contribution to the agency mission and goals. The annual appreciation breakfast, held in early fall, has senior management in the cooks' role again as they welcome employees back from summer vacations.

Strategic Partnering

Community Involvement

Integrally connected to the community, DTA throughout the year demonstrates that it is an employer of choice in the Duluth area. Employees from the general manager to relief bus operators can be found volunteering to build ramps at the homes of needy residents with disabilities. The early childhood center, an award-winning collaborative venture between the YWCA of Duluth and DTA, serves local working families. Located in the downtown transit center, the facility is of particular service to residents in transition from welfare to work and addresses two barriers facing working parents: childcare and transportation. The agency's labor management team is a member of Duluth's Corporate Volunteer Council and recruits volunteers to participate in community service projects such as free house painting paint-a-thons that benefit needy residents.

The DTA's focus on safety extends into the community and is another example of community collaboration. The Student Rider Safety Awareness Program, a joint effort with Burger King Restaurants of Duluth, involves the bus operator reading the Student Rider Safety message of the week to students then giving each a coupon for a free Burger King food item.

Labor Management Partnership

As a result of the high level of interaction that occurs between represented employees and management staff in other committees, the formal monthly two-hour meetings of the labor-management team's agendas and interactions are fairly low key. Details of how the team functions are included in the Appendix B, Human-Resources Guide, under the Labor-Management Partnership section.

HR Planning

The director of operations, who has responsibility for HR planning in the department, bases staffing needs projections on employee turnover data and the number of bus operators and mechanics who will soon meet eligibility requirements of 30 years of service, or 20 years at age 62. The director uses the data from these sources to make five-year projections, prepare budget requests, and plan recruitment of replacements.

4. SUNLINE TRANSIT AGENCY

COMPARED WITH YOU

SunLine, headquartered in Thousand Palms, California, with a satellite facility in Indio, consists of two joint powers authorities: SunLine Transit Agency, formed in 1977, and SunLine Services Group, formed in 1991; and Community Partnerships of the Desert, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3) formed in 1995, all of which share a common board. The board is comprised of an elected official from each member jurisdiction: Cathedral City, Coachella, Desert Hot Springs, Indian Wells, Indio, La Quinta, Palm Desert, Palm Springs and Rancho Mirage, and the County of Riverside.

As a result of the board's foresight, in 1994, SunLine became the first public transit operator in the nation to convert 100 percent of its fleet to compressed natural gas (CNG). Since then, the agency's clean fuel buses, paratransit vans, pickups and other vehicles have logged nearly 25 million clean air miles, and SunLine has become a world leader in clean transportation fuels and clean energy.

Today, the agency operates a fleet of 47 CNG buses, two Hythane® buses (a blend of hydrogen and natural gas), three liquefied natural gas (LNG) "SuperBuses," three electric trolleys, 26 CNG paratransit vans and other miscellaneous light, medium and heavy duty natural gas vehicles. For the second year in a row, in FY 2000/01, SunLine Transit Agency provided just under 4 million rides.

Besides offering daily SunBus service and SunDial paratransit service throughout the Coachella Valley, SunLine's SunLink service shuttles riders to Cabazon and Riverside where they can connect to MetroLink and Riverside Transit Agency. Funded by grants and administered by SunLine, two additional services—Vets Express and SunTRIP—help veterans access medical treatment in Loma Linda and help people outside SunLine's fixed-route territory with their transportation needs.

Created to provide non-transit services to member entities, SunLine Services Group generates revenues that help support public transit. Services include developing/managing clean fuels infrastructure and beta test projects, natural gas sales, regional street sweeping, graffiti removal and an interagency delivery service. As the valley's regulator of taxicabs, SunLine Regulatory Administration protects passengers and leases CNG-powered cabs to local operators. SRA also offers electronic fingerprinting services to the public.

In April 2000, SunLine became the first transit agency to construct on-site hydrogen generation/dispensing facilities. To date in 2001, the agency is the only place in the world where hydrogen generated from renewable solar power and reformed from natural gas is used to fuel ultra-low and zero-emission vehicles. The agency also offers the public the largest assortment of clean fuels currently available: compressed natural gas (CNG), liquefied natural gas (LNG), hydrogen and Hythane®. Also featured is an assortment of prototype and specialized equipment that SunLine is testing for various manufacturers. Dubbed the "Clean Fuels Mall," their wares offer substantive benefits: reduced emissions, improved public health, and reduced dependence on foreign oil.

Last year, high-ranking officials from nearly 20 countries visited SunLine. Guests range from ambassadors and environmental ministers to automakers, researchers, policymakers and more. Representatives from the U.S. Department of Energy to the California Governor's Office have stated in interviews, "No one else in the world is doing what SunLine is."

Sunline employs 275 regular and 30 contract employees within seven transit agency departments: Operations, Maintenance/Facilities, Administration, Finance/Information Technologies, Human Resources, Planning/Agency Development/Customer Service and Marketing/Education, as well as SunLine Services Group. Motor coach operators and mechanics are represented by the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1277.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

The size of the SunLine operation has nearly doubled in the last four years. The number of employees increased from 140 to 305. The contrast between the income level of the employees and the residents of the community they serve is

dramatic. The Palm Desert area is nationally recognized as an affluent residence, second residence and retirement area.

The most difficult to fill positions are the maintenance classifications required to service the new technology associated with the hydrogen-fuel-cell vehicles and the information technology (IT) positions. The inability to recruit and retain IT employees relates to the demand and compensation requirements for these classifications.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Competitive Wage and Quality of Work-Life Strategy

SunLine's ability to maintain a qualified staff can be attributed, in large part, to its ability to maintain a balance among several critical elements. Competitive pay rates and benefits for mechanics and motor coach operators are one element. SunLine and the union have chosen a nontraditional transit wage progression. The progression is 18 months in contrast to transit progressions of 36 to 60 months or, in come cases greater in other transit agencies. The 18-month progression permits SunLine to advance employees to the top rate in a manner that provides for immediate recognition and acknowledgment of the employee's initiative and proficiency. In addition, SunLine offers and promotes opportunities for employees to be part of a public-sector organization that has a visionary and entrepreneurial spirit.

Employee Referral Program

SunLine's employee referral program, titled "Bounty Hunter Program," allows employees to receive one payment of $25 for referring a new employee who completes the 90-day probationary period. With each recruitment, HR sends reminders to employees about the program. Initially the incentive payment was $50; however with up to 30 percent of new employees coming from employee referrals, it was determined that since the program was so successful payment could be reduced to its current level.

Collaborative Approach to IT Staffing

In order to address the organization's IT staff needs and remain within the budget, HR has worked with the Convention Business Center to design a position that can support both organizations and allow each employer to contribute toward funding the position.

Rollover and Individualized Training for New Bus Operators

The training staff closely monitors the progress of each operator throughout the new operator training program. Approximately halfway through the program, trainers are able to identify employees who may need intensive attention to succeed. In cases where a new bus operator shows excellent customer service skills but is not able to master driving skills on schedule, the employee is often able to extend the training period through an extension of the probationary period of up to 30 days. Sometimes the employee goes into a subsequent class of new operators. Other times, the person receives individualized tutoring in order to achieve required competencies.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Overall Organizational Environment

SunLine is well-known as a clean-fuels champion and resourceful service provider. The direction was first established by the board and later reinforced in a 1996 Strategic Plan. That plan was developed as a joint effort of SunLine's board members, executive staff, front-line employees from all departments, Royleen White & Associates, Amalgamated Transit Union staff, College of the Desert, Laidlaw Transit Services, Southern California Gas Company and representatives from the respective cities and Riverside County. The strategic plan provides the format for the ongoing efforts to expand service, introduce new products, and collaboratively address challenges

SunLine's general manager fosters an inclusive and innovative environment. With an emphasis on customer relations, the agency recruited the current HR director from the hospitality industry. In keeping with the agency's commitment to inclusiveness, a union representative was a member of the interviewing panel for the position. The ATU president states, "We can trust management because they not only include us in developing a solution to the problem, but we are involved with identifying the problem. They are straight shooters, and we all want to see the organization succeed."

Partnering with ATU and Other Organizations

The challenge of recruiting and retaining employees during a time of significant growth has been met by sticking with the principles of partnership as set out in the strategic plan. SunLine has a history of partnering with the union to establish new job classifications and job descriptions when there was a need to respond to service development. When curriculum was required to train for an alternative fuel, the agency partnered with the College of the Desert, the Southern California Gas Company and the ATU. According to the HR director, "the partnering concept initiated with the strategic plan continues to produce positive results for the agency." The organization's ability to recruit and retain employees while maintaining a turnover rate of less than 3 percent for the entire agency supports this statement.

Emphasis on Training

SunLine views responding to service challenges and the expansion of employee skills as a holistic strategy. The agency stresses through training the importance of proficiency in areas of responsibility and the importance of recognition and rewards for employee contributions to agency goals. Examples of this approach include involvement with local colleges, which design curriculum and train employees for the newly created CNG classifications and the hydrogen classification. Upon completion of the program, employees are rewarded with promotions and wage increases in the new technology classifications.

The union, employees, supervisors, and managers participate in the design of comprehensive training programs for SunLine. Career path identification and development as positions are created with "new technology" requirements are part of the culture of the organization. This approach encourages employee buy-in rather than threatening potential loss of positions through technology improvements.

Training to become proficient and expert in their field, especially in the arena of alternate fuels, has sparked mechanics to be leaders. SunLine is frequently approached by other transit agencies and private vendors to demonstrate the benefits of CNG and its effect on buses and other vehicles using alternate fuels.

Cross Training as a Priority

Because of flexibility built into the labor contract and the agency's diversity of functions, SunLine is able to offer employees many opportunities for cross training. Working within the seniority structure, HR is able to solicit interest in training opportunities outside employees' regular job classifications. For instance, when SunLine needed operators to provide the commuter service to Metrolink in Riverside, several motor coach operators had the opportunity to train for the special certification needed to operate this different type of service. Cross training helps to keep work interesting at SunLine and therefore acts as a retention tool.

Supervisory and Management Training Program

The Forum is SunLine's supervisory and management development program. For the past 18 months a group of 30 managers and supervisors has participated in monthly training sessions—some on topics of their choice, others mandated by the agency. Combinations of internal and external experts lead the highly interactive training sessions. Topics have included harassment prevention, violence prevention, conflict and negotiation skills, stress management, risk management and worker's compensation, budget development, and performance appraisals. A segment of each session is devoted to roundtable discussion in which any member can bring up an issue for discussion, input, or feedback.

Employee Recognition

SunLine's employee recognition program includes a number of informal and formal activities. Each month an Employee of the Month is selected and receives a plaque, $50 in cash and recognition by the board. An Employee of the Year is selected from among the 12 monthly honorees and is announced at an annual employee awards banquet. Last year's winner received an agency-funded weekend holiday to a location of his preference (within California) for him and his spouse. Employees also receive years of service awards at this event. The agency sponsors at least one recognition a quarter including an annual picnic and an annual recycling committee clothing drive that is combined with the annual Thanksgiving holiday potluck. Last year this community service project resulted in the donation of more than 3,000 pounds of clothing to the community and prizes for the departments and individuals that collected the largest amounts.

The marketing department contributes stories featuring employees to the local newspaper, a source of pride for the organization and the honored employees.

5. PIERCE TRANSIT

COMPARED WITH YOU

Pierce Transit (PT), the second largest transit agency in the state of Washington, is located in the city of Tacoma. The agency serves 450 square miles of urban and rural Pierce County with local and express bus service, specialized transportation for people with disabilities, vanpools, and rideshare programs. With a staff of 770 employees, PT is governed by a nine-member board of commissioners, made up of local elected officials representing towns and cities in the service area of 675,000 residents. The agency records more than 12 million boardings annually aboard its 203-bus fleet, serves more than 9,000 shuttle riders, and makes approximately 577,500 vanpool trips per year with 224 vans.

PT takes pride in being an integral part of the Pierce County community in which it provides hand-painted promotional buses celebrating the area's cultural life. Express bus service to special events such as the New Year's Eve First Night Celebration, Fourth of July festivities, and Martin Luther King Jr. Day observances is part of its commitment to the community.

In the past twelve years, the agency has received at least ten national awards of excellence in areas such as public information and marketing, public transportation innovation, budgeting, and financial reporting.

The passage of Initiative 695 in November 1998 sent shock waves through the organization. This state of Washington voter initiative took $24 million in annual motor vehicle excise tax funding away from the agency. It brought into question how PT would continue to carry out its mission: "Deliver outstanding transportation services that match our customers' needs." With this level of funding loss, clearly cuts would have to be made in service and staff, when planning for the future.

The pressures created by the passage of I-695 required the agency to draw upon its strengths as an organization and as a community service. This period was a test of how vital the services provided by PT were to its constituents, and whether its core values of ". . . customer focus, excellence, continuous improvement, and unity of purpose, job enhancement, teamwork, employee development, and learning" would help it weather the turbulence brought on by I-695.

In response to the funding cut, PT laid off more than 30 relief bus operators. While the employees were recalled when funding was restored in 2000, the organization is still in a recovery mode from the impact of this dramatic reduction in force.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

The benchmark positions Pierce Transit has difficulty recruiting and retaining for are bus and paratransit operators, mechanics, senior systems analysts, and transportation planners.

Bus and Paratransit Operators

All PT coach operators are hired into part-time relief positions. This employment approach, mandated by the collective-bargaining agreement between the agency and ATU Local 758, creates an ongoing staffing challenge. The relief operator position requires the operator, as stated in recruitment materials to "be available seven days a week 24 hours a day, and we are not going to let you know your schedule until the day before and maybe a minute before."

Retention challenges for bus operators include the low unemployment in the area, as well as internal policies and mandates, specifically provisions in the ATU/PT collective-bargaining agreement that limits flexibility in work assignments.

Mechanics

Due to fewer new graduates from vehicle-mechanics programs, PT has difficulty recruiting mechanics through external advertisements. The agency's efforts to retain mechanics are hampered by collective-bargaining agreement provisions regarding seniority as the primary determinant of work assignments.

Senior Systems Analysts and Transportation Planners

A persistent recruitment challenge is the inability to hire senior systems analysts and transportation planners. The ability to recruit senior systems analysts is hampered by the high demand for persons skilled in this field and competition with major firms like Microsoft, which pay top salaries. In addition, the uniqueness of the language of PT's computer programs creates an additional recruitment challenge. Few qualified candidates are available within the recruitment area.

Transportation planners are in high demand from other public agencies as well as private sector employers who offer more competitive compensation packages. In the tight labor market in the Tacoma region, PT has difficulty attracting a sufficient number of qualified applicants. Employees with advanced skills frequently were being lured away by assurances of higher compensation.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Bus Operators

The most effective recruitment occurs as a result of local newspaper advertising. Upon application, each bus operator candidate receives a three-page document titled *The Life of a Relief Transit Operator at Pierce Transit* as part of the employment screening process. This document gives details about how the role of the relief operator fits into PT's commitment to the public. For example, it states, "Relief operators never know until 3 P.M. of any given day what their schedule will be for the following day"; "At about 3 A.M. your phone rings. You are informed that your shift is being changed and instead of coming in at 6 A.M., you are needed at 5:14 A.M. Also, instead of only working three hours, you will now be working eight. There go all your plans!"; "Relief operators are guaranteed twenty hours of work each week. This is not to say that you won't work 50 or so hours in a given week." The document ends with, "After hearing about our expectations of relief operators, is this something you would like to do?" A signature line is provided at the bottom of the page.

Once hired, each new operator participates in six weeks of new bus operator training. Aiding greatly in the success of this program is a two-day training segment added in 1999, "Increasing Human Effectiveness," a commercially prepared training unit. Placed within the first week of training, this segment helps employees see themselves as having the tools needed to be successful. Fellow employees are trained to present the program, which shows trainees how to empower themselves, reaching new heights of effectiveness in every area of their lives. The training and management staff expresses the view that this program has increased retention of operators due to its emphasis on personal accountability and

the development of self-management and problem-solving skills. Cited as an example of its impact was that nine months after the I-695 layoffs, 28 of the 30-plus laid-off operators returned when funding was restored.

Through a peer-mentoring program, the Operations Department reinforces a positive, open, supportive culture by matching volunteer operators who have records of exceptional customer service skills with new operators. The impetus for initiating the mentoring program was awareness that much of a new employee's success and job satisfaction revolve around fitting into and understanding PT's culture of service. Mentors complete a structured orientation that includes mentoring guidelines, checklists, and evaluation forms. Formal mentoring lasts through the new employee's six-month probationary period. In actuality, the supportive relationship lasts much longer.

Worthy of note is that female bus operators make up 40 percent of the operator workforce, almost twice the national average reported in a 1999 APTA Diversity Survey. PT's success in attracting and retaining female operators is attributed to affirmative recruiting initiated at the agency more than 10 years ago.

Mechanics

Having experienced shortages of skilled mechanics for many years, the PT/ATU Local 758 apprenticeship committee developed a 48-month apprenticeship program in 1985. Typically this state-approved program has two to four apprentices at a time, taken from internal and external applicants. The organization collaborated with a local community college to develop a screening test that is given as a prerequisite to participation in the program. Apprentices attend technical courses at the community college, on their time and at their expense, which supplement on-the-job learning. The apprenticeship program enables PT to maintain an adequate supply of well-trained mechanics. An apprentice may apply for positions before completing the program. If determined to be the best candidate, the apprentice is awarded the position without having to complete the full 48 months.

Senior Systems Analysts and Transportation Planners

Through an Internet advertisement conducted in 2000 for an open position for a senior systems analyst, the agency received 500 inquiries, of which only six had some of the skills required. Until recently, PT was restricted to hiring technical employees such as IT professionals and transportation planners at the skill level of a vacated position. To address the issues of recruitment and retention of transportation planners, PT implemented a career progression program in November 2000—a career-pathing approach to internally developing needed planning talent. The program holds promise as a mechanism for retaining the knowledge and expertise acquired by employees at the agency. By establishing clear career progression for each position, managers can now hire at the entry-level and, by assigning increasingly complex tasks, responsibilities, and projects move employees who demonstrate the necessary skills to the next higher level, without a vacancy. The agency expects this program to enhance retention by encouraging employees to develop skills faster, knowing they have promotional opportunities, greater professional challenge, and probably longer tenure.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Overall Organizational Environment

At PT, the organizational environment is one in which openness and high employee involvement is valued at all levels. The recruitment and retention of employees is dealt with from a total employment life cycle perspective, with a strategic approach to facilitating quality work life from the time an employee is recruited to the time of termination. The leadership of the organization, from the chief executive officer to the ATU Local 758 president, is involved in ensuring that employees feel a part of the organization from the start. To demonstrate their commitment, each of these individuals is involved in activities such as new employee orientation.

New Employee Orientation

PT introduces new employees to the organization through a comprehensive, consistent means of orienting them to the agency's culture, benefits and expectations. The program was structured in large part using survey feedback gained from employees hired over a two-year period about their orientation as a new employee. Led by HR staff, the orientation gives the new employee a complete view of the organization through a media presentation that focuses on the mission and history of the agency, employee responsibilities and benefits, a system bus tour, meetings with coworkers, lunch with the supervisor, department-specific orientation, assignment to a buddy, as well as social time with coworkers, and a formal probationary discussion.

Complementary Retention Strategies

Total Quality Management

PT implemented a total quality management program several years ago. Staff points out that employee involvement was high long before the total quality movement. Examples

include operators and supervisors working together during the design stages in a new transit center. Operators serve on the route improvement team. In maintenance, when a new uniform contract was being awarded, mechanics participated in the decision. Likewise, mechanics' recommendations were used in deciding what changes would be made in the expansion of the maintenance shop. One anecdote describes employees' commitment to quality: A mechanic was so intent on resolving the issue of a bus dying in service that he took the bus manual home to find out how to diagnose the problem. He subsequently felt comfortable challenging the manager's assessment of the problem until he made his point. The solution he recommended was accepted.

Employee Involvement

Throughout the year, employees participate in providing input on decisions that affect PT employees' ability to meet the needs of constituents. A series of committees and task forces form the structure by which employees have their say, and hold managers accountable for communicating with employees regarding the outcomes of participation. Notices posted requesting volunteers for a work-life activity are quickly filled with employee signatures. Often the request initiator has to select among the list of volunteers. Employees expect to be involved and question decisions they feel are made without their input.

Highway to Health, an employee-committee program, sponsors health education and support aimed at helping employees make healthy lifestyle choices. The Critical Incident Peer Support Team is a group of trained employees available by pager, 24 hours a day, to help fellow employees cope with stress brought about by abnormal situations. The Seeking Excellence and Recognizing Coworker Heroes (SEARCH) Committee, has the motto "Happy workers are more productive!" The committee plans fun and morale-boosting events for coworkers. The SEARCH Committee also has the authority to recognize and reward employees who make PT a better place to work.

Management and Leadership Development

One of the strengths in PT's quality of work life strategy is its emphasis on management and leadership training and accountability. Since 1997, 185 managers and supervisors have completed a four-day training program focusing primarily on communication skills, problem solving, conflict resolution and inclusive decision-making. Anyone in a leadership role has completed the training, from the president of the union and shop stewards to executive staff. This training has been helpful in communicating to these leaders that having a common language, tools and understanding of how to interact with employees makes it easier to do interventions when helping supervisors resolve issues.

Agency-Wide Diversity Training

The award-winning cultural diversity program developed and offered at PT has helped the agency make strides in increasing employees' sensitivity to and appreciation for working in a diverse workplace. The goals of the diversity training are to encourage and promote harmony in the workplace, benefit from the strength that comes from individuals working together, create an environment where differences are respected and recognized, and encourage commitment to growth. The supervisory element is designed to provide supervisors with tools to guide and direct a diverse work team. New supervisors complete a four-hour class that covers Pierce Transit's diversity goals, workforce composition and the supervisor's role in maintaining a harassment-free work environment.

Strategic Partnering

Executive Leadership Team

The chief executive officer and department heads form the executive leadership team. As such, this group collaborates to make decisions that impact the total organization. The vice president of human resources and labor relations leads HR planning and policy implementation. Ongoing assessments of staffing needs of individual departments are integrated into the HR annual budget request. With input from other departments, HR develops drafts of new or revised policies, procedures, and programs for concurrence by the leadership team or approval by the board of commissioners. HR planning activities include annual turnover and retirement-eligibility analyses as well as utilization analysis for services such as the employee assistance programs.

Community Outreach

With an eye to the future, PT has an arrangement with local high schools to bring in high school students for several weeks during the summer to acquaint them with the work of mechanics. Students are paired with a mechanic and sample various aspects of work, including how the mechanic uses a laptop computer to diagnose engine problems.

Labor-Management Partnership

The LMC is a standing committee composed of the chief executive officer, ATU Local 758 president and other labor leaders, and representatives of departments. Positive outcomes of the labor-management partnership are evident from a review of LMC activities and minutes. Details of how the LMC functions are included in the Appendix B, Human-Resources Guide, under the Labor-Management Partnership section.

6. RTC/CITIFARE

COMPARED WITH YOU

Discovering how RTC/Citifare achieves success in recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce requires an understanding of the authority granted to two interconnected organizations. The Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Washoe County is the legal entity responsible for providing transportation services in the northwestern Nevada County of Washoe. Established in 1979, the five-member commission, which serves as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO), is responsible for operating the public transportation system, approving road construction or maintenance projects, and providing for their funding, design, construction, and administration.

In 1978, the RTC contracted the management of Citifare's bus operations to First Transit, Inc. and required First Transit, Inc. to establish a private corporation to operate bus services, Transit Management of Washoe, d.b.a. Citifare. Citifare's transit manager, director of operations, and director of maintenance are employees of First Transit. Citifare employs all others.

While RTC and Citifare are separate entities, RTC provides support for Citifare (administrative support, payroll, accounts payable, marketing, and transit planning), and RTC and Citifare share a number of programs. Throughout this report, the joint relationship will be identified as one agency, RTC/Citifare. Those activities strictly under the authority of only one of the entities will be referred to as "RTC" or "Citifare."

The service area for Citifare fixed-route bus service is a 69 square-mile urban area with a population of 320,000 residents. Citifare receives 40 percent of its funding from rider fares and additional funding from .25 percent sales tax revenues. The agency records 8 million boardings annually.

The RTC/Citifare has 300 employees. Of these, RTC employs the study benchmark positions of the information services technicians (4) and civil engineers (16). Citifare employs the benchmark positions of bus operators (166) and journey-level and master mechanics (18)—referred to as coach and master technicians, respectively.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

The recruitment and retention of bus operators is an ongoing challenge at Citifare. Most bus operators are hired into full-time "extra-board" positions with uncertain schedules, at least for the first year of employment. Another recruitment challenge is the transient nature of many individuals who apply for bus operator positions. Often applicants come with spotty employment records of multiple short-term employment episodes.

The 2.9 percent unemployment rate in the Washoe County area makes it difficult to recruit master technicians. The shifts and hours that newly hired technicians must work are unattractive to many at this skill level.

Until recently, the RTC experienced difficulty recruiting and retaining civil engineers. Two factors identified as contributing to the difficulty were the low unemployment rate and a non-competitive compensation package.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Citifare's experience with community outreach and newspaper classified ads has proven that these methods are the most cost-effective recruitment strategies for bus operator positions. The agency allows sufficient time for a reasonable pool of applicants to apply and provides a clear description of the actual position in classified ads.

Citifare's most pressing challenge with regard to the employment of bus operators is how to retain employees who have good records and who fit the requirements of the position. During the recruitment process, the staff informs prospective employees of the realities of the position and the stresses that come with it. This approach works well as a screening tool for eliminating applicants not well suited for the position. Position requirements are re-emphasized throughout the testing and interviewing process. Once employees are hired, structured new employee orientation and training programs help to enhance the likelihood of the agency's return on the recruitment and training investment of $9,000 per new employee.

The difficulty Citifare experienced in recruiting master technicians led to the development of an in-house coach-technician-training program. Typically, employees in utility worker and bus washer positions who show mechanical aptitude and are aware of the rigors of shift work fill coach-technician-trainee positions. Currently, Citifare employs four technicians who have received training as coach technicians through this internal training program. Ninety percent of employees trained and promoted in this program continue on staff.

The RTC recruits civil engineers and information services technicians through advertisements in local newspapers and use of commercial online sources. In addition, civil engineer positions are advertised in national engineering journals, in transportation trade publications, and through contacts with professional engineering associations.

To accurately assess the nature of a perceived compensation problem for information-services technicians and civil engineers, the agency participated in a local salary classification study. The study verified that salaries offered by the agency were somewhat below competitive salaries in the region. The study also verified that employee benefits offered by RTC were superior when compared with benefits offered by other employers. The RTC covers the full cost of the pension benefit as well as the cost for medical, dental, vision, and disability insurance coverage for the employees. Employees accrue two weeks of vacation during the first year and receive increased accruals with years of service. After 5 years of service, employees receive a cash award for each year of service, which is cumulative throughout their employment.

The pay-for-performance plan includes a base increase of 4 percent, and with a performance rating of "very good" or "excellent," the employee receives a bonus.

The comprehensive classification and compensation study provided the business case for raising salaries of information-services technicians and civil engineers. Employees hired into these positions now receive salaries that rank among the highest in the Reno area.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Overall Organizational Environment

"Open-door" is the watchword at RTC/Citifare. Consistently, staff speaks of how every manager, from RTC's executive director to Citifare's training supervisors, welcomes contact from any employee. Openness as an organizational norm sets the stage for a universal expectation of open and candid interactions throughout the agency.

A defining influence on RTC/Citifare's culture seems to be a number of long-standing policy statements set forth by its leadership in the early years of RTC. One of these policy statements, the RTC "Open Door Policy," establishes a formalized and informal open-door process, whereby employees have easy access to managers, whether to make suggestions for improvement or to express concerns. One of the ways the formal process is implemented is through a semi-monthly every-other-month all-staff meeting, a time when staff is updated on matters affecting the operations of the agencies. At each meeting, employees are given an opportunity to pose questions about any transportation-services issue.

The management team of RTC/Citifare is committed to the philosophy that employees are more productive and satisfied if they feel their employer cares about them, personally and professionally. Over the past several years, the team has emphasized the importance of seeking out examples of employees doing things right and recognizing them for their contributions. In the Citifare Operations Department, in particular, this philosophy is in contrast to a previously honored operations supervisor as transit cop tradition. Recent Operations Department supervisor professional development has focused on providing supervisors with the skills they need to move into and feel comfortable in the new employee coach role. Operators now report viewing supervisors as competent helpers who value them. Citifare cites the results of a recent onboard passenger survey as documentation that this approach has improved employee commitment and rider satisfaction. In 2000, riders rated bus operators higher on courtesy and competence than in 1997.

Position-Specific and Complementary Strategies

The RTC/Citifare takes a comprehensive approach to employee development and retention. Brief descriptions of some of several noteworthy strategies for developing and retaining a qualified workforce follow.

New Employee Orientation Program

Through a formalized, integrated approach to new employee orientation, the agency begins each employee's experience by giving them a sense of belonging and identification with the overall mission and goals of RTC/Citifare.

New Bus Operator Training and Mentoring

The training program for new operators includes a seven-week program, similar to those offered by other transit agencies in which driving skills, agency rules and regulations, and customer relations are emphasized. In early 2000, the agency added a mentor program to the training schedule. Citifare mentor program recruits volunteer veteran operators, supervisors, and trainers with superior technical and customer-relations skills to help new operators to feel comfortable in their roles and in the agency. Each mentor receives training to prepare for the assignment and is charged with guiding, tutoring, coaching, and advising new operators during the beginning weeks of their careers at Citifare. The mentor meets regularly with the new operator to discuss issues or concerns that may arise. Additionally, mentors work as part of a team to solve specific problems and recommend changes where necessary. Mentors receive a 7 percent increase in pay during the assignment period. The mentor program is credited with contributing to 28 percent fewer preventable accidents in 2000 as compared with 1999 and a 14 percent improvement in accidents overall.

Citifare University

Citifare University (CU), an advanced training program designed primarily to maintain high skill and confidence levels among bus operators, is open to all Operations Department employees. Initiated in March 2000, the program is a four-day training effort aimed at improving the performance of operators. While voluntary in nature, 90 percent of eligible employees have completed the program, well beyond the expectations of Citifare's Operations Department.

CU covers such topics as customer service, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) awareness, diversity awareness, advanced driving skills, workplace violence prevention, harassment prevention, maintenance troubleshooting (Maintenance 101), driver fatigue awareness, cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid skills, commercial driver's license review, and agency policies and procedures review.

Under the guidance of the operations training supervisor, transit supervisors serve as part-time CU trainers. Each must complete a training certification program or demonstrate training aptitude prior to becoming part of the CU team. To ensure

consistency in training content, the training supervisor provides training guides for each segment of instruction.

The experience within the CU program has facilitated a change in the role of supervisors from transit cop to employee coach, resulting in a more accepting view of these individuals and their roles by bus operators. Other outcomes attributed to CU are that preventable accidents have decreased by one-third, and passenger complaints have been lowered from 2.2 per 10,000 rides to 1.0 per 10,000 rides.

Another positive contribution of CU is the collaboration it promotes between the Operations and Maintenance Departments. When the master technician teaches the Maintenance 101 module, making bus operators aware of how they can troubleshoot certain mechanical problems on their own, the resulting interaction contributes to strengthened relationships and cooperation within the two line functions of the agency.

Maintenance Department Training

Maintenance Department training ranges from that given to entry-level trainees with no skills to the preventive inspection program. As a result of a contact from and experimentation with the Sierra Nevada Job Corps, the agency developed a 90-day apprenticeship program for training coach technicians. In March 2000, the agency initiated the program by training a Job Corps enrollee. The success in that program led to the development of an in-house program of the same content and length. In a 90-day period the maintenance training group is able to train a technician to perform all aspects of the job from preventive maintenance inspection, to engine tune-up, to major suspension overhaul and brake repair. Because the system operates one type of bus, the 90-day timeframe is feasible. As a result of initiating this program the agency now has its first female coach technician on staff.

The Maintenance Department places heavy emphasis on Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certification training. Maintenance uses training as a development and employee motivation tool. By encouraging employees to keep pace with the new technology and other advances in the field, the agency feels it has found the key to helping employees feel valued and keeping them excited about the day-to-day work they perform and committed to staying at Citifare.

The maintenance training unit conducts extensive one-on-one training. One of the training norms is that cross training occurs routinely between coach and master technicians. As a result of the "growing their own" environment, coach technicians are skilled in performing some of the work of the master technicians. While turnover is low in this department, this development and motivational practice helps Citifare maintain a reservoir of skilled technicians to quickly fill any vacancies that occur.

In 2000, maintenance employees defeated a proposal for labor union representation. An employee who has a work-related issue can approach a supervisor, the trainer, or department director and be assured that the matter will be addressed quickly. Citifare management feels that management flexibility and sensitivity to employees' needs were key factors in employees rejecting union representation. Jobs or assignments are based on knowledge and skills, not seniority. Managers maintain a climate of flexibility that allows them to respond to individual employees' special needs, without dissension from other employees.

Quality-of-Work-Life Initiatives

Employee Involvement

Operations Department mentors serve on a variety of committees, such as the planning committee with the RTC transportation planners. They provide input into decisions regarding proposed bus stops and service changes. Because of their experience on the street, mentors are able to provide concrete input on the feasibility of requests, including input on safety considerations such as ADA accessibility. In the May 2001 service changes, 10 of 14 changes resulted from operator and mentor suggestions.

Maintenance employees volunteer for and lead the quarterly Maintenance Safety Committee meetings. A master technician chairs the Safety Committee, which includes representatives from each shift and unit within maintenance and one supervisor. Another technician records and types the minutes on his home computer, which are then posted on maintenance bulletin boards. As a group, these employees have the authority to make recommendations about such safety matters as types of signage, posting of signs, purchase of safety equipment, and the acquisition of different types of hearing protection. The committee makes recommendations to the training supervisor who reports that, to date, each recommendation presented by the group has been approved.

Employee Recognition Program

RTC/Citifare recognizes employee contributions and commitment through a number of awards and recognition. The Employee Suggestion Award for cost-savings suggestions rewards employees monetarily for cost savings and quality-of-work-life suggestions. Employees receive longevity awards at 5, 10, 15 or 20 years of service. The hall of fame award is given to individuals who have contributed significantly to the goals of RTC/Citifare for at least eight years or through some major accomplishment.

Incentives

Citifare incentive programs include a cash incentive representing 1 percent gross pay earned in the preceding year and paid to those employees who had no chargeable accidents

during the year. Safety points are also awarded each month to the driver group with the fewest accidents. The incentive points may accumulate and be redeemed for valuable gifts. Citifare belongs to the National Safety Council, which affords operators the opportunity to qualify for and wear annual safe driving pins.

Employee Wellness Program

Annually, RTC contracts with a local vendor to conduct a health fair that includes the option of a comprehensive blood-chemistry analysis paid for by RTC. Employees receive a confidential computer printout of results that identifies health risk factors and recommendations for lifestyle changes. The agency also offers free health education workshops. Employees and family dependents needing help with personal problems that may adversely affect job performance can receive confidential counseling assistance through the employee assistance program.

Computer Purchase Program

The RTC offers an interest-free loan program to eligible employees to assist in the purchase of personal computer systems similar to those used by employees to perform their job duties. Employees execute a promissory note and make payments through payroll deduction.

Strategic Partnering

Management Team

The Citifare HR administrator is part of the senior management team that meets weekly to coordinate management efforts. Through the meeting, each team stays informed of budget and other RTC/Citifare organizational issues that may affect individual departments. As a team member, the administrator keeps abreast of how current or planned organizational activities may affect employee staffing, planning, or employee quality of life.

As an HR planning strategy, the administrator reviews the tenure of employees in bus operator and maintenance technician positions annually to project likely turnover. Based on these projections, the administrator pre-qualifies applicants for bus operator positions, enabling the Operations Department to fill vacancies without interruption to the quality and quantity in bus service.

Labor-Management Partnership

Citifare has a limited labor management partnership between management and Teamsters Local Union 533, which represents bus operators. Details of how the partnership works are included in the Appendix B, Human-Resources Guide, under the Labor-Management Partnership section.

7. PROFESSIONAL TRANSIT MANAGEMENT OF TUCSON, INC. DBA SUN TRAN

COMPARED WITH YOU

The City of Tucson Department of Transportation is responsible for local public transportation services and contracts with Professional Transit Management (PTM) of Cincinnati, Ohio, to operate Sun Tran. The general manager, assistant general manager, and director of maintenance are employees of PTM. All other employees are hired by PTM as Sun Tran employees. The general manager reports directly to the director of transportation for the city of Tucson, who also oversees the operating budget for Sun Tran.

Serving a population of approximately 500,000 residents in a 199-square-mile area, Sun Tran operates 199 vehicles along 36 fixed-routes with an annual ridership of 15 million one-way passenger trips. Sun Tran employs a staff of 500 employees: 340 full-time bus operators, 57 mechanics and 103 administrative employees. Teamsters Local Union 104 represents bus operators and mechanics.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

Sun Tran has difficulty recruiting and retaining employees in the benchmark positions of bus operator and diesel mechanic. A longstanding unemployment rate of 3 percent, contract restrictions, lack of qualified workers (i.e., workers lack basic computer and reading skills, a large pool of unskilled workers whose primary language is not English), and lack of a competitive compensation package have contributed to San Tran's difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified workers.

Although a decline in the local mining industry has provided Sun Tran with periodic pools of highly qualified mechanics (90 percent have an associate degree), the labor contract requires that new hires, regardless of experience, start out as an entry level "C" mechanic, at $14.42 per hour. The contract defines class "C" mechanics, as "those in their first twelve months of employment," regardless of skill level. This restriction creates difficulty in recruiting highly skilled diesel mechanics, who will not work for entry-level wages.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Hiring Only Full-Time Bus Operators

Two years ago, Sun Tran discontinued hiring part-time operators, and the quality of applicants increased dramatically. The elimination of the part-time bus operator position has been a successful recruitment strategy and has improved the quality, stability and retention of new employees. Unlike prior

part-time employees who received no benefits, new operators receive benefits upon completion of the five to six week training period with a starting salary of $10.64 per hour. Sun Tran now attracts a sufficient number of qualified applicants; but until the agency went to full-time only, HR staff relates, "It was like a revolving door with part-time hires." The change to full-time operators also contributed to a decrease in the amount of overtime and incidents of operator fatigue, thus, improving system safety.

Competitive Compensation Package

A key recruitment strategy at Sun Tran is to offer a more competitive compensation package for bus operators and diesel mechanics. However, Sun Tran's compensation package is not totally comparable to the city of Tucson's wages, which is the standard that transit workers use to measure competitiveness. Sun Tran implemented an attendance incentive program to make its compensation program more attractive. The program rewards personal leave time payable in hours. Employees can earn attendance incentive hours monthly. Employees who complete six consecutive months of perfect attendance have the option of converting two earned sick days to two personal leave days. Employees who complete 12 consecutive months can convert four sick days to four personal leave days. An employee can convert up to 24 hours of incentive time to cash with or without perfect attendance, once in a six-month period.

Advertisement of Vacancies

Sun Tran uses a variety of recruitment strategies including internal job postings that provide a number of employee referrals. The best source, however, is advertisements in the local newspaper. The agency also sends notices of job openings to approximately 50 local agencies described as "agencies serving people with disabilities, EEO and affirmative action agencies, and Goodwill Industries." The HR director reports getting a "few good candidates from the agencies."

The labor contract requires that "When the Company needs additional employees, the Company shall give the Local Union equal opportunity with all other sources to provide suitable applicants, and those qualified will be given equal opportunity to fill any vacancies." In keeping with the spirit of this provision, the company provides the union with a list of all job announcements when the recruitment process begins. Few referrals have resulted from this practice.

New Employee Orientation

Sun Tran reports that an employee orientation program is an effective tool for retaining qualified workers. The orientation program introduces new employees to a culture that values upward communication and feedback. During orientation, employees are informed of several committees that review and resolve operational issues and are encouraged to "be as involved as they want to be."

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Overall Organizational Environment

Sun Tran has an organizational goal of providing safe, customer-focused service to the riding public. In addition, the agency seeks to develop an environment and cultural climate of unity, in which employees characterize the labor-management relationship as "us," rather than "them." Management at all levels is committed to addressing customer complaints and supports training as a strategy for improving customer relations. In this regard, the agency uses a commercial operator-training program that provides instruction on customer service skills, the importance of good interpersonal relationships with co-workers, customers, and managers, and stresses the importance of bus operators as an integral part of the organization's goal to develop effective customer relations. The training manager stated, "Bus operators see how they fit into the big picture, that their jobs are about more than the route they are driving that day. They learn specific skills to deal with customers, but also they see how they influence the public's view of transit in the entire community."

Position-Specific and Complementary Strategies

Upward Communication

Sun Tran emphasizes employee communication and involvement as key components of its strategy to get employees to take ownership for providing quality, customer-focused service delivery. One communication vehicle used by Sun Tran is a confidential and anonymous 24/7 employee hotline. The general manager responds to the employee's feedback. The general manager also conducts a monthly meeting open to all employees, "Let's Ask/Let's Talk." Sun Tran also hosts an annual employee appreciation day and cooks breakfast, lunch, and dinner for its employees.

Leadership Development and Upward Mobility

Sun Tran promotes from within whenever possible and encourages bus operators and mechanics to train for upward mobility. The agency offers a tuition reimbursement program to assist with leadership skills training and competency development. Sun Tran pays 75 percent of the cost for six credit hours or two courses per semester, available for fall, spring, and summer courses. Courses can be for professional enrichment or job related. The tuition program also pays for courses leading to a college degree. Management describes the program as both an effective recruitment strategy and a retention tool.

Flexible Scheduling

Operators and mechanics have the option of choosing from two scheduling schemes. Based on seniority, employees in these classifications can vote to work four ten-hour or five eight-hour shifts each week. Typically up to 50 percent of employees can work the shorter workweek.

Performance-Based Needs Assessment and Training

Sun Tran conducts ongoing assessments of bus operator training needs. The training manager reviews ride reports and retrains operators, as needed, in competencies such as making smooth stops and driving defensively. In instances of a preventable accident, operators are required to attend one day of refresher training. Operators also attend an accident prevention program every three months. An approach found very successful is the use of a self-guided computer program, *Smart Driving Plus*, which is available from NTI. The program, which requires the operator to have basic computer skills, trains one operator at a time for about eight hours. Many operators have never used a computer and must be taught basic skills before they can use the program.

Strategic Partnering

Mechanic Training

With the assistance of a federal grant to train mechanics, Sun Tran partners with the College of the Desert to ensure that its mechanics are equipped with the technical skills required for maintaining new equipment. The college will train approximately 50 percent of Sun Tran's mechanics on the theory of CNG technology.

Labor-Management Partnership

The labor-management committee, which has been in operation for 20 years, is outlined in the labor agreement and meets monthly. Details of how the LMC functions are included in the Appendix B, Human-Resources Guide, under the Labor-Management Partnership section.

8. MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

COMPARED WITH YOU

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) is a modal administration of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) charged with implementing statewide transit policy. MTA is headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland's largest city, which is located ninety miles south of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and forty miles north of Washington, D.C. MTA has a staff of over 3,400 employees covered by several collective-bargaining agreements.

The MTA operates an integrated system of transit services through directly operated as well as purchased transportation services in the Baltimore and Washington metropolitan areas. The agency averages nearly 350,000 daily boardings, serving over 101 million passengers annually. These services consist of bus, paratransit, light rail, heavy rail, and commuter rail. The state provides planning resources and funding for Maryland's freight rail system and locally operated transit systems in its 24 subdivisions.

Servicing over 70 routes, bus operations requires approximately 900 coaches including mobility vans and a staff of 2,000 to carry 78 million passengers a year. Fifty-one of the routes are in Baltimore City, and in Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties. Eighteen commuter bus lines operate between surrounding Maryland counties and Baltimore or Washington, D.C. Mobility is an accessible paratransit service which provides curb to curb transportation for people who cannot use regular transit buses because of disabilities. Each year, the MTA invests over $11 million providing service to people with disabilities through directly operated and contracted vans, transporting 523,000 passengers per year.

The rail services consist of the Central Light Rail Line, the Metro Subway, and MARC commuter rail. The Central Light Rail comprises miles of service operating from Hunt Valley in Baltimore County to Cromwell Station in Glen Burnie. In addition, the rail line has a 2.7-mile extension from the main line to BWI Airport that was added in 1997. Staffed by over 350 employees, the system has 53 articulated light-rail vehicles accommodating up to 260 passengers each. Over 8.6 million passengers ride the 32-stop line in the course of a year.

The 15.5-mile Metro Subway utilizes a fleet of 100 rail cars covering 14 stations and serving 13.6 million passengers per year. Staffing totals over 450 employees.

The MTA provides MARC commuter rail services over a 187-mile system serving Baltimore City, Washington, D.C., eight Maryland counties and parts of northeastern West Virginia. The service is operated under contracts with Amtrak and CSX and provides over 5.3 million passenger trips annually. Eighty-two daily trains provide weekday service to the 42 stations.

The MTA's operating budget is nearly $370 million dollars with an annual capital budget of nearly $200 million. The primary funding for MTA is the state transportation trust fund, which is generated in large part from gas tax, toll fees and fares. The agency has a 40 percent fare box recovery requirement.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

The strong economy in the Baltimore area has placed a burden on the MTA with regard to recruiting entry level employ-

ees. For example, competition from national firms has made it particularly difficult for the MTA to recruit mechanics and technicians. Many companies compete for the same applicants as the MTA and offer higher starting salaries. Adding to this burden, MTA implemented an early retirement program to promote savings and avoid service cuts or reductions in service. Theoretically, this approach permits highly paid and highly benefit-compensated employees to retire so that the organization can replace these individuals with newly hired people at significant savings. Unfortunately, low unemployment and the success of the local economy made replacement extremely difficult. The organization saw its vacancy rate increase to as much as 15 percent in employee categories such as technicians.

Railside electro-mechanical repair positions are highly compensated within the union pay scale, yet this classification is extremely difficult to recruit and retain. Retention difficulties are amplified by the fact that large numbers of these employees are relatively young and tend to be more mobile in the job market. The influx of technical companies to the Baltimore area has resulted in the loss of many of these employees as well as many potential replacements. A recent contractual expansion of the wage progression rate from 48 to 60 months poses an additional challenge to recruitment, as well as to retention of short-term employees.

Difficulties in recruiting diesel mechanics are much the same as with railside maintenance personnel. The top rate is quite competitive; however, new employers to the area offer compensation plans that exceed MTA starting rates for new hires and provide accelerated wage progression rates, even if they ultimately may not pay as much as MTA's top rate. The MTA is also faced with the traditional public sector versus private sector employment bias.

For several years, agencies within MDOT have experienced difficulty recruiting and retaining employees in the information technology (IT) field. Compensation requirements of many professionals in this field prevented MDOT agencies from being competitive with other employers.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Recruitment Campaign

The MTA operates with a $3.6 million HR budget with $225,000 earmarked as recruitment funds. To meet the recruitment challenges noted above, administrative services personnel designed a team approach to address the issues and develop solutions. The team directed to secure input from every level of the organization and develop an action plan to expedite recruitment in response to the large number of retirees and intense competition in the labor market. To this end, the group recruited support from managers of the operations and administrative departments, supervisors, and the rank-and-file employees. The union was also invited to provide suggestions and referrals.

The administrative services team had specific goals: include all segments of the organization in order to galvanize the company and expand its resources to achieve MTA staffing; train a sufficient and qualified group of employees to supplement the HR team and ensure that there would always be the availability of interview panels to select talented applicants; design expedited recruitment and hiring procedures and train departments to effectively utilize them. The approach contained the characteristics of a campaign, which resulted in the following:

- The union agreed to waive several provisions of the wage agreement for a limited time for specific maintenance classifications. For example, entry-level wages were raised for targeted positions, which resulted in starting rates ranging from 85 percent to 100 percent of the top wage rates.
- Teams consisting of HR and operations personnel made repeated visits to local technical schools to recruit and provide on-the-spot testing.
- On-site job fairs were conducted, providing immediate testing, interview, and job offers.
- Recruitment sources were expanded to include radio, out-of-area newspaper advertising, special publications, on bus ads, and increased Internet usage.
- Advertising was increased in frequency and redesigned to increase visual impact and focus upon the MTA's benefits package.
- Recruitment trailers were added to MTA public service announcements.
- Frequency of operator testing was increased.
- Operator training program was changed whereby applicants were hired without CDL permits, training was provided after hire.
- The rate of pay during operator training was increased.

The campaign undertaken by the MTA resulted in the development of a pool of candidates as well as filling most of the vacancies. Planning, participation and communication by all stakeholders was pivotal to the success of the effort. Recruitment pressures continue, however MTA has developed new skills for handling similar situations in the future.

Linkages with Technical Schools

MTA staff works with local technical schools that teach electronic technician maintenance programs, making frequent visits to the schools and presentations to students about MTA as an employer of choice. Pending successful completion of the technical school program, interested students can prequalify for entry level positions by passing screening tests that MTA staff administers at their school. Students have the opportunity to visit MTA maintenance facilities to learn about the work environment and speak with mechanics about the

work. Typically, two to three graduates from each class choose to work at MTA.

IT Personnel Incentive Pay

Several years ago, to address the high level of competition for IT employees, MDOT-HR reviewed all positions in this field and developed new classifications and compensation structures. An outgrowth of this analysis was the institution of a sign-on and recruitment bonus program for selected IT positions. The new employee receives the sign-on bonus of $3,000 paid in two lump sums; the first payment upon satisfactory completion of their first 90 days; the second payment upon completion of their first six months of service.

Employees who recruit employees into bonus-eligible positions receive $1,000 per recruitment. The first lump sum payment is paid when the new employee completes the first 90 days; the second when the employee completes the first six months of service. Employees ineligible for recruitment bonuses include those responsible for, or have significant influence in the hiring process of IT employees such as HR staff, data processing managers, and any employee on the (MDOT) Executive Pay Plan.

Employees in mission-critical IT positions are eligible for annual bonuses of up to $3,000. According to MDOT HR documents, a mission-critical project is a ". . . defined IT project or IT system which is essential to the accomplishment of an agency's primary mission and key goals or delivery of services to any agency's customers."

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Overall Organizational Environment

The MTA is viewed as a desirable employer and the average tenure for current employees is 15 years for bus operators, 27 years for train operators, and 17 years for mechanics and customer service representatives. The retention issues are being addressed through the constant development and reinforcement of a quality work environment. New means of recruiting and retaining quality employees is an ongoing process. For example, the MTA is currently reviewing the benefits of such things as cable TV ads and the use of recruitment videos.

Team Focus

The recruitment and retention crisis provided the opportunity for employees to appreciate the result of a team effort. Employees contributed toward recruitment and retention when they referred prospective candidates and when they supported new employees by reinforcing the attributes of employment. The inclusion of the operations team in the recruitment effort produced innovative recruitment techniques and strategies. It also created a spirit of camaraderie that identified the administrative departments as crucial to the function of the operation role. The labor-management relationship further advanced the administration's esprit de corps.

Labor-Management Partnership

Three unions represent approximately 80 percent of the MTA workforce, with the ATU representing 2,300 operators and mechanics. The MTA successfully addresses issues of employee recruitment and retention, in large part, due to a unique labor-management agreement developed six years ago. This agreement, known as the Labor and Management Partnership (LAMP), states that the purpose is "To establish and sustain a working relationship between the unions representing employees and MTA management that is consistent with, and supportive of, the mission, vision and values of the MTA." Details of the LAMP are included in the Appendix B, Human-Resources Guide, under the Labor-Management Partnership section.

9. ATC PHOENIX

COMPARED WITH YOU

ATC Phoenix is the largest of three subcontractors in the City of Phoenix providing transit services and has maintained a thirty-year contractual relationship with the city. With more than 1.3 million residents, it is projected that Phoenix will become the fifth largest city in the United States in the near future. The greater metropolitan area now boasts 2.4 million residents.

In March of 2000, Phoenix residents voted in a tax base to fund transit, bus rapid transit, and light rail. The results of these expansion efforts have positively impacted ATC Phoenix and users of public transportation. Prior to the referendum, ATC Phoenix ran daily service with limited service on Saturdays. The bus operator workforce has increased from 417 operators to 645 operators so as to allow full Saturday and Sunday service. ATC Phoenix currently employs 1,200 individuals, two-thirds of whom are unionized under three collective-bargaining agreements. The largest of the unions is the ATU Local 1433, providing representation for the bus operators. The Operating Engineers Union represents the more than 90 mechanics who service the bus fleet. The Teamsters represent service personnel.

ATC Phoenix has a mixed fleet of 340 buses with 28 more expected during fall 2001. Currently, 44 percent of the fleet runs on diesel and 56 percent of the fleet operates with liquefied natural gas (LNG). During peak service 254 buses service a 525 square mile area. The current cost per mile of operation is approximately $4.25 per mile.

ATC Phoenix has been rated as one of the safest systems in America and was recently awarded a national safety award by APTA. The low accident rate of 2.58 per 100,000 revenue miles attests to the bases for this recognition. On-time performance consistently hovers around the 97th percentile.

Annually, more than 30 million passengers board ATC Phoenix buses to various destinations in the valley of the sun. The economy of the area is as diversified as its population, with tourism being the primary industry. In addition, the area ranks third among national electronic production centers. Still growing, the city of Phoenix has a civilian labor force of 726,609 and an unemployment rate of 3.3 percent.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

Bus Operators

Until recently, ATC Phoenix had difficulty recruiting and retain bus operators due to an internal factor, the wage/benefit scale was not competitive, and an external factor of low unemployment. The passage of the referendum and the recently five-year negotiated agreements with three unions has boosted ATC Phoenix's ability to attract applicants for bus operator positions. The top hourly wage rate for bus operators is now $17.73 per hour.

Mechanics

ATC Phoenix's primary competitors in recruiting mechanics are within the airline and manufacturing industries. These employers sponsor students through expensive vocational training and having paid upwards of $20,000 to prepare journey-level mechanics and place them in positions with hourly rates of $25 to $27. America West Airlines is headquartered in Phoenix and Southwest Airlines has a large airport hub in the area. McDonald/Douglass and Lockheed are also among the competitors for well-trained mechanics. ATC Phoenix, as a quasi-public sector employer, is unable to compensate for tuition or offer competitive starting salaries.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Grassroots Recruiting

ATC Phoenix has benefited from grassroots recruitment strategies. Onsite job fairs have proven to be the most effective method of attracting applicants for bus operator and mechanic vacancies. The agency circulates flyers in targeted areas, such as Department of Economic Security out-station offices, local grocery chains, community businesses, and newspapers. ATC phoenix has also realized some success through Internet advertising.

Employee Referral Program

Recently, ATC Phoenix successfully enacted an employee referral program for the recruitment of bus operators and mechanics. Current employees can refer applicants to these positions. Applicants completing the 6-week student operator training earn their referral source $100 dollars. Operators completing the 90-day probationary program earn their referral source an additional $100. Operators who complete 1 full year of service with the company earn their referral source another $100 for a total of $300.

New Employee Orientation

ATC Phoenix has an extensive employee orientation program that assists new employees in familiarizing themselves with the transit industry, plant facilities, and job expectations. The general manager program is a part of the new employee orientation and has been critical to the success of newly hired employees. The general manager meets with groups of new employees, reviews his goals, the corporate structure of the agency, and the structure of the city of Phoenix Public Transit Department. Additionally, he highlights benefits of the mentoring program, and the open door policy in the workplace.

Mentoring Program

New operator trainees are paired with more senior operators once they graduate from the training program. The mentor serves as point of reference for the new employee and is constantly communicating with the training manager, the assistant general manager for human services (AGM-HS) and passenger services to resolve issues. Oftentimes graduates do not feel capable of handling the first assignment on their own and wish to have the mentor accompany them for the first one or two days. Through the mentoring program, additional training and support needs of the first-year operator can be can be discerned and accommodated.

Bilingual Training and Safety Support

ATC Phoenix uses bilingual trainers in the new operator-training program to interpret information and assist with defensive driving instructions to ensure that Spanish-speaking employees have complete knowledge of the vehicle, routes and customer service expectations. Additionally, the safety department employs a bilingual safety technician to assist Spanish-speaking employees with special program needs and employment requirements. The safety technician assists operators complete operational reports and acts as an intermediary with dispatch and the transit operations supervisors. This support has been very effective in attracting and retaining bilingual employees.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Overall Organizational Environment

Good communications with internal and external customers is one of the general manager's primary goals. This focus extends into the training and operational areas of ATC Phoenix. The general manager and senior staff members make special efforts to know employees on a first-name basis. The agency's open door policy allows any employee to voice a concern, offer a suggestion or have access to immediate problem resolution. This culture has promoted a friendly workforce and lessened the gap between union and non-union employees. The company supports union holiday-related activities and provides lunches and special barbecues to employees. Expanded senior staff meetings are open to everyone in the company who wishes to attend. Staff newsletters such as the *Dispatch* provide updated communications to employees. Recently an intranet was designed to further enhance employee communications.

Employee Recognition

Recognition programs held annually include a variety of social events for employees and their families. Social recognition programs include the annual employee recognition banquet where monetary awards and additional vacation incentives are awarded to outstanding employees. The team of the quarter awards includes savings bonds, time-off, and a special luncheon with the general manager and senior staff. The annual picnic is a day of fun for employees and families, as are water park activities held during the spring, summer, and fall.

Position-Specific and Complementary Factors

Celebration of Diversity

ATC Phoenix prides itself on its emphasis of celebrating and appreciating diversity. Diversity training has been provided to all supervisors, managers, and union instructors who assist trainers with new operator training. ATC Phoenix employs people from many cultures: Eastern European, Caribbean, Native American, African, Hispanic, Asian and derivatives thereof. The agency shows appreciation to all employees for their contributions to ATC Phoenix, regardless of race, sex, gender orientation, national origin, socio-economic culture and educational attainment.

2-Year Check-Up Seminar

Operators who have been employed for 2 years receive a 1-day seminar, with lunch, gift certificate for dinner for two, and two movie tickets. During the seminar, operators review defensive driving, customer service, and ADA training. The second half of the day is devoted to round-table discussions of problems and issues frequently encountered by operators who provide transit services to a diversified customer base. Guest speakers from the city of Phoenix's Public Transit Department respond to operator concerns as does transit public safety and the assistant general manager for passenger services. This training program has been a morale booster for employees.

Eye-on-the-Prize: The Customer

Employees at ATC Phoenix are committed to a unified effort of making ATC Phoenix the premier transit system in the Sunbelt. The mission and value statement is "The Customer"—the customer comes first. Employees endeavor to provide excellence in customer service to internal and external customers. The City of Phoenix Public Transit's Department sees the results of this effort in the declining customer service complaints and the increased kudos being awarded to employees. With this type of effort, ATC Phoenix hopes to maintain its strategic position in the valley and expand with the upcoming bus rapid transit and light rail system.

Upward Mobility Opportunities

Upward mobility is another effective retention tool at ATC Phoenix. Bus operators have been consistently chosen for dispatch, road, and radio supervisory positions. Professional salaries coupled with a down-home family work environment make ATC Phoenix a pleasant place to work.

Strategic Partnering

City and Regional Partnerships

ATC Phoenix management holds joint staff meetings with the executive leadership of the city of Phoenix Public Transit Department twice a month. These meetings ensure a smooth contractor-city relationship and enhance management communications. Policy issues and management practices are reviewed and amended as needed to achieve the mutual goal of providing safe, on-time, and friendly transportation services. ATC Phoenix regularly solicits and receives input from the citizens' advisory committee, the mayor, city manager and other surrounding cities such as Tempe and Mesa that interface with ATC Phoenix.

Customer services, marketing, and customer communications functions are contracted regional departments funded by the cities of Phoenix, Mesa and Tempe. These units ensure seamless service to the ridership throughout the valley. This type of coordinated effort facilitates continually improved and refined services for the citizens in the metropolitan Phoenix area.

The general manager and assistant general managers work closely with the director of public transit for the city of Phoenix and the four deputy directors for operations, regional services, facilities and finance to ensure that ATC Phoenix remains the largest contract provider of transit services in the area.

HR Planning

The HR department works closely with the strategic planning department to ensure that sufficient numbers of bus operators are always available. Through the collection and analysis of a variety of data gathered from the staffing, training, and budget functions, the strategic planning department uses a planning model to project and communicate the need for operators throughout the year.

Labor-Management Partnership

Management and union officials meet in regularly scheduled meetings to review contractual and non-contractual issues. Details of how the labor-management partnership functions are included in the Appendix B, Human-Resources Guide, under the Labor-Management Partnership section.

Leadership Role of HR

The ATC Phoenix general manager, at the 2001 APTA Human Resources Conference, cited the AGM-HS as being the person "leading the charge for expansion in Phoenix." The AGM-HS, with multiple responsibilities and extensive background in transit management, has the expertise to ask critical questions when changes in service or other critical business decisions are being considered. By having a "place at the table" for the city of Phoenix Department of Transportation and at ATC Phoenix, she is uniquely positioned to ask her peers questions like "What is the impact on the workforce? What is the impact on the community and the future of transportation?" These are particularly important questions because of the traditionally skeptical view of public transportation in the Phoenix area. The AGM-HS points out the importance of HR professionals branching out and serving on task forces that enhance knowledge about the big picture of their organization. She asserts that such activities help to develop the essential critical thinking and analytical skills that are required to gain and maintain credibility as a strategic partner.

10. REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT

COMPARED WITH YOU

The Colorado General Assembly created the Regional Transportation District (RTD) in 1969 as a regional authority to plan and build a public transportation system for the six county (and part of a seventh) area whose center is Denver, Colorado. The RTD began operating services in 1974 with the purchase of the City and County of Denver's transit operations.

RTD is governed by a 15-member, elected board of directors and serves a population of 2.2 million in 41 municipalities in a 2,400-square-mile six-county area. With an annual ridership of more than 75 million, RTD operates 976 buses along 179 fixed routes, and 31 light rail vehicles to 20 stations along a 14-mile light rail system. The state legislature mandates that private carriers provide at least 35 percent of RTD bus service. As a result, the agency leases 204 of its bus fleet to private carriers. RTD provides services to residents with disabilities through Access-a-Ride, a paratransit-contracted service. Also, in low service demand areas, RTD has instituted "call-in ride" service.

The RTD has a staff of approximately 2,700 employees; ATU Local 1001 represents 81 percent.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

The benchmark positions RTD identified as difficult to recruit and retain are bus operators, mechanics, information technology professionals, and engineers. In a region with an unemployment rate of less than two percent in some counties, the RTD with expanding service requirements, has for many years had difficulty recruiting and retaining employees in these positions. In the case of bus operators and mechanics restrictive work rules created recruitment and retention difficulties. The number of bus operator vacancies has ranged from 100 to 180 in recent years. The attrition rate for operators averaged 54 percent from 1997 to 1999. In some instances, the shortage of operators created on-time performance problems. Likewise, problems in recruitment and retention in the other positions created backlogs in work performance and affected efficiency of operations.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Diversified Recruitment Strategy

With an annual recruitment budget of $1.2 million, HR processed 3,857 employment applications by mid-2000. The estimated cost for recruiting and training the 187 new bus operators (out of 960 applicants) hired between January and June 2000 was $10,000 per employee, for a total cost of $1,870,000. These data were significant factors in HR instituting a diversified multi-media recruitment campaign that is the foundation of RTD's current recruitment efforts. Building on successes achieved in 1999, the 2000 and 2001 campaigns concentrated on those strategies that produced the highest yields.

One-Stop-Job Shop

An analysis of the bus operator and mechanic recruitment processes revealed them to be drawn out and cumbersome, likely resulting in the loss of good candidates. To accelerate the employment process cycle time, HR instituted a one-day turnaround time for applicants to apply, test, and interview for those positions. In job ads, RTD informs applicants that they need to bring their motor vehicle report at the time of application and to expect to spend up to four hours completing the application, testing, and interviewing process. The applicant completes the application, which is graded immediately. An interview team composed of Operations Department and HR staff conducts an interview. Those who successfully pass the interview complete the drug and alcohol screen onsite, are asked to sign an authorization for RTD to conduct a criminal background check, and are sent immediately for a Department of Transportation (DOT) physical. The Mountain States Employers Council, a Colorado employer-membership organization selected RTD as First Place Winner of its 2001 Human Resources Best Practices Contest for effectively implementing this innovative process reengineering approach.

Hotline/Job Line

RTD uses a multifaceted hotline and job line approach. The general hotline provides a menu of options the listener can select to receive detailed information on requirements for specific positions. If interested in a specific job opening, the caller follows a series of prompts to get information about requirements for the position. Potential applicants can request applications through the job line, which is monitored daily.

Radio Ads

RTD has found radio advertising one of its most effective recruitment tools for reaching diverse markets. Several 60-second ads run on four high profile Denver-area radio stations, ranging from Spanish/English, to country music, to oldies, and Top 40 stations, throughout the day on selected days of the week. One version of the ads feature the voice of an employee, speaking about the good salary he earns at RTD, performing interesting work, and about opportunities for growth and advancement not available with previous employers. Another version features the senior manager of HR in an interview format, highlighting the benefits that employees can expect by working at RTD, including interesting work, good pay and opportunities for advancement. A final version features the general manager, also in an interview format, giving a testimonial about what a great place RTD is to work for.

Newspaper Ads

Because of the high cost of individual line ads for each advertised position, RTD began advertising all positions on a full- or half-page design with up to five colors, a less expensive strategy than the combined line ads. The full-page color ads ran each Sunday and half-page black-and-white ads ran each Wednesday in the *Rocky Mountain News* (RMN), the paper that has yielded the greatest number of applicants for bus operator and general mechanic positions. One ad featured an African American woman showing a young child how to play a piano with a caption "We Take the Work Out of Applying for a Job Because We Know You're Busy." The ad highlighted 11 available positions, and requirements and/or benefits for each position. One section had the following words, each in a different color, boldly scrolled across the width of the page "GO!, HURRY!, FASTER!, STOP BY!, NOW!" The ad then referred the reader to RTD's *One Stop Job Shop.* The ad also included the hotline number for getting information about a $250 hiring bonus. (*The Denver RMN*, Careers Section, December 17, 2000, page 24J).

The agency also purchased additional coverage in a once-a-month, quarter page Corporate Profile article in the *RMN* Careers Section. All advertised positions were posted on two RMN-affiliated websites. Additional ads in smaller newspapers, including several that target different ethnic groups, provided additional visibility for RTD positions.

Internet Ads

In addition to posting job vacancies on the RMN websites, RTD posted bus operator and mechanic positions with Gotajob.com, a search engine aimed at an hourly workforce. Interested parties can also view all job openings at the RTD website and request job applications online.

Bus Ads

Displayed on all RTD over-the-road coaches are exterior notices showing bus operator starting pay and the Job Line number. Inside the buses are flyers about job opportunities at RTD along with a postcard tear-out for mailing to RTD for an application. Sixteen percent of applicants who learn about positions from bus advertisements are subsequently hired by the agency.

Change in Minimum Age for Bus Operators

In December 1998, the Colorado Department of Public Safety, which has authority under federal safety regulations to adopt safety standards rules for commercial vehicles in the state, lowered the age requirement for commercial

drivers to age 18. In February 2000, RTD lowered the age requirement to 19 years old to increase its pool of potential applicants.

Employee Referral Incentives

Overall, 13 percent of all job applicants and 12 percent of all new employees come from employee referrals. In an effort to reinforce the sense of ownership that employee recruitment is everyone's business, RTD began offering incentives to employees who referred applicants who were then hired as bus operators or general repair mechanics. The $500 incentive is paid in increments: $200 after the new employee completes probation, and $300 at the completion of 1 year of employment.

Sign-On Incentives

Applicants hired for the bus operator and general repair mechanic positions receive a $250 hiring bonus at the time of employment.

Reduction in Mandatory Overtime

New full-time bus operators are assigned to the extra-board, have irregular assignments and, as a consequence of an ongoing shortage of operators, excessive overtime. Two interim actions were taken to reduce mandatory overtime and mitigate the impact of resulting attrition:

- Extra-Board Premium: All employees, whether assigned to or volunteering for extra-board work, receive a $.75 per hour premium.
- DOT Exemption: RTD requested and was granted an exemption from the 70 hours worked in 8-days rule by the Colorado Department of Public Safety. The exemption allowed the agency to operate with an 80-hour in 8-days rule.

Relaxation of Work Rules

In an effort to get more bus operators to volunteer for overtime and to improve the flexibility of work schedules, RTD implemented a two-pronged approach:

- Removed the requirement to vote Monday morning or Friday afternoon in an effort to increase the overall bidding of work.
- Allowed part-time operators to select morning or afternoon assignments, or both, and removed the requirement to bid five days of work.

Vacation Changes

Until recently, union employees became eligible for vacation after one year of continuous employment. Recognizing that this was a long time without a break, and possibly contributed to unscheduled absences and attrition in difficult-to-recruit and -retain positions, the agency now allows employees to take one week of vacation after six months of employment.

IT Internships

A major feeder pool for information technology positions are the six to ten summer and year-round IT interns. Partnering with local colleges and universities, RTD places the interns in increasingly complex assignments as they demonstrate capability to take on such assignments. Recognizing that many IT professionals stay in one position less than three years, RTD provides up-to-date equipment, challenging work, and continuous training and development opportunities.

Incentive Premium for IT Professionals and Engineers

In addition to making adjustments in hiring salaries consistent with other major employers, RTD pays an incentive bonus of 10 percent of annual salary to IT professionals and engineers annually. This is a temporary preemption due to immediate market conditions. As the employment market stabilizes, this retention incentive may be withdrawn.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Overall Organizational Environment

Recognized by peer transit agencies as one of the outstanding transit agencies in the nation, RTD was selected as the Number-One Large Transit Agency in North America in 1993. One of the areas highlighted in this recognition was the agency's focus on the quality of work life of employees as a bottom-line strategy. Continuing its focus on employees, RTD has remained open to internal and external factors impacting its ability to deliver superior service to constituents. Recent changes in the employment environment with unprecedented growth in the Denver metropolitan area have created a dynamic and sometimes stressful hiring and retention environment for the agency. As the agency has expanded, adding bus and rail service, the challenge of maintaining a qualified workforce has captured the attention of the entire organization. One senior manager describes the environment: "We have more things going on here than almost any agency in the area." With leadership of the senior management team as the driving force, the agency continually seeks input from

and support of its current employees as it strives to maintain the level of service the public expects.

Position-Specific and Complementary Strategies

Emphasis on Professional Development

Since its inception, RTD has placed heavy emphasis on employee development, a proven employee retention strategy. Several funding sources are available to support employees who want to upgrade knowledge and skills. The professional development program (PDP), administered by the HR division, provides up to $2,000 in educational assistance and tuition reimbursement annually to salaried employees. The employee development plan (EDP), administered by the Operations Department, provides up to $750 in annual educational assistance and tuition reimbursement for union-represented employees. In addition, each department maintains a budget for attendance at conferences and other professional development activities.

The IT department expects its professional staff to spend 20 to 40 hours in continuing education classes and activities to maintain and improve their technical knowledge, skills, and various certifications. Budget dollars allocated for department-required education averages $45,000 per year. In 2000, twenty-five members of the engineering staff attended training under the PDP and a budget line for job-required training.

Supervisory Training

The new supervisor "Meet the Challenge" training program provides 24 to 32 hours of training focused on knowledge and skills essential to effective supervision. Completed by approximately 50 new supervisors annually, this training includes topics such as employment law, coaching, interpersonal skills, performance management, equal employment opportunity, diversity, change management, drug and alcohol program, and RTD policies and procedures.

RTD University (RTD-U)

By attending general education college credit courses offered at RTD facilities by a local community college, employees earn transfer credits accepted by all Colorado public four-year colleges and universities. Approximately 50 employees attend classes at RTD-U each year.

Employee Recognition: Champions of Transit

By integrating community involvement, employee wellness, and employee-recognition activities into a program titled *Champions of Transit,* RTD communicates its commitment to being a positive force in the community and to employee health, well being, and development. In a colorful redemption catalog format, the agency describes the program, what is in it for the employee and the community, how to get involved, and the rewards for each type or level of involvement.

Employee Communication

Keeping employees informed and providing avenues for employee input are priorities at RTD. Employee forums conducted by the general manager, department meetings, and the "Monday Morning Q"—a weekly bulletin of current and upcoming events published by the general manager's office—are a few of the communication vehicles.

The senior manager of HR describes RTD Intranet as a "robust communication medium." Employees who do not use computers in their work can access the Intranet through kiosks in various worksites and in the education and development facility. Through the Intranet, employees have access to

- Information about events such as Bus Roadeos, picnics, and recognition activities
- Pictures or movie clips that showcase event activities
- Intranet learning center
- Employee handbook
- RTD phone book
- Monday Morning Q
- Performance appraisal forms and procedures
- Department descriptions
- Position descriptions
- Job postings
- Forty employment-related forms

Strategic Partnering

Community Job Postings and Job Fairs

Community outreach is an integral part of RTD's overall recruitment strategy. In 2000, Human Resources regularly faxed job postings to 107 community agencies, conducted weekend job fairs at the headquarters building as well as job fairs at the Operations Department facilities that featured onsite remote radio broadcasts, and participated in job fairs held in various municipalities in the RTD service area. In addition, staff participated in job fairs at a military base and at businesses undergoing downsizing.

Recruitment Video

In order to reach a wider audience with the RTD employment story, HR prepared a standalone video that features

employees in hard-to-recruit and -retain positions describing why they work at RTD and the benefits of being a part of an agency that treats employees well. The Senior Manager of HR gives the corporate overview of the agency and invites potential applicants to consider RTD as a career option. The HR staff mailed the video to 70 agencies in the Denver Metropolitan Area and surrounding six states.

Operation Second Chance

In an effort to tap into a nontraditional labor pool, RTD partnered with the Colorado Department of Corrections (DOC) to establish a pilot employment program for inmates recently released from prison. This action was designed to relieve the shortage in entry-level positions that can serve as feeder pools for other positions. The collaborative effort involved the DOC and RTD establishing screening criteria, such as excluding persons who committed murders or sexual assaults, and DOC conducting candidate screening for the 12 available slots. Coors Brewing Company, which has operated an ex-offender program for 32 years, provided technical staff support to the effort. The nine females and three males selected for the program went through a 3-week re-orientation to work "boot camp" conducted by STRIVE, a nonprofit welfare-to-work agency. Following graduation, RTD hired the 11 participants who completed the program. In addition to this pilot program, RTD is in discussion with DOC about initiating a mechanic training program at DOC training facilities.

Labor-Management Partnership

The general manager initiated discussions with ATU leaders about forming the LMC in 1998 as a means of mutually resolving problems and enhancing working relationships between RTD labor and management. Management and union officials meet in regularly scheduled meetings to review contractual and non-contractual issues. Details of how the LMC functions are included in Appendix B, Human-Resources Guide, under the Labor-Management Partnership section.

HR Planning

The senior manager of HR meets with the team of fellow senior managers weekly. In these meetings, the group considers current issues, future directions, progress on key projects, and matters that need to be prepared for consideration by the board of directors. As a member of the executive team, the HR manager provides input into and knows about plans that affect HR functions as they are being considered.

Through the collection and analysis of an array of qualitative and quantitative data, the senior manager of HR, in collaboration with HR staff and other senior managers, prepares current year and multi-year staffing and employee development plans. Ongoing scanning of the external environment—the labor market and competition—gives HR advance notice of emerging trends related to employee recruitment and retention. These data are analyzed to determine if current strategies are yielding the results expected and what changes, if any, may be needed. For instance, when recruitment efforts were not producing expected results, as documented by data, the HR manager successfully made the business case for a budget amendment to increase the recruitment budget by $670,000 for the second half of 2000.

During the annual budget development process, the HR manager works with other senior managers to formulate modifications to recruitment strategy commensurate with defined needs.

Some of the internal data sources and reports the HR staff uses in planning for future requirements include the following:

- 6-year transit development plan
- Fiscal budget
- Compensation surveys
- "Big Plan"—RTD anticipates seeking a referendum for a tax increase to accelerate the build-out of the transit system.

11. SANTA CLARA VALLEY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

COMPARED WITH YOU

Expansion, rapid change, and more expansion in the volatile economic climate of California's Silicon Valley is the environment that Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) has operated in since 1995. From 1973 to 1994, transit services for residents of Santa Clara County were provided as a function of county government. In January 1995, transit services and congestion management for the jurisdiction were merged, forming the agency known today as VTA.

Working under the direction of a 12-member board of directors, VTA, headquartered in the City of San Jose, employs more than 2,800 people. Most of VTA's employees are represented by four labor unions.

The VTA's 500-plus vehicle bus fleet serves a 326-square-mile urbanized area. The 28.4-mile light-rail system is operated with a fleet of 50 cars. Over the past 5 years, VTA has increased its rail system by 25 percent. With initiatives passed in the past several years, the agency will have 6 billion dollars in capital expansion over the next 10 years. Current plans call for doubling the size of the rail system and increasing the number of buses to double the size of the current fleet size over the next 30 years. At present, VTA has three rail construction projects as well as several roadway projects underway.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

The VTA has difficulty recruiting employees in the benchmark positions of bus operator, mechanic, planner, transportation engineer, and computer programmer and analyst. The high cost of housing in the region, lack of competitiveness in pay, and an unemployment rate of less than two percent are the primary reasons for difficulty in recruiting and retaining these employees. In early 2000, VTA had 70 bus operator openings. With the median cost of homes in San Jose being more than $500,000, the bus operator position with a beginning wage rate for new operators of $10 per hour was not attractive. Some operators drove one to two hours one way to work. In the case of mechanics, the availability of skilled workers in this field is very small. Approximately three years ago, VTA had 30 diesel mechanic vacancies.

Engineers at all levels are widely sought after by private-sector and public-sector employers. Major high-tech firms in the area give engineering students jobs two years before graduation, and the students sign letters of commitment to the company. Having experienced a vacancy rate of up to 29 percent, the engineering group has had some positions remain vacant for up to two years.

At one point, 25 percent of computer programmer positions were open. The chief information officer describes the region as "dot com heaven," adding that professionals in the field continually look for new and exciting opportunities that pay the highest salaries.

Transportation planners in the region seem to gravitate to environments that provide opportunities for flexibility and growth. The misperception that VTA is a slow-moving governmental agency with mundane work is a challenge the agency faces in recruiting the best-qualified candidates for these positions.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

The Great Job Fair

Evidence that employee recruitment and retention is viewed as a total organization responsibility at VTA has been demonstrated through the "Great VTA Job Fair." The first fair in 2000 was preceded by the selection and compensation manager conducting an internal recruitment effort in every department for the purpose of soliciting volunteers to staff the event. As a result, 140 volunteers devoted a Saturday to help greet and provide information to a surprising 1,800 attendees and to help with getting more than 800 people to complete job applications on that day. The camaraderie established through this collaborative effort laid the groundwork for other organization-wide initiatives. The "Great Job Fair II," held 6 months later, was even more successful, drawing 2,100 participants and resulting in more than 1,400 applicants.

Compensation Adjustments

As a result of the 1997 labor contract negotiations with the ATU Local 265, VTA bus operators were placed on a 54-month progression rate (from a previous 30-month rate) in order to pay for an enhanced pension plan. This action soon became a detriment to recruitment of operators due to the economic boom that has occurred in Silicon Valley. In addition, in 2000, a neighboring transit agency agreed to a 24-month progression. In early 2001, the organization made a decision to open negotiations for a new contract 1 year before the term of the agreement ended with a commitment to being the highest paid transit agency in the Bay Area. Having accomplished this goal, the challenge to recruiting operators has lessened.

Re-Engineering of New Bus Operator Training

Due to a high dropout rate during new operator training, a number of steps were taken to help trainees complete the program. One significant action is a change of philosophy by the training staff. Rather than having a "boot camp" mentality, the staff now attempts to create a supportive learning environment. Examples of the change are actions taken to individualize the learning experience, such as fast-tracking trainees who already have their Class B license, conducting remedial training to help trainees pass the written tests, or, as needed, offering oral testing instead of written. With up to 15 trainees starting the six-week training program every two weeks, the agency is less likely to lose people who, in the past, would have waited up to 10 weeks for a class to start.

Diesel Mechanics Training Program

The continued inability to attract mechanic applicants was the impetus for implementing a 14-month diesel mechanic training program. At one point, VTA was so low in mechanics that it could not get buses out on the street—about 30 mechanics short of the 120 approved positions. The training program started in 1998 with 18 trainees from the service mechanic classification, a position that requires one year of automotive experience performing functions such as oil changes and lubrication. The program has a high retention rate and allows some trainees to test-out of certain aspects of the program and complete requirements in less than 18 months. The diesel mechanic vacancy rate is now less than 3 percent. The success of this program has led VTA to develop a similar program for the electro-mechanic classification.

Transportation Engineers

Meeting the challenge of filling transportation engineering positions took a team effort. The entire department deter-

mined that a strategy of recruitment of upcoming graduates and "growing their own" was their best bet for reducing a 29 percent vacancy rate. Managers and staff engineers, including the department union steward, accepted the challenge to get the word out about available positions, whether through their alma maters or other sources. This approach resulted in a number of successful referrals. The practice of hiring engineering students as summer employees also resulted in new hires. Linking with local university engineering departments, the department works with HR to contact graduating students early enough to communicate that VTA is a viable option as they search for exciting and meaningful work. The group realized that it needed to paint a picture in all of its recruitment efforts of the diverse opportunities available with $6 billion in construction money. To retain these new employees, the department implemented several six-month rotations that allow new employees an opportunity to learn why surveying is important to construction work, to do hands on construction inspection work, and to work with a project engineer, reviewing engineering plans. In addition to keeping the work interesting, this strategy gives these junior engineers a good foundation for growth and promotion.

Planners

Most VTA planners are recruited from graduate programs at local universities. VTA makes a constant effort to keep the message before graduating planners that VTA has exciting work with high growth potential. This approach has enticed a number of planners to join the VTA team. One strategy for retaining these employees has been the implementation of a multi-faceted approach of flexible scheduling, the freedom to do challenging assignments, work-related conferences, and a comfortable and pleasant work environment. The department also keeps an eye on its competition to avoid unexpected external influences.

Computer Programmers

The IT group, in collaboration with HR and marketing, knew they had to go on an image campaign if they were going to get well-qualified programmers. The division director stated that they had to communicate that "VTA has the same kind of cool interesting work going on as Cisco." For the recruitment fair, the unit created flyers that focused on dispelling the image that VTA was probably 10 to 15 years behind high-tech employers. One advantage VTA has is that most major private-sector employers in Silicon Valley do not have strong college recruitment programs—they look for senior level people. The development of a recruitment strategy to hire new graduates and grow their own by "getting them in and throwing fun, cool stuff at them" has worked at VTA. The unit uses an open-ended approach to training and work assignments based on employee needs and interests in an effort to keep them from being lured away. An added resource is the agency's commitment to keeping technology packages up to date. VTA uses the same software packages used by the major employers of the Silicon Valley—one of the few public agencies with these tools.

Project Manager Recruitment Strategy

The manager of selection and compensation assigns each personnel analyst to specific divisions as long-term Project Managers, responsible for learning staffing needs and priorities within the assigned unit. Working closely with division managers, analysts learn about staffing needs in a timely way because they learn the business of the division and are aware of what is occurring on a day-to-day basis.

Adjustments in Recruitment Announcements

A mechanism that HR uses to increase its responsiveness to client departments is to adjust the announcement of some positions to be alternately staffed, depending on the pool of applicants. With this approach, the hiring department announces a position at one level but can hire a person at a lower associate level, then train the employee to the point that they are capable of doing the full job. To accomplish this, HR issues two bulletins—one for the higher level and one for a lower level. This career ladder mechanism prevents the loss of high-quality candidates who may lack the exact position requirements but can be developed to the desired level. This approach has proved valuable for positions such as engineers, planners, and information systems analysts.

Ensuring a Diverse Pool of Candidates

In order to ensure that VTA makes a good faith effort to attract a diverse pool of applicants for each vacant position, an assessment is made of whether each position is underrepresented as relates to race or gender. This assessment plays a large part in shaping the recruitment plan, each of which is dealt with as a separate project. While HR uses a variety of recruitment approaches, the most cost-effective is the use of the Internet, including free services offered through this medium. When VTA publishes an ad in the local newspaper, the position is also advertised on the paper's Internet job bank, which has a link to the VTA Website where all vacant positions are listed.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Overall Organizational Environment

"Professionalism, a lot of leeway, and accountability" are terms senior managers use to describe the organizational

environment at VTA. As a result of the business plan developed by the agency in 1996, these organizational leaders feel they have a clear sense of direction and that the top priority in every department is a focus of service on the street. Ongoing involvement of employees at all levels as well as citizen involvement are norms embraced by the group. Policymakers and citizens are involved in every major decision regarding service plans. The agency maintains five citizen advisory groups—several staffed by senior staff. Workshops conducted with elected officials and the VTA Board engage elected officials in the process and also allow staff to report progress made on transportation plans for the county.

Leadership in ensuring that VTA maintains a qualified workforce starts at the top. The general manager, through scheduled and impromptu visits to facilities, day and night, listens to and models by example concern for employee issues and well-being. The director of HR takes the lead in mentoring and partnering with fellow senior executives to ensure they understand and participate in recruiting, training and maintaining a qualified workforce.

The organizational development and training (OD&T) staff within HR is a critical resource in the professional development of the executive team. Their goal is to provide these managers with the skills they need to keep employees challenged and energized as the agency continues in a growth mode. With expertise in organizational assessment and instructional design, the OD&T group customizes training programs that meet the unique needs of VTA managers, with an emphasis on relationship building and supervisory, management, and leadership skills. Performance management, one of the leadership and management programs, focuses on the development of interpersonal, coaching, and listening skills. While this 26-module, once-a-month course is not mandated, it is widely understood that the executive management team supports the program. During the initial implementation of the program, the OD&T manager presented a condensed version of each module to the team at the same time the full module was being presented to their subordinates. The message communicated through this action was that VTA expects managers and supervisors to embrace a more humanistic, outcome-oriented approach to working with employees.

Position-Specific and Complementary Strategies

Focus on Employee Ownership

One of the five areas of focus in the VTA Business Plan is employee ownership: "A personal and conscious level of commitment to enthusiastically support and participate in achieving the goals of the organization." The agency emphasizes employee communication and employee involvement as key components of its strategy to get employees to take ownership for providing quality service delivery. Mechanisms such as the general manager and senior managers being visible on shop floors let VTA learn from employees closest to the service. The regular presence of the executive team in facilities demonstrates to front-line managers and supervisors the value of getting and using input from employees. What the general manager refers to as the "personal touch," while not comfortable for some individuals who come from a tradition of autocratic management style, is a critical piece of a commitment to encourage employee ownership in all aspects of work at VTA.

The use of a variety of other communication vehicles demonstrates the agency's commitment to keeping employees informed and involved. *TransAction* is a newsletter that employees receive six times a year. *The Monday Exchange,* a biweekly bulletin that comes out of the general manager's office, highlights activities going on in the agency and those coming up during the week. *On the Line* is a publication that responds to employee questions and comments generated during the biannual employee survey, focus groups, and forums, as well as from telephone calls made to a dedicated phone line. *The Loop,* a horizontal communication tool, is set up as an electronic messaging kiosk that rotates throughout the day and contains information of interest to a large number of people. The agency's Intranet, VTANET, provides employees with ready access to the procedures and forms they need to do their work.

The HR staff conducts focus groups annually to determine progress made toward the strategic goal of employee ownership. In addition, two employee opinion surveys conducted in the past four years have helped to gauge progress toward this goal. The executive team uses survey results to reinforce current strategy or to make adjustments that will move the agency toward its strategic goals.

The employee advisory committee, a 12-member group composed of representatives of the four labor unions as well as non-represented employees, meets monthly and addresses issues of concern to the general employee population. The group also selects Employees of the Month and Employees of the Year.

Strategic Partnering

Marketing Outreach as Recruitment Outreach

The Marketing Division has included as part of its mission the task of informing the public about the good that VTA does in the community and its uniqueness as a public agency. Furthermore, they communicate that working at VTA is a career option versus a stop along the way. As such, the marketing director cites the division's role in "helping HR turn over rocks to find people," reviewing how employment ads are done, and suggesting the types of give-aways the agency uses to attract attention to VTA as an employer. Whenever the marketing staff is involved in community outreach, they also do employment outreach by creating an image that VTA is a good employer. Staff who conduct community outreach

meetings inform the public not only about new construction; they also "let them know that VTA wants them to help put it into the ground." VTA recruiters often attend these public meetings.

Community Involvement

The VTA maintains relationships with all of the community-based organizations in Santa Clara County that conduct job training through CalWorks, the welfare-to-work program in California. Through "job clubs," created as an extension of job-readiness training, VTA staff provide presentations at the training sites about jobs available at the agency. To respond to the trainees' transportation needs, the VTA manager of selection and compensation served on the initial planning for Santa Clara County's welfare-to-work efforts. One service that VTA provides to CalWorks participants is a guaranteed ride home. In instances when fixed-route service is unavailable due to schedule irregularities or other unforeseen circumstances, VTA uses its paratransit services to guarantee the participants up to 12 rides per year. Offering this service has enabled VTA to connect with county social services as a viable resource in the community. This relationship has provided a mechanism for informing different segments of the community about available entry-level positions.

Accelerated Degree Program

In 1998, VTA began a partnership with local community colleges wherein the colleges offer evening credit courses at VTA facilities. Most employees enrolled in the 18-month associate degree program take transferable courses that can become part of a bachelor's degree program at a local university. One VTA attorney teaches a credit course in labor relations that many managers take to improve their understanding of labor contract management, especially how to work within the provisions of the contract while also maintaining high productivity. VTA pays the tuition for employees participating in the program. This program is especially beneficial to employees who aspire to advance in the organization or who need additional education to gain the management and leadership knowledge and skills required of managers and supervisors in the agency.

Labor-Management Partnerships

The VTA maintains a number of labor-management partnerships that help to maintain a qualified workforce, directly or indirectly. Details of how the LMC functions are included in Appendix B, the Human-Resources Guide, under the Labor-Management Partnership section.

HR Planning

The recruitment and retention challenges prompted VTA to institute a long-term "grow our own" philosophy and planning process. The HR director meets regularly and works with each division director to determine current staffing and employee development needs as well as needs they anticipate over the next two to three years based on such things as turnover data, expansion plans, and age and length of service of workforce. A typical question in these meetings would be: "Considering Measure A/B that goes out to 2006, what are your long-range planning activities and projected staffing needs." The agency's budget process is also a major HR planning tool—each director reviews the others' budget requests to ensure that everyone understands how each budget request fits in with overall organizational priorities. By participating in this process, the HR director reviews proposed expenditures and works with other managers to project staffing and employee development needs.

12. UTAH TRANSIT AUTHORITY

COMPARED WITH YOU

The Utah Transit Authority (UTA), a public transit authority governed by a 15-member appointed Board of Trustees, is headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah. Each trustee represents a municipality or county within the UTA service area and is appointed by the respective governing bodies.

UTA provides bus, paratransit and light-rail services to a population of 1.6 million people in the Wasatch Front area of Utah. From 1974 to 1999 the Wasatch Front's population increased to 783,000 people. It is projected that between 1999 and 2020 the Wasatch Front's population will grow by an additional 920,000 people.

UTA's fleet consists of 747 buses, including 155 vans and 8 trolleys, and 23 light rail vehicles for the TRAX system. UTA provides 2,916 trips per weekday on 90 routes. Service to the Salt Lake City area entails 10.5 million miles of bus service for approximately 17.2 million riders per year. In the Ogden area, UTA provides about 2.35 million miles of bus service and carries about 2.9 million riders annually.

UTA has 1,625 employees, 800 of whom are coach operators. The Amalgamated Transit Union Local 382 represents twelve hundred employees. The next labor contract expires in year 2003, which was extended to avoid expiration during the Winter Olympics, which Utah will host in 2002.

The number of national recognition awards the agency has received demonstrates UTA's commitment to excellence. In 1986 and in 1996, UTA received the award for the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Outstanding Transit System of the Year award. In 1991 and 1996, UTA won APTA's John A. Volpe Silver Safety Award. In 1999, the United States General Accounting Office reported that UTA was the only transit agency in the United States that

built its light-rail system under budget and ahead of schedule. According to UTA staff, no other 500 bus and light-rail transit agency in the United States operates on as little as .25 percent local sales tax or equivalent local funding.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

For several years, UTA experienced difficulty recruiting and retaining bus operators and difficulty retaining paratransit and light-rail train operators. In the 1999–2000 time period, a 3-percent unemployment rate in the Salt Lake area negatively affected recruitment and retention. In 1999, the turnover rate for bus operators in their first year of employment was 35 percent. All UTA operator positions are full-time; however, new operators are assigned to varying work across a 6-day workweek on the extra-board. Flexible-hour and split-shift requirements were identified as major factors contributing to attrition in the operator ranks.

In 2001, the unemployment rate of 4 percent directly relates to private-sector layoffs and completion of major highway and other construction projects in the area. These occurrences have created pools of unemployed workers. However, UTA anticipates that continued population growth in the area will make employee recruitment and retention an ongoing challenge.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

A recruitment tool used to attract new bus operators until recently is a sign-on incentive of $1000, paid incrementally throughout the first year of employment. Operators receive $250 at the completion of training, $250 after the probationary period, and $500 at the completion of 1 year of employment. The sign-on incentive is advertised in newspaper advertisements, the primary external source of bus operator applicants. Current staffing levels do not justify continuation of this incentive.

Employee referrals also produce a significant number of applicants for all UTA positions. An employee who refers an applicant receives a $10 gift certificate if the candidate is interviewed, $50 cash if hired, $100 if the new employee completes probation, and $200 if the employee completes 1 year of service.

The Family Day held during new bus operator training, receives high marks as a tool for lowering the operator turnover rate. A member of a trainee's family is invited to spend one-half day at UTA learning about flexible schedules, the extra-board and split-shift requirements, and the stress that operators face once on the job.

UTA is in the process of formalizing an informal mentoring and coaching program which was initiated in 2001. Each new trainee will be assigned a sponsor who will typically be a peer operator who has successfully met the difficult demands of the extra-board working conditions and, therefore, understands what the new operator is experiencing. This sponsor will meet periodically with the new operator to discuss any concerns, answer questions, and give pointers on how to survive life on the extra-board.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Overall Organizational Environment

HR directors at UTA have been a part of the executive team for more than 2 decades. Over time, the HR director's leadership role has shifted from focusing on how to help the organization deal with employees as an expense to helping the organization see and treat employees as strategic assets in accomplishing the mission and goals of the agency.

The development of an organizational vision statement and strategic priorities by the board of trustees in 1998 marked a turning point in changing UTA's view toward employees. After months of making the business case for a series of intensive team-building board workshops in 1997, HR staff conducted a series of off-site workshop retreats with the board. Prior to the work with the board, the HR director conducted 6 months of one-half-day team-building workshops with the executive team. This professional development effort prepared the executive group to be a cohesive team, ready to take leadership in influencing and implementing board direction.

A major leadership role taken by the HR director was that of ensuring that the appropriate environment was in place for the board to begin to see employees as assets. This role included making presentations to the board about how the organization approaches labor negotiations, and addresses employee development and training. This action was key to enhancing the board's understanding of employee-related issues.

The results of the series of board workshops are the UTA vision statement and strategic priorities that guide the operations of the organization today: "UTA's vision is to provide quality transportation services that are integral to the communities and people we serve. To achieve this vision, UTA will continually strive to build and maintain partnerships and to communicate within our organization and with community leaders and the public. UTA will continually strive to meet the needs of our patrons and our employees by taking advantage of technology, opportunities, and challenges." *(UTA Vision Statement, April 24, 1998)*

One of the strategic priorities accompanying the vision statement demonstrates the board's view of workforce needs: "UTA will work to attract and retain good people, with the skills and capabilities necessary to meet the challenges we face. We will work to have the right numbers of people with the right skills and capabilities at the right times." A second strategic priority states, "UTA will work to improve communications and relationships among employees at all levels, and across all departments. Decisions will always be made

with consideration to employee stakeholders, and with their participation when appropriate."

As a result of three years of structured activities geared toward ensuring that employees are treated as strategic resources, employee morale and communication have improved. Employees are energized to move the organization forward as a community asset and industry leader. They feel empowered to make a difference through participation in a number of task team initiatives, several of which are described later in this study. The board of trustees expresses praise for the quality of UTA's workforce and how they have made a difference in opening the new light rail service and have stepped up efforts to make UTA an even more effective service agency.

Vision, Individual, Partnering Program

For 3 years, UTA has leased offsite facilities to conduct the vision, individual, partnering (VIP) program, an organization and personal development initiative aimed at moving the total organization toward the cultural changes outlined in the 1998 vision statement. The 5-day VIP program, facilitated by an internal organization development consultant, is designed to improve communication about organizational priorities and to foster the development of skills employees need to help carry out ongoing partnering initiatives. Approximately 1,300 employees have completed a voluntary participation program, with 17 to 20 employees from different departments in each group. Two days focus on communicating to employees UTA's organizational vision and strategic priorities. That portion of the program also involves department directors and managers outlining functions within their departments. For another 2 days, employees learn personal effectiveness skills. On the final day, managers participate in a managers' roundtable where they respond to questions and issues raised by VIP participants. Prior to the roundtable, participants brainstorm topics they want managers to address.

One measure of the VIP Program effectiveness is UTA's turnover ratio for new bus operators. In 1999, the first year of the program, the turnover rate for operators in the first year of employment was 35 percent. In 2000, the turnover rate decreased to 27 percent, and in 2001, the rate is projected to be less than 20 percent. Initially bus operator attrition was seven to nine employees per month; however, as of July 2001, four to five operators leave the agency each month. As a result of the low operator turnover rate, UTA plans to use existing operators to fill most of the 2002 Winter Olympics staffing needs.

Partnering—An Organizational Priority

Employee involvement, a major focus at UTA, has been given the title of "partnering." Partnering has taken place in significant ways over the past three years. Bargaining teams for UTA and ATU agreed to spend their first day of labor contract negotiations in 1998 negotiating a definition of partnering from a labor-management perspective. The parties agreed:

> "Partnering means managers are willing to share responsibility for employee interests and the union representatives are willing to share responsibility for running the business in an effective, customer focused manner. Managers must take the responsibility for considering in good faith, the interests of the employee when making business decisions, while the union must take responsibility for considering in good faith, the business' interest while advocating for the employee." *(UTA/ATU Contract Newsletter, 1998)*

Much of the focus of labor-management partnering has been on formal programs, especially between the top management and union leadership. Several broad organizational improvements have resulted. Many of these initiatives, which would traditionally have been reserved for formal labor contract negotiations, were accomplished through partnering mid-term of the labor contract. Specifically, structured partnering resulted in improvements in employee pensions, work scheduling practices, repair parts availability, and employee involvement in the opening of a new division.

Guidance Team

In 1997, UTA's general manager instituted the guidance team (GT), a group that leads the implementation of the agency's strategic priorities. A 20-member committee, the GT includes the UTA executive team—The general manager and department directors—the ATU president and representatives from different functional areas of the organization. The GT's specific purpose is to manage change. It works in conjunction with the normal organizational structure, without supplanting day-to-day operations of individual work units. The GT focuses on issues that require crossing established departmental or other boundaries in order to bring about sustainable organizational change.

The HR director describes the GT as a hybrid organizational design that includes some elements of a labor-management committee and some elements of a quality circle structure. By borrowing concepts from both of these designs, UTA established a change leadership structure that allows it to make best use of each in a way that fits the unique needs of the organization. The executive staff, made up of the general manager, department directors, and the union president, are permanent members of the GT, while all other members—managers, supervisors, bus operators, and mechanics—serve two-year rotating terms.

The GT spent several months discussing how it would operate and set out ground rules and operational policies. The group uses a consensus model for decision making that operates within UTA's management structure.

Task Teams

The GT charters task teams composed of employees from affected functional areas. The teams meet monthly and use a quality circle method of problem solving to address organizational and work-life issues. Employees on task teams are appointed for one-year rotating terms. Represented employees are appointed by the union president; non-represented employees by department directors. Descriptions of several task team activities follow.

One work-life initiative grew out of the "Child Care Task Team," a group of employees from Administration and Bus and Rail Operations with a common interest in acquiring child care services for employees near UTA's largest facility. Beginning its work in 2000, the task team investigated child-care provider options and recommended to the GT that UTA form a partnering relationship with a provider that was constructing a child-care facility near this location. The GT accepted the recommendation and UTA finalized a contract in 2001 that provides employees with extended hours of childcare at discounted rates. The agency subsidizes a portion of the cost of care.

In 2000, UTA convened the "Bus Operator Restroom Task Team" to address problems of operators not having a sufficient number of restroom facilities along bus routes. Composed of bus operators and supervisors, the team helped to identify convenient bathroom locations throughout the system. At the recommendation of the task team, the agency hired a comfort station coordinator, a full-time employee who acts as a liaison with businesses and other building owners along routes in order to locate and secure agreements whereby operators can use bathroom facilities as needed.

According to the manager of labor and employee relations, the most positive external factor influencing retention of UTA employees was the passage of a tax referendum in November 2000. This measure ensures a stable revenue base for expansion of transit services. He explains, "Employees are excited about the potential opportunities here and the growth of TRAX. The second extension is scheduled to open in December 2001."

To involve the community and build support for expansion of transit services, the GT chartered two task teams, "The Community Future and You" and "Information Hub." Each task team was made up of more than 20 employees each. The primary focus of "The Community Future and You" was to find ways to connect with employees and to make sure they understood where UTA was going and that they had access to information. This community outreach effort provided employees an avenue for participation and involvement in transit advocacy. During the referendum campaign, the group distributed 50,000 flyers informing the public about the grand opening of TRAX, with specific instruction about how to use the new light rail system.

The purpose of the "Information Hub" was to educate the public about long-range transit plans that were the subject of a 2000 ballot initiative. New transit funding was proposed to expand the transit system in order to preserve the quality of life in the Salt Lake area and to relieve traffic congestion from the increased population. The task team's job was to make sure each employee understood what was in the long-range plan that voters would vote on. Task team members went to work sites on each shift to ask employees what information they needed and how they wanted to receive it. Team members prepared information that responded to the feedback they received, returned to the work sites, and presented the information in person.

The HR director speaks with pride about the level of commitment, ownership, and identification that employees showed to the agency. Employees exhibited these attributes through the volunteer activities, whether crowd control or blowing up balloons for the opening of the light-rail line. Three hundred employees volunteered, went through the training, showed up for the event, and spent the day in 10-degree weather to help usher in a new era at UTA.

Another demonstration of employee commitment, ownership, and identification was the proactive role the union took in getting the ballot initiative approved. The union held meetings twice weekly at the union hall to coordinate represented employees who wanted to volunteer time on the weekend to place lawn signs, put up flyers, or talk with residents at Utah Jazz basketball games about why an investment in public transit made sense.

Position-Specific and Complementary Approaches

Employee Communication

The agency takes employee communication very seriously. The general manager conducts scheduled "Face-to-Face" meetings at UTA facilities where he fields questions and concerns of employees. Recently, he conducted 32 meetings in a two-month period, accompanied by an internal organization development consultant who helped to respond to issues and recorded issues for follow-up.

Another official communication vehicle at UTA is the bimonthly employee bulletin published by the communications department. Contents of this publication often include a message from the general manager, which is sometimes a response to issues raised in "Face-to-Face" sessions, highlights of task team activities, or sometimes an issue that has been brought before the board of trustees. Employees use the UTA Intranet to access personal information from their employee files, including date of hire and benefits.

Healthy UTA

The UTA Wellness Program is a quality-of-life program that has been operational since 1990. Recognized as a model

program by other transit agencies, the mission of the program is "To provide wellness opportunities to our valued employees which support and maintain healthy lifestyle choices and promote an overall sense of well being." The 10-page booklet about the comprehensive wellness program includes a letter of introduction signed by the HR director, the ATU president, and the wellness program administrator. The following statement appears in the letter: "We know that the challenging demands of daily life can be overwhelming and can make achieving better health a difficult task. Because we value you as an employee and person, we have developed programs and resources to help you and your family choose healthy alternatives." Activities include sports programs, health evaluations for all employees and their spouses, a fitness facility at each worksite, health education, and discount tickets to recreational events in the community. In 2000, a total of 1,017 employees participated in one or more wellness activities.

Computer-Based Training

In addition to making effective use of traditional training methods, UTA's Training Department makes extensive use of computer programs for defensive driving training. The group also uses CD-ROM training programs as follows: *The Professional,* which discusses operator health, customer relations, and pre-checking a bus; and *Smart Driving+*, which emphasizes the Bus (pre-trip inspections, potential road problems, and reporting problems to maintenance). Other computer-based training includes *The Driver,* which focuses on the physical and mental well-being of the operator—as well as driving knowledge and skills and knowledge needed to operate a bus legally—and *Defensive Driving,* a review of basic and advanced driving skills. These programs help the operator to develop interpersonal and customer service skills and to address concerns about the position being stressful.

Apprenticeship Training Program

Several years ago, to ensure the availability of a continuous pool of mechanics, UTA and the union formed a joint apprenticeship-training program for the mechanic position. The apprenticeship committee also involves union representatives in the selection and training of journeyman mechanics. According to the manager of compensation and benefits, "the union is very involved in this committee and participates in the selection of all candidates."

Partnering with Educational Institutions

UTA partners with a local technical school, Davis Applied Technology Center, for electro-mechanic training, and with Salt Lake Community College and the University of Utah for management development training. Each new supervisor must complete the University of Utah six-session basic supervisor program. New managers must complete the school's basic management program. University faculty come to UTA facilities to offer classes or employees may attend public sessions of these programs.

Additional Insights on HR as a Strategic Partner

The executive team meets weekly to discuss nuts-and-bolts issues of the organization. Every other month, the group has a daylong, off-site strategy retreat, facilitated by an HR staff member, an organization development consultant. In 2000, the group focused on the tax referendum, what it meant, and what obligations it would put on the organization. Most recently, the group has focused on a 30-year financial plan drafted by the Finance Department that allows the group to look strategically at bus expansion, rail construction projects, facilities, and workforce requirements as the agency plans to triple its ridership. By reviewing the financial plan using an interactive model, the team can target those things the organization's health is sensitive to: sales tax growth, operating costs, and how quickly the agency does construction projects.

In these strategic planning sessions, each executive contributes to the important policy questions. The group looks to the HR director to take the lead in translating strategic plans into operational goals, to create an organization that is aligned with organizational goals, which has the right people with the right skills, with clear accountability for carrying out essential functions. The HR director also uses the strategic goals to draft corresponding annual performance measures for the entire organization. The full executive team reviews and signs off on the measures prior to implementation.

Speaking of the importance of HR's alignment with overall organizational goals, the HR director emphasizes, "The HR basics must be in good shape before it makes sense to elevate employee relations to the strategic level. If the agency isn't hiring high quality people through a good recruitment and selection process and market-competitive pay, then it won't pay to invest a great deal in those people. Furthermore, if managers are constrained by unreasonable and inefficient labor contract rules they will be less willing to take the time to involve and develop employees. I cannot overstate the importance of linking the employee relations strategy to corporate goals and strategy. Too often HR people embark on programs of partnering, development and participation, without a link to a clear corporate goal. Without a corporate purpose, these programs are just feel-good fluff."

HR Planning

UTA uses a workforce-planning model for bus and rail operators that allows the agency to accurately project staff needed in those positions. For the rest of the organization,

HR is currently conducting a staffing analysis for each position, a 10-year historical review of the staffing levels and workloads. The HR staff will follow this review with a benchmarking process within the transit industry, with the goal for 2002 of having a budget much more informed than previous staffing plans.

13. METROPOLITAN ATLANTA RAPID TRANSIT AUTHORITY

COMPARED WITH YOU

Atlanta, Georgia, "Gateway to the South," is known as a transportation hub. The city, founded as a railroad terminus, has grown to be a leader in air, rail and automobile travel. According to a brochure from the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau, "From the runway to the railway to the freeway, Atlanta is a model of accessibility, which has been the key to the city's growth as a center of business and conventions and as an international destination for commerce and tourism."

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), the public transportation agency for the area, transports an average of 580,000 passengers daily within the City of Atlanta and Fulton and Dekalb Counties on 704 buses and 238 rail cars. An appointed 15-member board of directors representing the two counties in its service area and the City of Atlanta governs MARTA. Four state-level officials serve as ex-officio members of the Board.

MARTA has 5,000 employees, 75 percent of whom are represented by unions, with the majority represented by the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 732. Funded by a local sales tax and federal funds, MARTA is the seventh largest transit system in the nation.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

In the recent past, MARTA has experienced difficulty recruiting bus operators due to three factors: a noncompetitive wage and benefit scale, applicants' failure to meet internal screening requirements, and an unemployment rate that has ranged from 1.6 to 3 percent over the past three years. The manager of recruiting describes the situation as "perpetual recruitment motion due to turnovers, retirement, and disciplinary action, that averages 15 operators monthly."

Currently, bus operators are hired as part-time employees and paid minimum wage until completion of 33 days of training. However, due to the decreased supply of qualified candidates, a tight labor market, and increased demand for services, it takes less than a year to obtain full-time status with benefits.

MARTA has difficulty recruiting employees in the Maintenance crafts, including bus mechanics. In some instances, highly skilled maintenance employees leave MARTA and receive up to $10,000 signing bonuses in the private sector.

One factor that restricts external recruitment of bus mechanics is the labor contract "rule of fifty," which requires that internal candidates fill 50 percent of all promotions. This creates a challenge in staffing these difficult-to-fill positions. Labor contract language also defines who can move into a job, and provides the only avenue for advancement for represented workers. For example, a junior apprentice/hostler is hired into a "holding pool" while waiting to start a bus mechanic apprenticeship program. Under the labor agreement, this person has the right to bid for a skilled mechanic position such as a rail electronic technician (ET) position after 90 days of employment. As a result, it is difficult to keep a sufficient number of bus mechanic apprentice candidates.

On occasion, MARTA has difficulty recruiting and retaining information technology (IT) personnel. MARTA offers competitive salaries for IT professionals; however, retention is a problem. The compensation analyst acknowledges that MARTA's computer systems may not be as state-of-the-art as those at private-sector employers and, therefore, not as interesting to IT employees. Also, skilled individuals in this field are in high demand and tend to change jobs frequently, especially when offered lucrative signing bonuses and higher salaries.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

MARTA views recruitment and retention issues as opportunities to improve interaction with employees and the community to create a positive view of the agency as a good place to work. The department has developed a multi-faceted and proactive customer-focused strategy for maintaining a qualified workforce. This section summarizes key components of the strategy.

Detailed Job Descriptions

To ensure that MARTA hires qualified employees, a compensation analyst prepares detailed job descriptions based on direct observations of each job. According to one analyst, "With bus operator recruitments, there is little we can do to alter the screening requirements for operators, due to safety concerns and governmental restrictions. My job is to make sure that the job description exactly matches the job to be performed. The goal is to assure that we hire operators who will not have physical difficulties performing the job and that recruiters will know exactly what to look for in a candidate."

For example, one requirement at MARTA is that all operators must be capable of driving all buses. Therefore, there is a height requirement added to the job description. The detailed job descriptions facilitate recruitments and help to protect the agency from liability issues and worker's compensation and discrimination claims.

Instilling MARTA's Customer Focus and Teamwork Values by Example

The recruiting branch uses a team approach to recruitment in which each recruiter and senior recruiter have an area of specialization and meet weekly to discuss the need for mutual assistance and to share leads for filling difficult-to-recruit positions. While the team concept is evident in the way the group collaborates, the manager is vigilant in focusing on individual recruiters' personal and professional needs and development. He espouses the philosophy that personal and work needs are intertwined; therefore, at the beginning of each year, he works with each member of the Recruiting staff to set personal and professional goals. Throughout the year, goal progress and accomplishment are monitored and acknowledged with impromptu recognition by the manager.

The complexity and volume of recruitment types at MARTA make the work environment potentially stressful. Recruiters may conduct up to 200 recruitments a year. In order to provide appropriate support to each recruiter, the recruiting branch developed two senior recruiting positions. The senior search recruiter position grew out of the need to have a staff member knowledgeable about employment search engines on the Internet, national databases, and other sources for creating pools of contacts for difficult-to-recruit positions.

The person in the second position, the senior recruiter, conducts daily performance reviews with other recruiters, and provides coaching and counseling to these employees. This person also provides leads to contacts that recruiters can make to secure pools of applicants. By working with the senior recruiter, other recruiters have become adept at "value selling" MARTA, a process by which a recruiter might call another employer and ask to speak with someone in a department equivalent to the MARTA department recruiting an employee. Typically, the recruiter describes the position and positive aspects of MARTA as an employer and requests permission to fax a copy of the resume for review or for passing along to other interested parties.

Recruitment Clock Process

One method that MARTA uses to ensure quality control of individual recruitments is the recruitment clock. The clock has timeframes ranging from 30 to 180 days. Each recruiter knows which clock to use as a measure of when a recruitment is to be completed. Clock categories are as follows:

- 30-day—Administrative
- 60-day—Safety Sensitive
- 90-day—Critical Fill and Mid-Management
- 180-day—Police

On a weekly basis, recruiters submit a status report that indicates where they are on the clock with each recruitment. If the recruitment is within two weeks of the clock period and a sufficient pool of candidates has not been identified, the recruiter meets with the senior search recruiter. This person provides guidance on how the recruiter may find applicants and may provide resumes from databases. If the position has not been filled when the clo*ck* time has expired, the senior search recruiter takes responsibility for the recruitment. A key strength of this approach is that recruitments are monitored closely with monthly reports that provide information on defined recruitment targets, tracking, and accountability for results. The effectiveness of the clock process is evidenced by 95 percent of positions being filled "under the clock" period.

Bus Operator Recruitment: Proactive Staffing Process

The philosophy within the bus operator recruitment function is that recruitment is a constant process; therefore, the agency does not wait until there is a large number of vacancies to recruit for the position. The manager of recruiting has the authority to recruit as needed without a job order. One recruitment technician is responsible for all bus operator recruitments and interviews applicants one day each week. When the agency has about 30 bus operator vacancies, the recruiting staff conducts an in-house job fair, which is advertised in local newspapers. The manager meets quarterly with the budget department and the director of bus transportation to monitor progress toward employment goals and to review future needs.

Plan for Hiring Full-Time Bus Operators

Recognizing that the uncertainty of part-time employment is a deterrent to recruiting and retaining bus operators, MARTA has developed a strategy to eliminate part-time bus operator positions. While the plan has yet to be implemented, the action is designed to reduce overtime and to improve the quality of the pool of applicants. Through a recent survey, the majority of part-time operators indicated an interest in moving to full-time status. The remaining part-time operator positions will be phased-out through attrition. The current workforce of 1,200 full-time operators will increase to more than 1,500 when the transition is complete.

Maintenance Apprenticeship Programs

MARTA has mechanic apprenticeship training programs for internal applicants who pass required aptitude tests. Apprentices, hired as junior apprentice hostlers, form a pool of applicants that are available to enter diesel mechanic apprenticeship programs as needed and as training classes are scheduled.

Military Bases: A Source for Mechanics

One external resource that MARTA has tapped into successfully is the pool of qualified mechanics at military bases in the Southeast, particularly at bases that are closing or moving. MARTA staff advertises that they will be attending the military career fair and takes a team that includes HR and Maintenance staff. Interviews and aptitude tests are conducted on the spot and if a person is a good match for MARTA's needs, a conditional offer is made on the spot, pending physical examination and background check.

Electronic Staffing System

MARTA uses an electronic staffing system, *Resumix,* which builds in an extensive database to acquire and retain quality employees. As a recruitment tool, the system allows staff to sift through a massive volume of resumes to match candidates with open positions and to allow recruiters to connect to internal and external applicants, to staffing information, and to each other quickly and easily. According to the recruiting manager, "In HR's role as strategic partner to the core business, skills, and experience have become the most important pieces of information to have about a worker. The system is designed to identify those skills and experience and find more qualified candidates electronically, thus reducing the direct costs of organizational staffing and increasing recruiting efficiency."

With the electronic staffing system, whenever a position becomes available, the recruiter can make an immediate query as to who in the database may meet requirements. For instance, if the position requires a "team player," the recruiter can type that term into the system, and it will access all resumes that list that attribute, even if the exact term is not used on the resumes.

Job Fairs

When MARTA staff attend job fairs, they go with a "hot list" of positions. If a recruiter makes contact with individuals who seem to fit the requirements of these positions, they engage in focused dialogue on the spot, letting them know that someone will be contacting them in the next 24 hours to make sure all of the information needed is included on the resume. With this information, MARTA not only focuses on current openings but also uses it to build the electronic database for future openings. The information is retained in the system for three years.

Recently, MARTA developed a new recruitment strategy of partnering with the local media to advertise a job fair to recruit for bus operators. The communication officer at MARTA, working with two local TV stations, provided free public service announcements that produced 389 candidates in one day. The television communication resulted in truckers driving from out of state to attend the job fair. The job fair was held near an operating rail station, and three different models of buses were available for candidates to tour. Technical training branch staff was available to respond to questions regarding the operator training and the CDL certification program. The success of this effort is reflected in the 89 operators scheduled for interviews over a two-month period.

New Employee Orientation/ Sponsorship Program

Communication with new employees begins with a two-day orientation into the culture of MARTA. During orientation, senior managers emphasize the agency's vision and mission. The new employee sponsorship program, a component of new employee orientation, matches the new employee with a sponsor employee from the same department to provide them with essential information and support during their first months at MARTA. This person introduces the employee to coworkers; reviews the mission and policies of the department; reviews benefits; ensures that the new employee schedules a time with the manager for performance planning; provides emergency contact information; informs the employee of upcoming events and department meetings; and stays available to respond to any concerns or questions. This program has proven effective in helping to eliminate any apprehension new employees may have in adjusting to an unfamiliar environment.

Enhanced Customer Relations Skills Training

In an attempt to retain bus operators who have had difficulty relating to customers, the technical training branch offers the enhanced customer service training program. Produced by MARTA staff, the program includes video clips of customer-relations scenarios that operators are confronted with while driving the bus. MARTA operators and instructors perform in the video and each segment suggests an incorrect and then a correct way to handle a situation. As part of the training, operators are videotaped in role-playing situations and conduct critiques of their own responses in video playback sessions.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Overall Organizational Environment

MARTA is an organization in transition. When the board of directors appointed a new general manager and chief executive officer (CEO) in November 2000, one of his first actions was to create a "transformation team," a group that involved nearly all employees in one way or another. The cross-functional team was charged with identifying opportunities for improvement and making recommendations for improved performance. Key personnel from each division

brainstormed for weeks, conducted employee focus groups, and made other contacts with employees and board of directors members. The result was a comprehensive list of recommendations with both short- and long-term goals and 30 recommendations in six key areas, including employee relations. Of particular relevance to the issue of maintaining a qualified workforce was the implementation of a recommendation to realign and consolidate some departments and functions.

The long-term goal of the team concept is to give the CEO a baseline view of the health of the system, with maximum employee input and ownership. In keeping with that goal, the CEO implemented the CEO hotline for employees to register concerns and issues; 100 percent of calls are responded to in five business days. The hotline has proven to be an effective vehicle for communication and a valuable tool for providing employees direct input to the CEO and for assessment of employee-related issues.

Organizational Climate Report

On a quarterly basis, employee relations and development (ERD) reviews a number of indicators of organizational health to develop the *Organizational Climate Report.* Data used to compile the report are exit interview results, retention survey data, turnover rate, recruitment-fill rate, the nature of discrimination complaints, and all other employee complaints whether they relate to grievances, violence, nepotism, or other issues. Eighty percent of one ERD staff member's time is spent analyzing these data and drafting the *Organizational Climate Report* that is presented at executive team meetings quarterly by the assistant general manager of Human Resources. In addition, ERD staff review each report to discern trends that may signal the need for changes in programs or policies. For instance, in exit interviews, most employees state that they are resigning due to problems with their supervisor, hence the enhanced attention to supervisor and management training and accountability described in this case study.

Retention Survey

In the last fiscal year, ERD staff conducted a random-sample survey of 10 percent of staff with more than five years of service to find out why people stay at MARTA. Most frequent responses were that employees like what they do, working relationships, the management team, and job security. Employees stated that their greatest source of dissatisfaction is not being appreciated for their contributions.

Complementary and Position-Specific Strategies

Town Hall Meetings

In informal Town Hall meetings, HR staff goes to seven MARTA field facilities to listen and respond to questions of "employees where they live." Typically scheduled at between-shift times, these sessions give HR an opportunity to inform employees about available services, such as the employee assistance program, and to discuss matters related to topics such as recruitment and compensation. If an employee has a question or concern that cannot be answered on the spot, HR staff get back to the individual with a response within three business days.

Employee Recognition as a Core Value

According to the director of ERD, all supervisory and management training includes modules on how to make employee recognition "real for employees." One goal is to make day-to-day, personalized employee recognition a core value within MARTA. In the longer term, the plan is to revise the management performance evaluation form to include a section on how the manager rewards and recognizes employees. A newly hired ERD employee has helping and coaching managers on how to reward and recognize employees as 50 percent of her job responsibilities. This level of support is designed to facilitate the change in organizational culture necessary to make personalized employee recognition a core value.

Employees respond well to employee recognition at MARTA, whether the annual holiday party in which close to 3,000 of the agency's almost 5,000 employees participate and receive gifts and elegant entertainment, or the annual golf tournament.

The Martariffic informal recognition program is designed to reinforce MARTA's strategic direction in seven areas: customer focus, transit advocacy, employee development, continuous improvement, business management, safety, and teamwork. An employee must demonstrate at least three behaviors in any of the areas. Employees can nominate themselves or be nominated by a peer or by their supervisor. Awards include items of sports clothing, sports bags, and computers and briefcases.

On a quarterly basis, MARTA senior management recognizes employees for various contributions within the agency or in the community, unrelated to job responsibilities. At a forum known as "Expanded Staff" managers recognize employees with awards of up to $5,000. Employees with 25 or 30 years of service also receive recognition at this event. This is also the venue at which announcements are made of new managers or employees who received promotions.

Professional Development for Employee Relations and Development Staff

The high priority that ERD management places on personal and professional development of staff shows in the attention given to the development of competencies required to provide customer-focused services. New recruiters receive

intensive mentoring and coaching in addition to formal professional development.

The technical training branch has a professional development program customized to match the type of technical training in which the instructor will be involved. For instance, a person hired as a bus operator instructor will spend a large part of the first year learning how to be an instructor. Each new instructor is paired with a veteran instructor and completes formal training in adult learning skills, platform skills, and in some cases, instructional design skills. While the unit has a 90-day probationary period for the first year, instructors are placed on a performance plan and receive evaluations of their instructional delivery and their motivation to be an instructor. At the end of one year, with successful completion of performance plan requirements, the instructor is certified as having the competencies required by the agency.

Supervisory Management Training

The supervisory management program is designed for individuals in management positions or those wanting to qualify for future management opportunities. The result of a needs assessment conducted by ERD, the ten modules include topics such as strategic planning, how to manage within budget, how to reward and recognize employees, and how to encourage optimal performance. While not required, when the six-month schedule of classes was distributed earlier this year, the classes began filling up immediately.

Leadership Development Training

Designed for directors and assistant general managers, this eight-module series covers strategic management, character-based leadership, how to put people first, and business management applications.

Succession Program for Critical-Fill Positions

In 2000, ERD designed a program for positions designated as "critical fill," typically safety-sensitive Operations positions or positions where there is only one person in a core function. The succession program allows MARTA to identify talent available within the agency—employees who can be groomed to take on additional responsibilities. The program requires cross training: specialized projects that require being away from the typical job responsibilities several hours each week. A final step prior to implementation is a critique of program design by managers in September 2001 to ensure that everyone understands what it takes to make the program successful. Supervisory and succession program participant training is a critical part of program design.

Wellness Program

The wellness program at MARTA is a comprehensive effort aimed at addressing employee health and well-being as a personal and bottom-line issue. Twice-a-year health fairs at facilities as well as monthly massages, brown-bag health education classes, and monthly health promotion newsletters sent individually to employees are all received well. With fitness facilities at each location, employees can maintain healthy levels of physical activity at their own pace.

Strategic Partnering

Partnering Between ERD and Operations

Approximately one year ago, ERD and Operations partnered in developing and offering the Frontline Leadership Training Program. Designed for individuals already in supervisory roles, the six-module program consists of half-day sessions on a series of topics determined to be key to success as a front line supervisor at MARTA. Computer-based training activities (that employees complete on their own following class sessions) supplement and reinforce classroom work. Topics include how to motivate, recognize, and reward employees; document performance; and identify and address problems early.

Contributing to the enthusiastic sign-up for the program is the support given by the deputy general manager for Operations. In addition, having input from frontline supervisors and managers during program design created a sense of ownership that has carried through during implementation.

The technical training branch assigns a dedicated chief instructor (CI) to each major Operations division. By establishing a close working relationship with division directors, the CI ensures high-quality customer service by providing direct input and feedback on training and critical skills positions. The technical training manager works directly with assistant general managers, department directors, budget managers, and labor relations managers to address training skills issues. This access to managers at all levels in various departments facilitates the communication required to align maintenance of a trained workforce.

Links with Welfare-to-Work Program

MARTA maintains an ongoing applicant referral relationship with the Georgia Department of Labor's Welfare-to-Work (WTW) Program. Some employees currently in the Maintenance apprenticeship program came through referrals from WTW. Initially, the recruiting branch brings WTW participants into the agency on an unpaid internship basis for four to six weeks. In the first week or so, the intern works in ERD to give staff an opportunity to assess the person's work habits

and other attributes. Often these individuals have not had work experiences that prepare them to work in a setting such as MARTA and, therefore, can benefit from coaching about acceptable work behaviors. The coaching sessions help the intern become aware that how one presents himself or herself all of the time, whether in language, nonverbal communication, or dress, can influence hiring decisions. A natural entry for many of the interns is MARTA's clerical pool, which acts as an internal staffing agency for administrative staff. After each pool assignment, ERD receives a report card on the person's performance. The report card provides feedback on how well the intern functions in six job performance areas: enthusiasm, initiative, customer service, attendance, computer literacy, and overall performance. This feedback is essential in determining if additional coaching is needed and where the person, upon successful completion of the internship, can most likely succeed with the agency as a regular employee.

Links with Educational Institutions

MARTA has developed a number of partnering relationships with educational institutions, including Georgia State University, which tailors courses to meet MARTA's needs. The agency also uses resources available through the NTI in ensuring its workforce has up-to-date transit-relevant training available on an ongoing basis. MARTA pays tuition reimbursement of 80 percent per course, or $1,850 per year. Packaged with the Georgia HOPE Scholarship, employees can receive funds to pay for most educational costs at state universities, colleges, and technical schools in Georgia.

APPENDIX B

HUMAN-RESOURCES GUIDE

ABOUT THE GUIDE

The Human-Resources Guide is a reference tool of best practices that transit agencies—small, medium, and large—in different geographic locations have found effective in recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce, especially in difficult-to-recruit and -retain benchmark positions. In each case, the "best practice" has been used for at least one year with positive results. The guide also highlights the role of labor-management partnerships in maintaining a qualified workforce, especially in the study benchmark positions.

The guide is divided into three sections. The first section describes 18 best practices, each with a single focus of *recruitment, training, or retention practices*, and categorized as such. Other practices with two or three areas of focus are categorized as *combination practices.* Three additional practices that show promise, but have not had sufficient testing to reach best practices status, are categorized as *promising practices.*

The second section is the Labor-Management Partnership Guide and is divided into three subsections: (1) transit labor-management partnership case studies, (2) guidelines for establishing a labor-management partnership, (3) attachments that document labor-management partnership processes at three transit agencies.

The third section, Human Resources Self-Assessment for Maintaining a Qualified Workforce in Difficult-to-Recruit and Difficult-to-Retain Positions, is a tool that transit agencies can use to assess their difficult-to-recruit and -retain positions and monitor their workforce needs. The tool was field-tested by a panel of transit human-resources professionals to ensure its applicability.

The principal authors of the Human-Resources Guide are Clementine Morris, Vanessa Grayson, and Thomas Webb. Grayson developed the best practices format and collected data for a number of practices. Morris, veteran transit human-resources professional, conducted the majority of best practices data collection and edited the full group of practices to ensure that all content was presented clearly. Frank Medina, also a transit human-resources professional, assisted with data collection for several best practices. Webb prepared the Labor-Management Partnership Guide, which reflects his decades of experience as a transit agency labor relations director and expertise as a consultant to public and private employers.

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SECTION 1: BEST PRACTICES

RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Employee Referral/Sign-On Incentives

Area of Focus: **Recruitment**

Contact Person: Dawn Moore, Human Resources
Agency: Citibus
Address: 801 Texas Avenue
Lubbock, TX 79457
Phone: (806) 767-2380
Fax: (806) 767-2387
E-mail: dmoore@citibus

Implementers

Small work team led by the Human Resource Department.

Objective

To increase the pool of bus operator applicants, without sacrificing service integrity and quality.

Background

Citibus' pool of qualified applicants for bus operator positions was very limited.

Steps in Implementing Practice

- The costs associated with overtime and possible accidents—as a result of operators working extended hours—were compared with the costs of offering referral and sign-on incentives to current and new employees.
- The incentive program was advertised on employee bulletin boards, through payroll stuffers, and through other employee communications.

Resources Required to Support Practice

A $500 incentive is awarded to the employee making the referral, as well as the new operator who becomes a full-time employee after 6 months' employment.

What Makes It Successful

Recruitment costs were reduced, while the applicant flow increased.

How Success Is Measured

An increase in the pool of qualified applicants.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

Management was very enthusiastic in embracing this initiative.

Lessons Learned

- Ask, very specifically, how people come to the organization. Document this information, so as to avoid abuse of the program.
- Be clear about the program's guidelines and policies.
- Because the incentive is not awarded until after the new employee completes six months of employment, there is an added incentive for the senior operator to mentor the new/junior operator—ensuring that both receive their incentive.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

eRecruiting

Area of Focus: **Recruitment**

Contact Person: Katrina Wiggins, Director, Office of Human Resources Management and Planning
Agency: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Address: 600 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: (202) 962-2303
Fax: (202) 962-1180
E-mail: kwiggins@wmata.com

Implementers

Office of Human Resources Management & Planning

Objective

To make it easy for potential applicants who conduct job searches on the Internet to apply online for jobs at Washington Area Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

Background

The Office of Human Resources Management and Planning (HRM&P), recognizing that other major employers in the area were using online recruiting as a tool to attract candidates, decided to initiate eRecruiting at WMATA. The Director had some experience with eRecruiting at a previous employer and was committed to introducing WMATA to this technique as well.

Steps in Implementing Practice

Understanding that planning for implementation of eRecruiting is very important, the Director took a number of steps to ensure its success. Initially, one person was assigned to oversee the effort. The person in this role had to be experienced in screening and searching keywords on the Internet.

The quality of an agency's website is critical to the success of the use of this technique; therefore, HRM&P worked closely with the Information Technology Department to get eRecruiting off the ground. The website had to be user-friendly and able to accept resumes online. In addition, the site needed to be constructed so that during a job search, if a person sees a position that a friend or family member may be interested in, that individual could email the site to that person.

From a marketing standpoint, pictures of employees telling their success stories are included on the website as a way of humanizing the search experience. To further encourage applicants to consider employment at WMATA, employee benefits, including perks such as work life programs, are described on the site.

The eRecruiting process is also set up to use other job search websites to locate potential applicants. Some searches on these sites can be conducted free of charge; other searches cost up to $1600.

How the Practice Was Tested

Initially, an applicant could search the WMATA site for the position, then download the application form, complete it, and fax it or mail it to HRM&P.

Revisions to Original Practice

An applicant can now search for the position and complete and submit the application online. After the applicant clicks on the *Submit* button, the site automatically acknowledges receipt of the document.

Resources Required to Support the Practice

HRM&P and IT staff's involvement was critical in the planning and implementation phases. The costs of eRecruiting are variable depending on the level of eRecruiting done. Cost of tracking software will depend on the type selected.

What Makes It Successful

The WMATA website is user-friendly and gives information that is appealing to potential applicants. Extensive planning in collaboration with IT, applicant tracking software, continuous monitoring by staff knowledgeable about online job searches, and the ability to keep up with the increased volume of applications were all critical elements in successful implementation of this practice.

How Success Is Measured

WMATA maintains metrics of the number of resumes received, number of interviews conducted, and number of hires with each recruitment. Each application has a number code that alerts staff as to which medium was used to acquire the application.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

Executive management has been supportive from the planning stages of this effort. A driving force in moving in this direction was performance goals established for the department related to expected recruitment results.

Lessons Learned

The practice of eRecruiting, while a cutting-edge use of technology, should not replace the practice of accepting applications by fax or mail if those processes are working for an agency. Many applicants will not have access to or a comfort level with the Internet; therefore, eRecruiting can best be used as a supplement, not a panacea for all purposes.

The implementing agency needs to be prepared for the increased volume of applicants and to have recruiting staff with online search skills to administer the process.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Mechanic Recruitment Through Partnership with a Private Technical School

Area of Focus: **Recruitment**

Contact Person: Ben Gomez, Vice President, Human Resources
Agency: Dallas Area Rapid Transit
Address: 1401 Pacific Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75266
Phone: (214) 749-2571
Fax: (214) 749-3653
E-mail: bgomez@dart.org

Implementers

Maintenance and Human Resources Departments

Objective

To maintain a reliable source of transit mechanics to fill positions as they become available.

Background

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) made a decision to hire only bus mechanics who have an associate degree in the field. The agency has developed relationships with technical schools to accomplish this requirement. One relationship has been particularly fruitful in supplying the agency with an ongoing flow of qualified mechanics.

Steps in Implementing Practice

Through a structured partnership that started about four years ago with Wyoming Tech, a private technical school in Laramie, Wyoming, DART hires up to 10 of the school's graduates annually. The retention rate for these mechanics is very good, in part due to the up-front work by DART staff to attract and make them feel connected to the agency, even before they begin employment. With so many of Wyoming Tech graduates at the agency, new mechanics have a ready-made affinity group from the time they arrive at DART.

DART established a positive relationship with Wyoming Tech by making frequent visits to the school at least three or four times each year to work with the school's recruiters. Instructors from the school also visit DART's facilities. As such, these individuals know DART's requirements first-hand. DART also provides equipment as well as promotional materials for the training program.

Wyoming Tech draws from a national student base. Consequently, getting new graduates to relocate to other cities after graduation is not a difficult task. Wyoming Tech is very aggressive in recruiting minority students, which fits well with DART's goals of maintaining a representative workforce. To facilitate diversity among mechanic trainees, DART identified a number of high schools within its service area that have a large number of Hispanic and African-American graduates, which Wyoming Tech now targets for its recruitment outreach efforts. The school provides scholarships to assist students who may need financial aid to pay for the training.

How the Practice Was Tested

At first, DART maintained an intermittent recruiting presence at Wyoming Tech facilities. While these infrequent contacts resulted in some referrals, the numbers did not meet DART's need for mechanics.

Revisions to Original Practice

With the regularly scheduled trips to the school and involvement of DART Maintenance employees as technical advisors and supporters of the program, a relationship has developed that provides a continuous pipeline of well-qualified mechanics.

Resources Required to Support This Practice

DART's Maintenance staff makes frequent visits to Wyoming Tech to maintain relationships and to provide technical assistance that ensures that the training provided is relevant to job requirements at the agency. Expenses for this collaborative effort include travel, used bus equipment, and promotional materials for the school. Equipment that DART provides to the program, typically old bus equipment, allows students to work on equipment similar to that which they will encounter on the job.

What Makes It Successful

The continued presence by DART staff at Wyoming Tech is the driving force behind the success of this recruitment venture. The ongoing two-way interaction that builds on the previously established collaborative relationship keeps the referral of new mechanics at a steady pace.

How Success Is Measured

The success of the practice is measured by the ongoing flow of new graduates from the program; two or more several times a year.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

In keeping with the Maintenance Department's decision to require an associate degree for mechanics at DART, the management staff chose the route of working with technical schools as the source for new mechanics. The HR staff builds on the initiative established by Maintenance by providing human and fiscal resources to keep the practice going.

Lessons Learned

Making a partnership like the one DART has with Wyoming Tech requires relationship building and maintenance, a mutual awareness of needs, and a willingness to take the steps necessary to meet organizational goals in a timely manner.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Partnering with Community-Based Organizations to Recruit Bus Operator Applicants

Area of Focus: **Recruitment**

Contact Person: Richard Percival, Employment Services
Agency: Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)
Address: One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952
Mail Stop 99-4-3
Phone: (213) 922-7137
Fax: (213) 922-5225
E-mail: percivalr@mta.net

Implementer

Employment Services Manager

Objective

To enhance the effectiveness of the partnership between MTA and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) that is focused on recruitment of bus operator candidates.

Background

In 2000, the MTA formalized its partnership with local Employment Development Department (EDD) offices with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MTA and EDD. A key element of the MOU was that MTA would co-sponsor a job fair every two months to be rotated among three EDD regions: Crenshaw, El Monte, and San Fernando. Crenshaw is predominantly African-American and Latino in make-up; El Monte is Latino and Asian; and San Fernando is Latino and African-American.

Steps in Implementing Practice

MTA/EDD job fairs were scheduled at least six weeks in advance. The MTA agreed to provide advertising through public service announcement flyers and in local newspapers. The MTA also agreed to furnish adequate staff, including a display bus and bus operators. The EDD agreed to provide a minimum of three staff members for each job fair.

How the Practice Was Tested

Job fairs were conducted at each of the three EDD offices during the year. For each job fair, flyers were placed on all buses operating in that region for two days prior to the event. An MTA Media Relations Representative contacted local radio, television, and print media, requesting public service announcements through a press release.

Revisions to Original Practice

For subsequent job fairs, EDD staff increased their support by personally dropping off flyers at all community-based organization partners in their region and visiting local radio stations to request public service announcements. The staff also dropped off stacks of flyers at local Department of Motor Vehicle and community college offices and to as many social services organizations as they could contact within a 30-mile radius of the job fair. The MTA Human Resources staff also initiated an e-mail/fax campaign to contacts in the region.

Resources Required to Support Practice

- Human: Five MTA Human Resources staff, one MTA Media Relations Representative, two Bus Operators, two Security Personnel, and five EDD staff members
- Fiscal: Salaries of the staff and internal printing of flyers
- Other: MTA bus for display at job fairs

What Makes It Successful

The combination of three separate promotional efforts: MTA Media/Public Relations activities; MTA Human Resources Employment Services e-mail/fax campaign; and EDD staff community outreach.

How Success Is Measured

On June 10, 2000, a job fair at the Crenshaw EDD attracted 125 participants. With the additional effort by EDD community outreach and the Human Resources e-mail/fax campaign, a job fair at the same location on January 27, 2001 attracted 622 participants.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

The MTA management has committed the agency to the partnership through the annual renewal of the MOU. A substantial part of the bus operator applicant pool is now drawn from the MTA/EDD job fairs. Management supports the use of MTA's Human Resources, Media Relations, and Operations department resources (equipment and staff) for ensuring the success of job fairs. MTA's Maintenance Department also supports the efforts by placing job fair flyers on MTA buses.

Lessons Learned

By combining a grass roots approach, EDD's community outreach and MTA Human Resource's e-mail/fax campaign, with the professional media relations/press release efforts of the MTA's Media Relations Department, the agency increased job fair participation by 500 percent. On January 27, 2001, the job fair was scheduled from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. By 8:30 AM more than 50 people were waiting to get into the job fair. The event opened early with a consistent attendance throughout the day; the job fair had to remain open until 2:00 PM due to the crowd that remained at closing time.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Process Re-engineering: One-Stop-Job Shop

Area of Focus: **Recruitment**

Contact E-mail: Manny Herrera III, Senior Manager, Human Resources
Agency: Regional Transportation District
Address: 1600 Blake Street
Denver, CO 80239
Phone: (303) 299-2100
Fax: (303) 299-2015
E-mail: manuel.herrera@RTD-Denver.com

Implementers

Human Resources (HR) Division

Objective

To attract and retain applicants for bus operator and mechanic positions through immediate action on their applications.

Background

An analysis of the bus operator and mechanic recruitment processes revealed them to be drawn out and cumbersome, linear processes of time-sequenced requirements, which likely resulted in the loss of promising candidates. It was common for recruitments to take up to 10 weeks to complete.

Steps in Implementing Practice

To accelerate the employment process cycle time, HR instituted a one-day turnaround time for applicants to apply, test, and interview for those positions. In job ads, RTD informs applicants that they need to bring their Motor Vehicle Report at the time of application and to expect to spend up to four hours completing the application, testing, and interviewing process. The applicant completes the application, which is graded immediately. An interview team composed of Operations department and HR staff conducts an interview. Applicants who successfully pass the interview complete the pre-employment drug and alcohol screen onsite, are asked to sign an authorization for RTD to conduct a criminal background check, and are sent immediately for a Department of Transportation (DOT) physical.

Resources Required to Support Practice

To make this change, HR hired an additional recruiter to manage the process and a telephone support person to check references for these positions. Staff from HR and the Operations department is available on an on-call basis to conduct interviews with applicants on the day of application.

What Makes It Successful

The commitment of HR and Operations to the process makes it successful. Being able to process applicants and make job offers quickly to qualified applicants makes HR more responsive to the needs of the Operations department and, ultimately, to the riding public.

How Success Is Measured

A process that previously took 10 w.eeks can now be completed in two weeks, most of it in one day. The hiring yield from applications received increased from 16 percent in 1999 for bus operators to 21 percent in 2000; from 14 percent in 1999 for mechanics to 20 percent in 2000.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

Management recognized the need to change the process and, through HR management, led the process re-engineering effort in collaboration with the Operations department and HR recruiting staff.

Lessons Learned

Being willing to critique time-honored, inefficient processes is the first step in re-engineering a critical function such as the recruitment of employees in difficult-to-recruit positions. By forming partnerships with internal customers, HR can be creative, more responsive, and productive in meeting staffing needs of the organization.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Radio and Television Advertising

Area of Focus: **Recruitment**

Contact E-mail: Lynnette Taugner, Senior Human Resource Generalist
Agency: Metro Transit
Address: 560 Sixth Avenue N
Minneapolis, MN 55411
Phone: (612) 349-7551
Fax: (612) 349-7566
E-mail: lynnette.taugner@metc.state.mn.us

Implementers

A multi-disciplinary work team with representation from Human Resources, Finance and Transportation.

Objective

To increase the flow and pool of qualified bus operator applicants.

Background

This activity was launched as a result of a diminishing pool of qualified bus operator applicants.

Steps in Implementing Practice

A retention study was commissioned by the agency. Following the study

- An outside advertising agency was hired to develop a media plan focused on bus operator recruitment.
- Qualitative and quantitative research was conducted to develop an applicant profile.
- The plan was presented to and approved by senior management.
- Radio and TV ads were developed and aired.

Revisions Made to Original Practice

Prior to implementation of the media campaign, employee referral incentives were used as the primary recruitment strategy. With the success of the media campaign, however, the incentive referral program was discontinued.

Resources Required to Support Practice

Recruitment funds were re-allocated to the media campaign, delivering a better return on investment.

What Makes It Successful

Concurrent with this effort was a corresponding salary and benefits enhancement initiative.

How Success Is Measured

Response to radio and television ads are tracked daily. The applicant flow has doubled.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

Management has been fully supportive of this activity.

Lessons Learned

- Know your target audience and execute campaigns that are specific to these groups.
- Don’t rely on a single strategy. Use multiple approaches.
- Stay visible—let your public know what your system is doing, independent of recruitment activities.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

VTA Recruitment Campaign: A Human Resources (HR) and Marketing Partnership

Area of Focus: **Recruitment**

Contact E-mail: Anne-Catherine Vinickas, Director, Marketing & Customer Service Divisions
Agency: Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
Address: 3331 North First Street
San Jose, CA 95134-1906
Phone: (408) 321-7539
Fax: (408) 321-7541
E-mail: anne-catherine.vinickas@vta.org

Implementers

Marketing and Customer Service Department in collaboration with Human Resources Department

Objective

To attract as many potential employees as possible, especially operators and mechanics, to apply for career opportunities at VTA.

Background

In 2000, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and most Silicon Valley employers struggled with serious staff shortages and an extremely low unemployment rate of 1.3 percent in the "High Tech Capital." VTA's operator and mechanic shortages were beginning to affect the ability to provide bus and light rail service to the public, and customer complaints were understandably increasing. The extremely high cost of living and lack of affordable housing (in 2000, the median home price in Santa Clara County was $525,000) in the Bay Area were apparent in the attrition rate among bus operators, mechanics, and other positions.

With over 300 vacant positions throughout the organization, VTA quickly learned that previous recruitment efforts would no longer meet the demands of today's market. VTA needed to develop a new way of doing business. To accomplish this, VTA worked to (1) engage all current VTA employees as "recruiters" of prospective employees; (2) inform all potential applicants and the general public that VTA was seeking qualified applicants for many different positions and fields of work; and (3) position VTA as an employer of choice.

In the past, all recruiting efforts were assigned to the HR Department. However, VTA senior staff decided to expand the planning and recruitment efforts for a first in VTA history, an on-site job fair with staff implementation shared among different divisions. As such, a team of staff, chiefly from the Marketing & Customer Service and HR Divisions, began co-coordinating the VTA Great Job Fair approximately eight weeks before the event. The Marketing & Customer Service Division was primarily responsible for developing and implementing an advertising campaign that could be used for the job fair as well as ongoing recruitment efforts.

Steps in Implementing Practice

As part of the comprehensive marketing plan, the group developed an advertising campaign that focused on current VTA employees and the community. Full-color photos representing a diversity of employees, careers, and disciplines complemented the theme; "We're hiring people who make a difference in our community." The team also wanted potential employees to know that VTA is a great place to work. So, they highlighted the fact that, in 1998, "VTA was picked as one of the top 50 places to work in the Valley" by *San Jose Magazine*. The advertising campaign included the development of the following print collateral: newspaper ads, exterior bus-boards, interior car-cards, on-board flyers, passenger newsletter (*VTA Take-One*) feature articles, light rail station and transit center posters, banners posted at VTA work sites, personnel hiring brochures, job fair event programs, and promotional items.

In addition, VTA also developed media promotional partnerships with several local television and radio stations, including English and Spanish language stations. In exchange for VTA allowing the station logo placement on all job fair print collateral, the partnering stations provided VTA with free radio and television spots worth at least $25,000 per station. Overall, VTA received over $100,000 in free radio and television advertising.

How the Practice Was Tested

Achieving success was extraordinarily difficult because of the highly competitive job market in Silicon Valley in 2000. In addition to the extremely low unemployment rate, VTA was competing with some of the best high-tech companies who were offering higher wages, stock-options, cash bonuses and other employee benefits. However, VTA's decision to focus this new recruitment campaign on employees, family, and community was enough to attract even passive job seekers, including those already gainfully employed.

Revisions to Original Practice

The VTA Great Job Fair was so successful in terms of attendance and applications received that VTA held an even more

successful VTA Great Job Fair II in April 2001. This second job fair built upon the first and yielded even higher final results.

Today, VTA's Marketing & Customer Service Division continues to partner with HR to revise recruitment marketing strategy by providing advertising, job fairs, community outreach, and other methods to attract new employees to VTA.

Resources Required to Support This Practice

- Human: The VTA Recruitment Campaign is a constant effort that requires ongoing active management participation. One public communications specialist serves as project manager. This individual's time requirement for this campaign averages 16 hours per week.

  One HR analyst position is dedicated to this campaign. This individual works primarily on job fair logistics and averages approximately 16 hours per week on this project for the two months leading up to a job fair.

  One events coordinator is dedicated to assist with the job fair logistics and planning the event. This individual dedicates approximately 10 hours per week for the two months before a job fair.

  VTA employs a team of graphic designers. These individuals help develop all recruitment collateral from newspaper advertisements to job fair posters and flyers. Their time commitment to recruitment efforts varies depending on the media-advertising schedule and job fair support collateral requirements.

  VTA employees from all divisions participate in the VTA job fairs and are available to answer questions about job specifications, benefits, and VTA in general.
- Fiscal: VTA has increased the FY 2001–2002 budget for recruitment advertising and promotions by 50 percent in support of expanded recruitment efforts.
- Other: Both job fairs were conducted at the VTA River Oaks Administration facility in San Jose, California.

What Makes It Successful

The VTA recruitment campaign took the problem of staffing vacant positions from an HR responsibility to an organization-wide responsibility. By partnering with the Marketing & Customer Service Division, HR was able to market VTA more effectively in a challenging recruitment environment. During the two job fairs, VTA employees from throughout the organization pulled together to make the events a success.

How Success Is Measured

Public reaction to the entire campaign was extremely positive and immediate. Shortly after VTA released the advertising campaign, HR immediately reported a substantial increase in the number of applicants visiting or contacting the main office. The success of the job fair was also apparent in that there were over 1,800 attendees, 739 applicants, 173 eligible applicants, and 40+ newly hired employees. The promotional partnerships were so effective that VTA was able to run approximately $100,000 in radio and television advertising for a total cost of $15,000.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

Management's role is a commitment to remain actively involved, increase recruitment funding, and provide dedicated positions to the recruitment campaign and personnel for job fair staffing. VTA senior, middle, and front-line managers are present at the job fairs to staff information tables and provide assistance.

Lessons Learned

The development of the recruitment campaign and subsequent job fairs taught the agency that staffing problems impact everyone in the organization, regardless of where the vacancies exist. So, if VTA approaches the problem as an organization, it can put the best talent and thinking to work toward a successful solution, benefiting internal and external customers.

TRAINING PRACTICES

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Computer-Based, Trainer-Led Training and On-the-Floor/Field Instruction

Area of Focus: **Training**

Contact E-mail: Walt Smothers, Maintenance Training Supervisor
Agency: Transit Authority of River City (TARC)
Address: 1000 W. Broadway
Louisville, KY 40203
Phone: (502) 213-3205
Fax: (502) 213-3206
E-mail: wsmothers@ridetarc.org

Implementers

TARC's Executive director determined that a team approach would be used in the bus procurement and inspection procedures for the 111 Gillig buses that would be purchased over a 2-year period. Rather than hire an outside consultant to conduct on-site inspections of the new coaches, a team of main-

tenance personnel were sent to Gillig Corporation during the manufacturing of TARC's new buses.

In support of one of its key goals, "Become a Learning Organization," TARC's Learning Institute implemented performance-based instruction for maintenance workers, including service personnel. The Maintenance Training Supervisor is responsible for conducting the training.

Objectives

To provide first-hand knowledge of the manufacturing process and to give the responsibility of making sure everything was going according to TARC's specifications to the team members who would be responsible for maintaining the new coaches.

To help maintenance workers to close the gap between their existing knowledge, skills, and attitudes and the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they will need to repair Gillig coaches. This approach was also a means for assisting the bus line inspection team in transferring the on-the-floor/field instruction of "how Gillig coaches are put together" to the work environment and to reinforce their newly acquired knowledge.

Background

When TARC embarked upon an upgrade of its coach fleet, the decision was made to involve coach operators, maintenance staff, and members of the planning team in the development of specifications for the new vehicles and the review of proposals from manufacturers of the vehicles. TARC also decided to use its own maintenance personnel to conduct the on-site inspections.

In support of this initiative, the Learning Institute began development of performance-based instruction curricula for maintenance workers. By the year 2005, many of TARC's technical maintenance team members will be eligible for retirement. Faced with this challenge, the Learning Institute also developed, "Preparing Tomorrow's Mechanics Today," a maintenance-training program for service workers (coach cleaners, laborers, hostlers, etc.) and a refresher training program for mechanics.

Steps in Implementing Practice

To ensure that TARC would purchase a fleet of vehicles that would be driver-friendly, dependable, and easy to maintain during their service life, TARC assembled a team of coach operators, mechanics, and management personnel to provide input at every step of the procurement process. This began with identifying the drivetrain specifications. Members of the engine and re-build teams attended presentations given by major manufacturers of drivetrain components. Following the presentations, the team members selected the engine and transmission systems that they believed would provide the most dependable service to customers.

The next step, developing bus specifications, involved input from a team of coach operators, mechanics, and management personnel. They established criteria for windows, seats, flooring, tires, wheels, rear axle, lifts, electrical systems, paint, decals, and heating and air conditioning systems. The drivetrain and bus specifications were sent to a select group of bus manufacturers for their review. Using the typical bus procurement process, each manufacturer incorporated TARC's specifications into its bid package and returned it to TARC for review and approved equals on components that did not meet TARC's specifications. Following TARC's review of the manufacturers' proposals (each over six inches thick), TARC asked each manufacturer for their best and final offer.

The Federal Transit Administration requires that if an agency purchases more than ten buses using federal funds, an inspector must be on-site during the manufacturing process. In the past, an outside contractor has performed TARC's on-site inspections. Adhering to TARC's learning organization goal, TARC management believed that an inspection team composed of maintenance personnel would allow first-hand knowledge of the manufacturing process and ensure a thorough inspection process. The team members were trained in the fundamentals of bus line inspection as well as the all-important federal and state production regulations, i.e., pollution. With 16 buses on the assembly line at one time, this training was invaluable to the team and to TARC.

How the Practice Was Tested

TARC's 43-member maintenance inspection team was sent to Gillig Corp., in early 1998 and fall 1999 on a two-week rotation basis during the manufacturing of the new coaches. With the exception of the first and last inspection, there were always two team members on site with the first informing the next of the problems they had discovered during their inspection tour.

Revisions to Original Practice

Following delivery of the first fleet of coaches, input was solicited from the Learning Institute regarding the use of the new coaches in the training of new coach operators. The Learning Institute's trainers offered suggestions for enhancement of the coach design, e.g., placement of mirrors, climate controls, etc., which were incorporated into the specifications and on-site inspection procedures.

Resources Required to Support Practice

The team-based approach to in-house inspections requires cooperation from all team members. The inspection-procedures training was conducted prior to travel by the

inspection team. Costs will include cost of training consultant, travel costs for inspection team—airfare, room and board and ground transportation, and staff time. The actual inspections were performed at the manufacturer's facility. The development of the Maintenance Learning Facility includes capital costs for training equipment, renovation of space, and staff time. In-house maintenance workers performed all renovations.

What Makes It Successful

In recognition of the mechanics who completed the rigorous bus line inspection-training program, a formal resolution was presented to the TARC Board of Directors and a luncheon was held in their honor. Continuing efforts to encourage other employees to offer suggestions for achieving TARC's mission, goals, and vision include two monthly one-hour "Talk About TARC" get-togethers.

How Success Is Measured

TARC team members performed with distinction. The on-site inspection team made over 40 changes to the vehicles during the inspection process, making it possible for the new coaches to be placed in service in record time from delivery with very few problems. The knowledge gained during the inspection process gave the team important insight needed to perform maintenance on the coaches throughout their service life. TARC has received national recognition for its team-based approach to training, bus procurement, and inspection.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

In-house manufacturing inspections will be used on all future bus procurements. To introduce and reinforce the knowledge obtained during the on-site inspections and to assist mechanics who did not participate in on-site inspections, a performance-based Maintenance Learning Facility providing demonstrated guidance, practice, and skills mastery of all coach and related mechanical operations is now available. The Learning Facility is equipped with a training bus, tools, an air system training board, an input and output training module, and programmable logic control boards comparable with features on the Gillig coaches.

Utilizing a 15-module curriculum, maintenance employees are able to learn all aspects of transit coach maintenance, from performing simple repairs to working on complex mechanisms, e.g., electrical, engine, and heating and cooling systems. This curriculum also includes a computer-training module. The training is also available to mechanics wanting to refresh their technical skills.

For coach operators and other team members, the Learning Institute has implemented computer-based instructor led diversity, ADA and disability awareness, and customer service training. The instructor obtains a volunteer from among the participants to use the mouse and assist in the training. Participants who are not familiar with using a computer are usually the first to volunteer. Afterwards, they inquire about computer training and take advantage of TARC's computer-training contract on their own time.

Lessons Learned

- A well-trained, empowered and motivated work force is critical to organizational success.
- Employees must be motivated "to learn to learn" and provided with learning opportunities that improve performance.
- Employees want to know that they are valued contributors to the organization's success.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Partnerships with Colleges, Universities, and Technical Schools

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Area of Focus: **Training**

Contact Person: Marie E. Pena, Human Resources Manager
Company: Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA)
Address: 100 N. Myrtle Avenue
Jacksonville, FL 32204
Phone: (904) 630-3127
Fax: (904) 630-3166
E-mail: MarieP@jtaonthemove.com

Implementers

Human Resources (HR) Department.

Objective

The objective of the initiative is to provide employees with the training that prepares them for advancement.

Background

In March 1999, training was not a priority at JTA. However, the agency began converting its computer system and

realized that the employees would need training to use the new system.

Steps in Implementing Practice

HR personnel began conversations with consultants to identify available training packages. In doing so, HR discovered that Jacksonville City Government, a funding source, had a catalog of training that was available to JTA employees free of charge. The city already had a contract with a computer company and JTA employees were able to utilize this existing resource. JTA began sending members of its clerical staff to computer training under the city's contract.

JTA also determined that technical employees needed advanced training and began contacting local colleges, universities, and technical schools. In collaboration with other local companies, JTA partnered with a college to conduct the technical training. The agency also discovered that the city had a contract with a local university for training its management staff, e.g., time management, quality processing, teambuilding, supervision, and leadership training. Again, the training was available free of charge to JTA and its employees.

How the Practice Was Tested

HR made follow-up contacts with employees who had received training. They designed a questionnaire to identify whether the training was beneficial, would the employee recommend it to others, its value to job, and whether there was an observable transfer of the learning.

Resources Required to Support Practice

JTA's relationship with city government reduces its training costs, other than staff time, to zero. The city's training catalog is the source for needed training at this time. If training outside the city's catalog is needed, such as technical training, training for engineers, telecommunications, or arbitration, JTA uses technical schools and colleges. The amount spent for outside training is $3,000.

What Makes It Successful

Employees are interested and excited about training. Employees want training in order to learn new things, and training is now a priority with JTA. All departments are committed to and support the training initiative. All employees will receive training, and JTA recently began to train its supervisors.

How Success Is Measured

The enthusiasm of the clerical staff and the self-pride they exhibited when they learned to do something new (e.g., inserting an on-line signature into a document) with the computer were contagious. Employees were encouraging others to sign up for training. The clerical staff felt a sense of accomplishment when "they were able to teach the supervisor to perform a task." Employees are asking for training outside of the city's catalog. Training has had a significant impact on productivity and morale.

HR now submits a training report with the number of employee training hours to the Executive Director—this was not done in the past.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

JTA has made a commitment to developing talent from within. All departments are committed to the training strategy and refer employees for training and respond to an employee's request for training. The entire organization is working on providing employees with training that prepares them for advancement.

Lessons Learned

- Employees are interested in learning.
- Employees enjoy getting attention and it helps them to see their worth to the organization. They feel valued.
- Happy employees help to improve productivity and morale.

RETENTION PRACTICES

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Champions of Transit Employee Recognition Program

Area of Focus: **Retention**

Contact Person: Josephine Richards, Employee Services Coordinator
Agency: Regional Transportation District
Address: 1600 Blake Street
Denver, CO 80239
Phone: (303) 299-3036
Fax: (303) 299-2015
E-mail: jo.richards@RTD-Denver.com

Implementers

Employee Services Program in Human Resources Department

Objective

To implement a program that demonstrates RTD's appreciation for employee involvement in community, organizational, and personal development activities.

Background

By integrating community involvement, employee wellness, and employee recognition activities into a program titled *Champions of Transit,* RTD communicates its commitment to being a positive force in the community and to employee health, well-being, and development. In a colorful glossy catalog, *Get Involved, Get Healthy, Get Rewards, Get Recognized,* the agency describes the program, what is in it for the employee and the community, how to get involved, and the rewards for each type or level of involvement.

Steps in Implementing Practice

Each Champions activity has point values for the three types of activities included in the program. The Community Outreach Program includes RTD Promotion Booths at Fairs and Festivals, Internal RTD Employee Events, and Community Races. The Personal Development component includes Wellness Center participation and Resource Center use. The Resource Center is a self-development resource that contains a variety of books, audiotapes and videotapes related to health, behavior, and personal and professional development. As employees earn points for participating in the Community Outreach or Personal Development activities, they record them on a point tracking form, which is submitted according to a quarterly schedule. Employees receive a quarterly report of points earned and notification of eligibility for local merchant gift certificates ranging from $10 to $75, or a $100 or $200 Savings Bond.

The Employee Recognition Award Program includes Service Awards given after one year of service and for each five years of service up to 30 years, Outstanding *Achievement Awards* for performance above and beyond expectations, and the General Manager's Award given to those nominated by a department head for exceptional work throughout the year. Employees receiving 25- and 30-year Service Awards, Outstanding Achievement Awards, and the General Manager's Award are honored at an annual all-staff Employee Recognition celebration. Throughout the year, supervisors and managers award on-the-spot Dining Dollars meal gift certificates, in recognition of extra hard work, meeting difficult deadlines, or other extraordinary performance.

How Practice Was Tested

RTD has had employee recognition and wellness program awards in place for 10 years.

Revisions to Original Practice

The Champions activities bring together the best practices in implementing two employee development and recognition initiatives into a strategic approach to valuing and reinforcing employee contributions to the organization and community and to commitment to their own well-being. The 2001 program was changed based on input from employees about the structure of the 2000 program.

Resources Required to Support This Practice

Staffing of the program is part of the function of the Employee Services Program. The awards and facilities for major events such as the annual recognition event are budgeted during the annual budgeting process. Support of other departments is critical in implementing various aspects of the program.

What Makes It Successful

The program is relevant to employee and RTD corporate goals. Through many years of refinement of employee development, community involvement, and employee recognition processes, RTD has a program that fits the mutual needs of employees and the organization.

How Success Is Measured

Employee participation in various aspects of the program is high. Managers use on-the-spot awards to show appreciation for outstanding contributions immediately. Events, such as the Annual Employee Recognition Celebration, are well attended by employees, their guests, and members of the Board of Directors.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

Management commitment to the program is demonstrated through an annual budget allocation to support the program and by management's active participation in day-to-day program activities.

Lessons Learned

Employees appreciate knowing that their contributions are recognized and valued. Recognition of personal and professional accomplishments can reinforce organizational goals for continued improvement. For a program such as *Champions of Transit* to work, the total organization has to be aware of the program and embrace its goals.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

High Employee Involvement in Quality-of-Work Life

Area of Focus: **Retention**

Contact Person: Marnie Slakey, Vice President, Human Resources
Agency: Pierce Transit
Address: 3701 96th Street SW
Tacoma, WA 98499
Phone: (253) 581-8095
Fax: (253) 984-8224
E-mail: mslakey@piercetransit.org

Implementers

Human Resources (HR) as the lead department in collaboration with other Pierce Transit (PT) departments.

Objective

To maximize employee input and feedback on a broad range of quality of work-life issues and participation in decision-making, thereby increasing job satisfaction, productivity, and retention.

Background

Several years ago, PT embarked on a quality improvement effort in which employees at all levels were trained in process improvement methods that facilitate the analysis and revision of work processes. Over time, a number of initiatives that grew out of the quality program became programs of choice among employees. Some programs, such as the Labor Management Committee, focus on solving organizational problems. Other programs, such as the Highway to Health and SEARCH programs focus on employee-to-employee issues.

Steps in Implementing Practice

Pierce recognizes the importance of considering the employee as a whole person, offering programs that address work-life issues common to most employees. A number of standing committees, which employees join voluntarily, form the core of employee involvement efforts. The Highway to Health Program, an employee-committee program, provides opportunities to employees to learn about ways to can take control of their own health and well-being and encourage them to incorporate this information into their daily lifestyle choices. The Critical Incident Peer Support Team is a team of trained employees available by pager 24 hours a day to help fellow employees cope with stress brought about by abnormal situations. The Seeking Excellence and Recognizing Coworker Heroes (SEARCH) Committee, which has the motto "Happy workers are more productive," generates fun, morale-boosting events for coworkers. The SEARCH Committee also recognizes and rewards employees who make Pierce a better place to work.

How the Practice Was Tested

Employee involvement has a long history at PT. The quality improvement effort contributed to formalizing the current level of involvement.

Revisions to Original Practice

The high employee involvement environment at PT is reinforced by its culture of quality. The agency is flexible in how it deals with employee issues and, therefore, is amenable to improvements or adjustments as needed.

Resources Required to Support This Practice

Employees from different departments volunteer to coordinate or assist with various employee involvement efforts. Most involvement efforts at PT are low cost or require no funding in addition to the already budgeted staff compensation.

What Makes It Successful

Mutual support among all sectors of PT makes high employee involvement a norm. When there is a request for employee participation, typically the sign-up sheet fills so quickly that management has to make choices as to which employees may be the best fit for the assignment.

How Success Is Measured

Ongoing participation and enthusiasm for being a part of the organization is the best indicator of the success of the quality-of-work life efforts described above.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

Management's initial and continued support for high quality of service to the community and quality-of-work life for employees demonstrates the organizational commitment to employee involvement as a norm valued throughout PT.

Lessons Learned

When employees see their ideas being used and their efforts appreciated consistently, they invest in the organization and their own futures.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

New Employee Orientation

Area of Focus: **Retention**

Contact Person: Beth Alexander, Human Resources
Agency: Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA)
Address: 1600 McKinley Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43222
Phone: (614) 275-5843
Fax: (614) 275-5898
E-mail: www.cota.com

Implementers

Human Resources Department

Objective

To ensure that new employees are embraced and feel welcome from the very beginning of their employment experience.

Background

One corporate value of this system is that feeling welcome is the first step in retention. This program was launched as a measure in support of this value, rather than in response to a specific problem.

Steps in Implementing Practice

Benchmarking research on the employee orientation function was conducted. One finding was that feeling welcome is one of the most important and lasting impressions made on a new employee when joining a workforce.

Revisions Made to Original Practice

The scheduling of the orientation is still being revised, with the goal of developing a consistent orientation schedule.

Resources Required to Support This Practice

Staff must be willing to participate on an on-going basis. The costs are the price of breakfast and lunch, which varies based on the number of new employees in a given time period.

What Makes It Successful

The orientation builds esprit de corps and knowledge of the corporate culture from the start.

Management Commitment to Success of This Practice

Management and staff, at a number of levels, must be willing to play a role in the orientation program.

Lessons Learned

The agency can use the general orientation program to cover broad/general employment topics. Specific benefits, departmental policies, and procedures should be covered in individual sessions so as to avoid confusion.

The orientation program includes a tour of the system's other facility. An unexpected consequence of the program is that the staff of this facility feel more connected to the system as a whole, despite their decentralized location.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

New Employee Orientation for Coach Operators

Area of Focus: **Retention**

Contact Person: David Wheat, Director of Human Resources
Agency: Transit Authority of River City (TARC)
Address: 1000 W. Broadway
Louisville, KY 40203
Phone: (502) 561-5140
Fax: (502) 561-3248
E-mail: dwheat@ridetarc.org

Implementers

TARC Learning Institute

Objectives

To integrate new employees into the organization, to help them to feel comfortable as members of the TARC team.

Background

Prior to the start date, the HR department orients new employees on compensation and benefits. The Learning Institute is responsible for conducting orientation for new coach operators and maintenance workers. Each department is responsible for orienting new administrative employees to department policies and procedures. Orientation is provided to groups of coach operators and maintenance workers and to individuals.

Feedback from new coach operators revealed that they felt "separate" from employees in the administrative building, which caused them to develop an "us and them" mentality for anyone outside of the transportation building, their worksite. Overall, the employees felt that the transportation department had nothing to do with the other departments at TARC.

An assessment of the process for bringing new employees into the organization was undertaken. The results revealed the following:

- There were no written procedures for employee orientation.
- Orientation was conducted in a "hit and miss" fashion.
- Results of the ineffective orientation process were
  A. Poor attendance
  B. Poor Morale
  C. Increased Accidents
  D. Complaints of rudeness, discourtesy, and pass ups from customers.

TARC attributed the assessment results to failure to review the coach operator job description, inadequate review of policies and procedures, inadequate departmental orientation, and no follow-up contact with new hires.

TARC's Learning Institute, responsible for new coach operator training, recommended the development and implementation of a formal new employee orientation-training program. The Board of Directors approved the recommendation.

Steps in Implementing Practice

The Learning Institute mailed a three-question survey to all TARC employees. The survey was designed to identify the types of training and training topics that new employees need the first day at TARC. The survey was mailed directly to the employee's home with return postage prepaid. During the survey period, flyers and electronic sign messages were used to communicate the importance of the survey to all employees. Trainers campaigned among the employees and encouraged them to participate in the survey. The survey results provided the framework for the development of an orientation program that TARC plans to provide to new and existing employees at all levels.

Orientation is used to help the employee understand TARC's mission and goals, structure, culture, policies, and procedures. It also allows TARC to present new employees with the information they need to become productive immediately. The employee meets the team members who will provide continuing support during the orientation process: the Executive Director, union officials, trainers, HR personnel, and department heads.

The orientation curriculum for new coach operators begins with an introduction to and presentation by the Executive Director, Union president, and Director of transportation. The new employees receive an orientation package of information that includes TARC's mission statement, vision statement, fiscal year goals and objectives, training guidelines, etc. The orientation is also used to identify the employee's expectations of TARC and to communicate TARC's expectations of the employee. The new employee is introduced to the trainer, who introduces the new employee to department heads and other employees while conducting a tour of TARC's facilities. The Maintenance training supervisor conducts a similar orientation program for new maintenance employees. Orientation is an ongoing process with activities scheduled throughout the operator's 5- to 6-week training program.

How the Practice was Tested

The orientation program is presented to new coach operators in groups ranging from 4 to 10 participants. Follow-up is conducted with new coach operators who have been on the job for six weeks. This process helps to identify gaps in the orientation curriculum and any new operator's re-training needs.

Revisions to Original Practice

When the orientation program was implemented, TARC was encountering the "nontraditional" worker. The employees were lacking in the soft skills of customer service and professionalism.

TARC added a module to the original orientation to assist the new employee in displaying an image of professionalism. This module consists of personal grooming, attitude awareness, and customer service.

TARC implemented a mentor program for new hires in April 2000. After receiving the coach operator badge, new

employees are assigned a mentor. Senior coach operators volunteer to serve as mentors to the new coach operator. The Learning Institute trains the mentors on the program's purpose and procedures. A luncheon is held to introduce the mentor and mentee. The mentor provides the new coach operator with day-to-day support in job responsibilities, referrals, and acts as a "buddy" to the new coach operator.

The orientation curriculum is revised based on the results of follow-up with new employees and supervisors, changes in employment procedures, and contract issues. The original orientation program is being modified to include an orientation program for existing employees. Orientation training materials are also updated as necessary.

Resources Required to Support Practice

TARC's new employee orientation includes a four-hour image enhancement module presented by an outside consultant. The cost of this module is $125 per student. The Learning Institute includes an additional $8,000 in its budget for this training. The cost of orientation training packets is $9.50 per student. The yearly cost for state-of-the-art training videos is $1,000. Other costs include staff time.

What Makes It Successful

A successful new employee orientation program is a team effort. At TARC, everyone plays a role in new employee orientation, from the janitor who cleans and prepares the classroom to the Executive Director who is the first team member to greet and welcome the new employee to TARC. Follow-up with new employees and supervisors reveal that the employees know where and who to go to for help with work issues, knows the importance of the coach operator job and how it fits in with other departments, knows the policies and procedures, and how to perform the coach operator job. Employee buy-in is also critical to the program's success.

How Success Is Measured

The Learning Institute conducts follow-ups with new employees on an ongoing basis. Employees want the orientation program to succeed and show their support for the program by sharing ideas and offering suggestions. The employees always receive feedback on their suggestions and recommendations, e.g., a relatively new employee suggested that new employees receive a certificate of training following completion of coach operator training, which was implemented immediately. The employee's suggestion was also highlighted in the bi-monthly employee newsletter. Recommendations for topics to be covered in orientation are also incorporated into the program.

During the 180-day probationary period, the Transportation training supervisor collaborates with the safety director to monitor the new employee's safety record, with the transportation dispatcher to monitor the new employee's attendance and disciplinary actions, and with road supervisors to monitor the new employee's on-the-street performance. The number of new employee accidents is also on the decline.

A transportation counselor is responsible for monthly contact with the mentor and with the mentee to determine the success of the match and needs identified by the mentor or mentee for additional support. The counselor reports additional training needs to the Learning Institute.

Exit interviews reveal that part-time employees are leaving for a higher wage, benefits and full-time employment. The retention rate for new coach operators has improved. In 1999, 20 percent of part-time coach operators left for higher wages, benefits and full-time employment. In 2000, 15 percent of part-time operators left for higher wages and full-time employment. The remaining employees reported that the orientation program created a positive first impression and made them feel a part of the TARC team.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

A top-down commitment is required for the success of an employee orientation program. TARC's new employee orientation program is an organizational effort and is supported by the Board of Directors, the Executive director and all departments. The Learning Institute encourages suggestions for improving orientation through random conversations with team members.

Lessons Learned

- Employee orientation is an effective strategy for retaining new coach operators.
- Employee orientation is a dynamic and ongoing process.
- Orientation curriculum should be revised to address employee concerns and to stay current with organizational changes.
- Employee orientation requires employee buy-in and management commitment and support.
- Employees want to know that they are valued contributors to TARC's success.

COMBINATION PRACTICES

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Bilingual Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Testing and Operator Training

Areas of Focus: **Recruitment, Training, and Retention**

Contact Person: Gwynn Simpson, Assistant General Manager, Human Services
Agency: ATC Phoenix
Address: 2225 West Lower Buckeye Rd. Phoenix, AZ 85030
Phone: (602) 262-4024
Fax: (602) 534-6272
E-mail: gsimpson@vm.maricopa.gov

Implementer

Assistant General Manager, Human Services

Objectives

To attract and retain bus operators from Arizona's large Hispanic population.

To ensure that individuals whose primary language is Spanish are successful in completing the Student Operator Training and obtaining the CDL.

Background

Due to the large number of Hispanics in the Phoenix metropolitan area, ATC Phoenix needs to attract and retain bus operators from this population in order to be responsive to its constituents. Previously, the success rate for new Hispanic bus operators was not at an acceptable level. The agency historically has had bilingual operator instructors; however, a special effort was made to hire a bilingual trainer. Bilingual operator instructors are able to translate curriculum and learning materials for students whose first language is Spanish.

Steps in Implementing Practice

The program began with Human Resources establishing a targeted recruitment to bridge the gap between individuals whose first language is Spanish and native English speakers. The AGM for Human Services decided to pilot a project where Hispanic employees could learn to drive and be successful in a six-week student operator training program. Interviewees whose first language is Spanish are paired with bilingual interviewers who determine whether the person possesses the level of English competency needed for success in the student operator training program, with support from bilingual trainers. Once the determination is made, those with sufficient competency in English are hired and given support and program tutoring in Spanish. Students are counseled in Spanish and have materials translated when needed. Practice for CDL testing is also conducted in Spanish.

How Was the Practice Tested

ATC Phoenix maintains records of the student attrition by race and sex. The retention rate of Hispanics whose first language is Spanish has improved. ATC Phoenix currently employs bilingual trainers and operator instructors. The agency also has bilingual CDL testers. The agency has been able to train and retain more Hispanic operators than in previous years with the addition of the bilingual trainer working with bilingual operator instructors.

Revisions to Original Practice

The target for next year is to develop a plan for translating all written student operator training materials into Spanish and producing a Bilingual Student Operator Training Manual.

Resources Required to Support Practice

ATC Phoenix hired one full-time bilingual trainer. Financial resources required are those needed for this staff person.

What Makes It Successful

ATC Phoenix's commitment that "No Student Operator shall fail due to a language barrier."

How Success Is Measured

- Retention rates have increased. Recruitment of Spanish-speaking individuals has increased.
- As a result of hiring a bilingual Safety Technician and bilingual Administrative Assistant in Safety, communications between Safety and individuals whose first language is Spanish has improved.
- Accident rates have decreased.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

When a vacancy presented an opportunity to do so, management targeted a recruitment for bilingual staff. With the

diverse staff of eastern Europeans, Hispanics, African-Americans, Native Americans, and Asians, ATC Phoenix has also provided diversity training for all trainers, operator instructors, and road supervisors.

Lessons Learned

Diversity management is an important issue in Arizona. The agency has been able to move toward its goal of accommodating a very diverse workplace by the addition of bilingual staff.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Bus Operator Mentor Program

Areas of Focus: **Training and Retention**

Contact Person: Paul Earnshaw, Operations Training Coordinator
Agency: Citifare - Regional Transportation Commission
Address: P.O. Box 30002
2050 Villanova Drive
Reno, NV 80520
Phone: (775) 348-0400
Fax: (775) 348-0449
E-mail: pearnshaw@rtcwashoe.com

Implementers

Operations department

Objectives

To implement a cost-effective strategy for increasing the retention rate of new bus operators.

To develop a team of mentors whose role is to guide, tutor, coach, and advise new bus operators during the beginning weeks of their careers at Citifare in order to make the adjustment to the Citifare way of doing things as easy as possible.

Background

In the past, Citifare has had to recruit for and train new bus operators six to eight times each year. A large number of new operators left the organization within the first year of employment. The agency has determined that the cost of recruitment and training of each trainee is approximately $9,000. The agency needed to find a way to improve its return on investments in this group of employees.

Steps in Implementing Practice

- Mentors are selected from among veteran operators who have good records and show potential- for teaching others what they know.
- Each mentor completes a 16-hour mentoring training seminar.
- Operations training coordinator assigns each new coach operator a mentor, a veteran operator who conducts the revenue training with the new operator and afterwards maintains contact related to personal- or work-related issues affecting performance.
- At the *Encounters-of-the-Meal-Kind* meeting, a meal paid for by Citifare, the operator and mentor sign a contract on what their relationship will be in the future.
- Mentor and trainee follow through with the contractual agreement, meeting regularly to discuss any issues or concerns that the trainee may have.
- On average, each mentor assignment lasts between 60 to 90 days; however, the length of time may vary based on individual needs.
- Mentor completes observations and evaluations and submits material to training coordinator.
- Mentor also works as part of a team to solve specific operations-related problems and recommend changes where necessary.

How Was the Practice Tested

The mentor program was initiated in March of 2000 with first group of mentors and new operators.

Resources Required to Support Practice

Veteran bus operators assigned as mentors for new operators. Mentors receive a seven percent pay increase during the assignment period. The additional cost of the program is for the meal at the *Encounters-of-a-Meal-Kind* meeting.

What Makes It Successful

- Mentors are veteran bus operators trained in the mentoring role by the operations department training coordinator
- 16-hour training process prepares mentors for their role.
- Mentors are recognized as special by the “Citifare Mentor” label pin they wear
- A formal contracting and evaluation process is the foundation of the program
- Confidentiality maintained between the operator and mentor creates a bond of caring and concern between the mentor and operator.

How Success Is Measured

Since the initiation of the mentoring program, the new bus operator retention rate has improved to the point that new operator recruitment and training, previously required six to eight times a year, now is being conducted in 5-month intervals.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

The director of operations presented the mentor program to Citifare staff as one approach for decreasing the attrition rate of new operators. The program was developed and is administered by the operations training coordinator.

Lessons Learned

A structured mentor program is a cost-effective way of providing support to new bus operators while also recognizing the value of veteran operators. The skills and confidence gained by mentors and new operators strengthens the organization's ability to anticipate and solve agency problems in the future.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Citifare University

Areas of Focus: **Training and Retention**

Contact Person: Paul Earnshaw, Operations Training Coordinator
Agency: Citifare - Regional Transportation Commission
Address: P.O. Box 30002
2050 Villanova Drive
Reno, NV 80520
Phone: (775) 348-0400
Fax: (775) 348-0449
E-mail: pearnshaw@rtcwashoe.com

Implementers

Operations department

Objective

To improve the skill and confidence levels of employees responsible for carrying out operations department functions of the agency.

Background

The Citifare operations department management identified two things that cause stress among employees at Citifare: not knowing what job expectations are and not knowing what is important in their jobs. To relieve this stress, the management staff decided that it needed to provide training that would help employees feel more confident in both of these areas. Labor contract restrictions required that employees be brought in for training during their bid hours of work. In order to work within these restrictions, Citifare designed Citifare University (CU) as an advanced professional development program for operations department employees, using an approach developed by the local telephone company in which employees are brought in for concentrated training for a one-week period.

Steps in Implementing Practice

Citifare University is a four-day, 36-hour training program in which operations department employees volunteer to attend Tuesday through Friday training sessions. Day and evening classes are scheduled as needed. Employees are paid their bid hours even if the hours are greater than the hours spent in class. If the bid hours are less than 36 hours, the employee is paid for 36 hours. This and the three-day weekend off the week they attend the classes serve as incentives to volunteer for the training.

After supervisors met and determined training content and structure, management and supervisory staff were trained first and then taught how to facilitate various aspects of the program.

Program elements include

- Harassment awareness training taught by the HR Administrator
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid training taught by one of six employees certified to teach this content
- Employment law segment, which includes a videotape with interactive training exercises prepared for Citifare by an employment law firm
- Diversity training, a video-based training program with interactive segments.
- Driver fatigue which focuses on causes and effects of bus operator fatigue
- Advanced defensive driving skills class that builds on training conducted in the new operator training classes
- Policies and procedures segment that uses a Jeopardy game format to teach the agency's policies.
- Workplace violence prevention that was prepared by surveying other employers to see what they were doing in this area. CU training integrates materials used by permission from other agencies with internally developed materials.
- Maintenance 101, developed by maintenance training supervisor and taught by mechanics. This segment offers bus troubleshooting tips as well as opportunities for operators to ask questions about the operations of buses.

- Operation Lifesaver, a segment that emphasizes crash avoidance at highway rail-grade crossings.
- Americans with Disabilities Act training that includes a visit to an assisted living facility in which employees at the facility conduct sensitivity training in which trainees are placed in simulated living-with-disabilities situations. In addition to sensitivity training, each participant is taught how to operate the van equipped to pick up employees with disabilities.

How the Practice Was Tested

CU was initiated in March 2000 with all employees in the operations department being given the opportunity to voluntarily participate.

Revisions to Original Practice

The training agenda will be revised for CU 2002. Some aspects of the program will remain intact and other aspects will be fresh, new content to maintain a high level of interest as the agency further develops the knowledge and skills of the staff.

Resources Required to Support Practice

Instructors from within and outside of the agency provide the training. Funding is provided as part of the operations department training budget. Training occurs in RTC/Citifare facilities.

What Makes It Successful

The program is voluntary with built-in scheduling and pay-structure incentives. Employees feel listened to, respected, and empowered as a result of completing the program. Employees value the graduation ceremony, complete with engraved diploma and graduation lapel pin. Each graduate's certificate is posted on the operations department bulletin board.

How Success Is Measured

The implementers anticipated that 60 percent of eligible employees would participate; 90 percent of employees volunteered. The agency has lowered preventable accidents by one-third since the program was implemented in March 2000. Passenger complaints lowered from 10 per 10,000 rides to 1.6 per 10,000 rides. Employee retention has also improved.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

The director of operations initiated the concept of CU. After outlining training goals she wanted achieved by 2001, she recommended CU as the vehicle for accomplishing these goals.

Lessons Learned

When treated well, employees willingly participate in their own development and that of the transit agency. A program such as CU needs to have as many built-in incentives as feasible that will motivate employees to voluntarily participate. Management's willingness to work around employees' schedules rather than having them work around the typical training staff schedule pays off in higher levels of participation. The rule of confidentiality about what is discussed in class is an important program element as long as the information does not involve criminal activity or agency rule violations. Comments made by program participants can serve as a needs assessment for future training priorities.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Integrated Approach to Recruiting, Training, and Retaining Information Technology (IT) Professionals

Areas of Focus:	**Recruitment, Training, and Retention**
Contact Person(s):	Celia Ussak, Personnel Director (212) 340-2132 (212) 340-3001(Fax) ussak@MNR.org Shirley Joshua Asst. HR Director/Compensation/ Employee Development Training & Retention Strategies (212) 340-2148 Chip Conlin Senior Employment Representative Recruitment (212) 340-4973
Agency:	Metro-North Railroad
Address:	347 Madison Avenue, 4th Floor New York, NY 10017
Phone:	Shown above
E-mail:	www.mta.nyc.ny.us

Implementers

Multi-disciplinary Team

Objective

To retain IT professionals

Background

In 1996, Metro-North Railroad's most experienced IT professionals began leaving to work for the private sector, which was offering higher wages. Because Metro-North Railroad could not compete with the compensation packages being offered by private organizations, they decided that retention of top-notch employees requires an environment that makes the employee want to stay. Retention of qualified workers became a "quality of life" issue.

Steps in Implementing Practice

After conducting an IT needs assessment, Metro-North Railroad decided that

- "You can't have good retention strategies without good recruitment and training strategies."
- "Recruitment and retention must be a seamless process."
- Training and development are critical to effective recruitment and retention strategies.

Taking a proactive approach, Metro-North Railroad conducted focus groups with IT professionals, including the clerical staff. They asked detailed questions about job responsibilities, difficulties faced, competencies needed to do the job, and interactions with other workers and departments. The employees were provided with feedback on their recommendations and progress reports throughout the assessment process.

Based on the assessment results, a generic job description was developed that included competencies and skills requirements. The available positions were designed to be broader with more variety rather than a single task. A "job progression" timeline was created to move employees from one level to another in a shorter period of time, e.g., the two-year requirement for promotion was reduced to six months to a year for promotion. For example, entry-level employees are hired as programmers. Programmers progress to senior programmers. Senior programmers progress to senior systems analysts. Senior systems analysts progress to managers. Senior systems analysts who do not desire a manager position receive additional training and become the "technical gurus" for others. Each of the positions serves as a mentor or coach to the other positions, creating a "cohort" support network. The supervisor also serves as mentor and coach.

An evaluation of Metro-North Railroad's compensation package revealed a close working relationship between recruitment and compensation, which resulted in development of new job descriptions and salary guidelines, and "flexibility" in managing the compensation package. The programming staff's salaries were increased, and new hire salaries are modified (slightly) to meet the applicant's qualifications.

To enhance the work environment, Metro-North Railroad offers flextime, dress-down day, and *very* limited telecommuting, i.e., work three days at the office and two days at home. The employees are encouraged to assume additional responsibilities, which has resulted in a work environment that the employees enjoy and that is productive. All team members are provided with "lots of training and development" to allow them to keep pace with rapidly changing technology.

Recruitment/Retention

In 1996, Metro-North Railroad was still operating in the mainframe environment and had not moved toward the PC environment. To locate qualified workers for their technology, they look to local technical schools that offered COBOL and mainframe applications. Technical schools provide students who are beginning second careers, have five to ten years of management experience, and knowledge from other fields. Metro-North Railroad believes that technical schools are an excellent source for locating IT employees with a "shorter learning curve," who are less likely to change jobs. Metro-North Railroad also utilizes colleges and universities to locate qualified workers. This labor pool consists of recent graduates with no prior work experience. However, they are computer-literate with knowledge of the latest technology and anxious to learn new skills. All entry-level employees receive training.

Utilizing colleges, universities, and technical schools has resulted in reduced recruitment and hiring costs for Metro-North Railroad. Applicants for IT positions are located by "word-of-mouth," which has eliminated the need for search firms. Metro-North Railroad's use of print ads has been reduced because of commercial online services, which offer lower rates and high traffic. Costs for consultants have also decreased. In addition, many qualified applicants are the results of voluntary (unpaid) employee referrals.

Training

Metro-North Railroad's IT staff consists of 80 professionals. Competency-based training is available for every IT position. The employees set goals that are evaluated by managers every six months. The "job progression" timeline allows managers to identify problems almost immediately, and the appropriate training or mentoring is provided. During the progress review, managers are able to identify "stars," who are rewarded with additional training. The managers also evaluate the employee's training needs to determine the

employee's potential for additional responsibilities and the desire to learn.

The IT department is equipped with a training room and two computers. When technology-training needs are identified, the IT staff develops the curriculum and delivers the training. For example, when the staff needed training on email, the IT professional responsible for the email system developed a training curriculum and delivered training to the entire organization. The computers are also available to employees needing access to computer equipment. To date, the IT department has spent $1 million dollars on training.

Resources Required to Support Practice

From the beginning, Metro-North Railroad's recruitment/retention and training strategies have been an organizational effort. The departments work "shoulder-to-shoulder" on every aspect of the program. Interdepartmental cooperation is a key factor in the success of the recruitment/retention and training strategies.

How Success Is Measured

Metro-North Railroad considers its recruitment/retention and training strategies effective and successful because, to quote the agency, "nobody's leaving." The results are a lower turnover rate, five percent attrition, and increased productivity. In the last year only one person has left the organization. Metro-North Railroad reports that they have saved millions of dollars in consultant fees because technology needs are addressed in-house.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

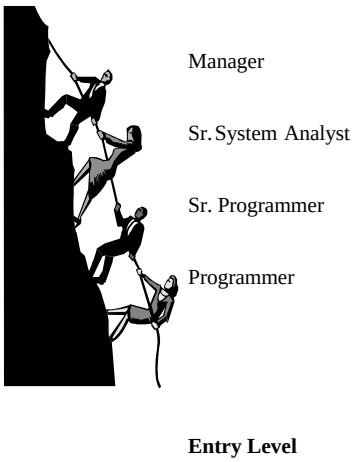
Metro-North Railroad is committed to finding out what its employees need and finding ways to satisfy those needs. The recruitment/retention and training strategies are constantly evaluated and revised. Focus groups are used regularly to seek out and provide feedback to others, as well as to evaluate existing processes and to make changes. The strategies are considered so effective that the IT recruitment/retention and training model will be used as a template for hiring engineers.

Lessons Learned

Key lessons learned include

- Always partner with client department.
- Maintain constant communication with the employees and other departments. Communicate the organization's needs to the employee.
- Do not make up needs, listen to what the needs are. Ask the employees what they need. This allows for employee buy-in.
- Employees really want their minds to grow.
- Don't be afraid to take a risk.

IT Job Progression Timeline



PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Interdisciplinary Approach to Recruiting and Retaining Employees

Areas of Focus: **Recruitment and Retention**

Contact Person: Monica Colondres
Agency: San Mateo County Transit District (SAMTRANS)
Address: 1250 San Carlos Avenue
San Carlos, CA 94070
Phone: (650) 508-6200
Fax: (650) 508-6281
E-mail: colondresm@samtrans.org

Implementers

Inter-disciplinary team led by HR Director

Objective

To make SAMTRANS an employer-of-choice for job candidates seeking employment in positions for which there was high competition in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Background

SAMTRANS, located in the second richest county in California, went through a period of about nine months when employment in Silicon Valley was soaring. At the time, in 1999, unemployment in San Mateo County was 1.2 percent. SAMTRANS needed to hire additional staff for current service and for the expansion of service. The expansion, with more bus service, required new bus operators. In addition, planners and engineers were needed to complete over $300,000,000 in construction projects on the heavy commuter Caltrain rail line over a five-year period.

Given this situation, the organization realized that it needed to be creative in addressing its staffing needs. SAMTRANS needed to design and implement a strategy to attract and retain the staff needed as the projects progressed.

Steps in Implementing Practice

The biggest problem was the hiring and retaining of bus operators. To address the challenge, the agency convened a multi-disciplinary group—HR staff, operations trainers, superintendents, managers and front-line supervisors, Scheduling, and Marketing— to look at the problem. The group of staff brainstormed the question: What are the biggest problems we have in our organization related to recruiting and retaining operators?

The first thing the group did was to reaffirm its employment standards that applicants must have very good driving and employment records, which could be verified. Due to these standards and the fall-out rate for drug and alcohol testing, even with 50 applicants, perhaps only three or four would meet job requirements.

The group determined that the biggest barrier to employment was the practice of hiring of part-time operators only. Even though the agency pays 100 percent of benefits of part-time operators who remain employed for three years, it was not enough to retain them.

A labor contract provision stipulated that SAMTRANS must hire part-time operators as full-time operators before hiring from outside of the agency. To address the issue, the group decided to rearrange the run structure, by reducing 40 part-time runs to 30 full-time runs, and allowing part-time operators to move to full-time status by taking one of the new full-time runs. Everyone who wanted to go to full-time got an opportunity to do so, and the agency was then free to recruit full-time operators from the outside.

With this solution in place, the group started looking at other problems. The agency already paid wages comparable to other transit agencies in the area. The training wage of $10 per hour for the six weeks of training was average for the area. To give SAMTRANS a competitive advantage, the agency decided to increase the training wage to $13 per hour. As a result, for a minimal investment, the agency received many more applicants than with previous advertisements for operators.

To address the issue of fall-out of applicants, the multidisciplinary team decided to capitalize on the fact that, historically, the best applicants came from SAMTRANS employee referrals. This awareness was the basis for starting a formalized Employee Referral Program in which employees receive $500 for each successful bus operator referral. Once the new employee completed the 90-day probation period, the referring employee receives $250; after one year of employment, the employee source receives a second $250. To facilitate the referral process, with each recruitment HR sends email notices to employees asking for referrals, rather than leaving it to chance that employees will see a posted job announcement. Another employment incentive initiated by the group is the signing bonus of $250 for new operators.

In 2000, SAMTRANS took the lead to partner with 34 other public employers in San Mateo County to conduct a public employers' job fair at the county fairgrounds. A firm that specializes in conducting job fairs coordinated the fair. For a fee of $500 each, employers received radio advertisements promoting the event, notices in free weekly newspapers and unemployment offices, and dedicated recruitment space at the event. The job fair exceeded all expectations with 2,000 people in attendance, many standing in long lines waiting to get into the event. The agency developed bags with SAMTRANS on them for attendees to carry all of their give-a-ways, which served as another opportunity to keep SAMTRANS on the participants' minds after the job fair. The bags also served as a method for tracking the number of participants.

The fair was held in two sessions: 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM and 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM. Due to the unexpected heavy attendance, several employers had to return to their offices for additional applications and information about their agencies. SAMTRANS can link approximately 20 employees to the job fair attendance. One of the positions filled at the job fair was an IT employee, an unexpected outcome of the event.

In 2001, SAMTRANS awarded a contract to a firm to "brand" SAMTRANS as a great employer—to make applicants feel that they wanted to come to work at the agency. Previous marketing efforts focused on the services provided by the agency, not on it being an employer of choice. With advertisements at local malls and inside of buses and trains stating "We need bus operators, mechanics, and engineers," the agency takes advantage of opportunities to catch people's attention where they naturally congregate.

With the recent downturn in the economy in the area, SAMTRANS is telling its story of being a stable employer with funding from a tax base, with a reasonable and in some cases, flexible work day. Flexible hours and schedules have proven particularly attractive for office positions such as engineers. Through negotiations with individual supervisors, these same employees can arrange to telecommute through a written agreement of expectations and outcomes. The agency uses a standardized agreement for all telecommuting employ-

ees, which is reviewed and renewed annually. By tallying the number of telecommuting hours each month, the agency gets another benefit of being able to champion itself as an environmentally friendly employer, contributing to better air quality in the area.

Another approach that HR uses to ensure that it is in harmony with its internal customers is that each new HR employee is required to attend the first two weeks of bus operator training. In these two weeks, the new HR staff member obtains first-hand knowledge of the language, the forms, and the requirements for the bus operator position.

How the Practice Was Tested

The team was empowered to brainstorm and to make recommendations that could be implemented in a timely manner.

Resources Required to Support the Practice

Time and energy of the employees involved in each of these efforts were critical resources.

In the case of the job fair, each participating agency paid a $500 fee and provided staff and materials for the day of the event.

What Makes It Successful

The interdisciplinary team had a specific charge: to address issues of recruitment of employees needed for current level of service as well as system expansion. The practice of using an interdisciplinary team to address employment issues brought forth energy from throughout the organization to solve a core agency problem.

With the job fair, in particular, having an event that featured public agencies as a specialized group of employers and marketing them as viable options for job seekers, using a variety of economical media, was an important success element. Using a professional job fair firm also contributed to the success.

How Success Is Measured

The success of each of the initiatives that came out of the team effort attests to the quality of their effort.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

Managers from different departments participated in the brainstorming as well as the design of the recruitment and retention efforts.

Lessons Learned

The total organizational focus on acquiring and maintaining a qualified workforce has energized the organization to craft a creative, cost-effective strategy.

PROMISING PRACTICES

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Bilingual Training Collaboration with Community Colleges

Area of Focus: **Recruitment**

Contact Person: Ben Gomez
Agency: Dallas Area Rapid Transit
Address: 1401 Pacific Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75266
Phone: (214) 749-2571
Fax: (214) 749-3653
E-mail: bgomez@dart.org

Implementer

Human Resources (HR) Department

Objectives

To increase the number of bus operators with Spanish-speaking skills

Background

The Dallas metropolitan area has a fast-growing population of Spanish-speaking residents. One of the biggest problems Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) has is the inability to attract sufficient numbers of bilingual bus operators. With approximately 15 percent of bus operators possessing Spanish-speaking skills and with the population in the service area 25 percent Spanish-speaking, DART is presented with a quality-of-service challenge.

Steps in Implementing Practice

Partnering with the Greater Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, DART has established a relationship with the Dallas Community College System, which has extensive educational resources for people who need assistance with learning English as a second language (ESL). The community colleges are interested in attracting new students into their ESL classes, particularly those that may have job opportunities upon com-

pletion of classes. Through a relationship established through Chamber contacts, DART provides the colleges with the seven-week new bus operator curriculum to use as part of their training materials. Students interested in becoming operators learn the terminology of bus operations as they are strengthening their English-speaking skills. As they learn the language of transit, these students also learn about job opportunities with DART, a stable employer.

How the Practice Was Tested

Starting in November 2000, DART provided community colleges in the area with bus operator curriculum materials to use in their ESL training program. Five graduates completing the program in May 2001 became bus operators at DART.

Resources Required to Support This Practice

The HR staff has established relationships with college ESL programs.

What Makes It Successful

This effort is of mutual benefit to DART and the community colleges; DART as an employer with new operator training classes starting every 4 to 6 weeks and the colleges as workforce development resources. DART staff goes into classes to make presentations about opportunities at the agency and to do informal mentoring as needed.

How Success Is Measured

While the relationship is in its early stages of implementation, with five new operators from one graduating class, indications are that this is a viable resource for increasing the numbers of Spanish-speaking bus operators. One measure of success of the relationship is that DART's HR staff is invited frequently to make presentations during ESL classes.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

This initiative is one of many that DART has sponsored to ensure that it is responsive to the diverse population in its service area.

Lessons Learned

While this effort is in its early stages, DART realizes that it must continue to build on the success reaped from its initial efforts to achieve maximum benefit from this collaborative effort. With many employers competing for bilingual employees, DART has to maintain a presence at the community colleges to ensure long-term success of this initiative.

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Career Progression Program

Area of Focus: **Retention of Professional/ Technical Employees**

Contact Person: Marnie Slakey, Vice President, Human Resources
Agency: Pierce Transit
Address: 3701 96th Street SW
Tacoma, WA 98499
Phone: (253) 581-8095
Fax: (253) 984-8224
E-mail: mslakey@piercetransit.org

Implementers

Human Resources (HR) Department

Objective

To establish a career progression system as a mechanism for retaining the knowledge and expertise employees acquire at the agency.

Background

Typically applicants were hired into a department at Pierce Transit (PT) at whatever skill level is needed for the vacant position. The tight labor market made it difficult to attract a sufficient number of qualified applicants to fill an opening. This situation was further complicated by the practice of filling a position only at the level advertised. To address this issue, in late 2000 the HR staff proposed and received Board of Directors' approval for a *Career Progression Program.* The program allows a department to hire at the entry-level and through assignment of increasingly complex responsibilities, enable the employee to develop skills necessary to qualify for movement to the next higher level without the requirement of a job vacancy within the department.

Career progression programs usually work best for professional/technical disciplines where proficiency and expertise can be increased through job training, additional education, and professional credentials and/or years of experience. Within PT, positions well suited for career progression include transportation planners and information systems analysts. Through a career progression mechanism, the agency benefits

from the investment made in developing/training professional employees through promotional opportunities, greater professional challenge, and consequently, longer tenure.

Steps in Implementing Practice

An employee is recommended for advancement by the department vice president. This is normally done through the annual budget process or on the employee's anniversary date. HR reviews the recommendation for agency-wide consistency and adherence to the written promotion criteria. The criteria, established at the time the program was initiated, list specific requirements for advancing through the career paths available in a job grouping. For instance, there are criteria for moving from Planner to Planner II, from Planner II to Senior Planner, and from Senior Planner to Principal Planner. Likewise, the program has criteria for moving from Computer Services Coordinator to Systems Analyst and from Systems Analyst to Senior Systems Analyst. The division manager, with concurrence of the vice president, determines the appropriate proportion of employees needed in each category in order to avoid budgeting all positions at the same level.

A progression recommendation is not a means for automatic promotion or a means to give an average performer more money. Career progression is to be used as a career development tool to provide a department with a program to encourage skilled employees in identified areas to advance in their careers. As such, the program is a valuable tool to appropriately compensate employees who successfully complete more complex and technically sophisticated projects.

How Practice Was Tested

One test was whether the program would create expectations of automatic promotion. So far, managers have been very selective in identifying employees who are approaching advancement requirements.

Resources Required to Support This Practice

Continual assessment by division managers of the staffing needs of the unit and the capabilities and development needs of staff within the unit is the critical resource.

How Success Is Measured

While no employees have been advanced at this point, several planners are in line to meet the criteria for advancement in early 2002.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

Management recognized the need to retain talented employees in difficult-to-retain positions and took a policy position to retain as many as possible through the *Career Progression Program.*

PROGRAM/PRACTICE TITLE

Customized Community Outreach

Area of Focus: **Recruitment**

Contact Person:	Michal Settles, Human Resources Department Manager
Agency:	San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) District
Address:	1330 Broadway, Suite 500 Oakland, CA 94604
Phone:	(510) 464-6239
Fax:	(510) 464-7667
E-mail:	msettles@bart.gov

Implementers

Human Resources (HR) staff in collaboration with other BART departments.

Objectives

To reach out to individuals who may be excellent employee prospects but have not identified BART as a possible employer

To begin to create an inviting employer-of-choice reputation within each community that BART serves

Background

BART has a positive reputation as a transportation service provider in its service area. However, the agency's reputation as an employer is less well defined—in some instances it is perceived as being an elusive entity. The agency has long been aware that many potential employees are left wondering how to become part of the BART team. This perception is a detriment to the agency's efforts to tap into the diverse resources available in its service area. With the upcoming expansion of the San Francisco Airport, BART will have to fill 500 positions. No longer can the agency allow itself to be seen as a less-than-approachable employer.

Steps in Implementing Practice

Historically, BART has participated in job fairs conducted by other groups and conducted job fairs at BART facilities. The HR staff decided that, rather than printing more newspaper ads and having the public come to fairs, it was time for BART to go the community.

Working with other BART departments, HR embarked on a six-month planning process to develop an outreach model that would begin to brand the agency as one at which many people want to work. In October and November 2001, BART conducted community outreach in every community that BART Board of Directors members represent, as well as in San Mateo County, an area where BART provides services but has no board representation. To encourage board support and attendance, the staff provided the board representative for the community with a schedule of activities.

The marketing department collaborated with HR to structure internal and external marketing activities for this effort. Based on utilization data on the positions where there is under-utilization as relates to race and gender, marketing targeted certain radio stations for advertising; 200 radio spots played announcing the outreach.

One area of potential community sensitivity addressed by HR staff was that while the BART police force participated as uniformed officers at recruitment tables, officers assigned to assist with crowd control of the thousands of participants dressed in plain-clothes attire. On its first venture into communities, the staff did not want to risk creating an image of appearing uncomfortable, as may be symbolized by the presence of a contingent of uniformed officers among throngs of attendees.

Another area of sensitivity related to the need to have bilingual or multilingual employees available at each outreach site. The HR staff includes a number of individuals who speak English as a second language, who were able to be responsive to attendees whose primary language was not English.

Twelve HR staff members staffed the nine job fairs in a four-county area that netted more than 7,500 attendees. In addition, each BART department had representatives at each site. Train operators, police officers, and other uniformed employees were onsite so attendees could actually speak with individuals doing jobs that were or were expected to become available. More than 3,900 individuals applied for positions at the job fairs.

During the outreach, BART staff conducted a series of workshops, including *Interviewing Techniques*, *The BART Selection Process* (including the types of tests that are administered) and *How the Union Process Works.*

How the Practice Was Tested

The October to November 2001 job fairs were the first attempt to conduct this level of customized community outreach.

Resources Required to Support This Practice

While initiated by the HR staff, planning for the community outreach involved all other BART departments. The support of individual board members was key to making this effort a success. Marketing expenditures included costs for print and electronic media. Facilities and locations for the outreach efforts were diverse, ranging from community colleges, local libraries, and senior citizen centers, to a major auditorium. Where possible, locations selected for outreach efforts were near BART stations to increase the ease of getting to and from the outreach site.

How Success Is Measured

- Extensive number (548-97 percent) of positive written comments from attendees; other comments related to suggestions
- Video documentation of process and attendance
- Between October 1 to December 10, 2001 more than 5,800 online applications were received.

Management Commitment to Success of Practice

Each department accepted HR's invitation to participate in this outreach effort.

SECTION 2: LABOR-MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Every business enterprise's success, whether private, public or nonprofit, depends upon customer demand for its product and the ability to deliver the product to the customer. This principle applies whether the product is public transportation service or the manufacturing of motorcycles. In order to generate a quality product and satisfy the client, an employer needs a qualified workforce. The internal organizational value of retaining employees directly affects the quality of the product. The external value of retaining qualified employees enhances an employer's ability to recruit high-quality candidates.

Successfully balancing the recruitment and the retention of qualified employees reinforces the reliability of a product. The employment environment produces the corporate "brand" that affects the attitudes of incumbents and the interest of job candidates. The brand provides a sense of what it must be like to be involved with an employer. Retention success exists when employees feel responsible and they (1) "own" their work environment and (2) feel good about themselves in the workplace. These factors contribute to the degree of support the employer receives and to the success of the corporate vision, mission, and goals.

Some employers mistake the significance of these factors; it is about productivity and cost. It is not about a "touchy-feely" environment. Failure to retain employees disrupts delivery of service and increases the expense of providing service. Poor quality of service or a poor product reduces customer satisfaction and directly affects cost and the public persona of the corporation. The public persona also directly influences the ability to recruit employees. The quality of applicant interest to replace the attrition in the workforce suffers as a result. The spiraling impact translated in dollars equates to increased cost and reduced returns.

At one time, United Parcel Service (UPS) possessed a public persona of competence, reliability, and efficiency. The public perceived the company as the brown shirts that delivered our packages and contributed to the smooth operations of businesses. The integrated individual and corporate identities promoted confidence in them and increased UPS business.

Until the 1997 strike, many people were not aware that UPS was unionized. Subsequent to the strike, the public persona distinguished the employer, the employees, and the union. Public confidence in the company diminished. Some clients, who at one time were exclusive UPS customers, diversified their shipping sources to protect themselves in the event of future disruptions. Applicants who once stood in line to work for the company now think twice about the UPS employment environment. The organization's failure to maintain a quality environment placed it in the position of doubling its efforts and cost to restore the prior environment in order to recapture profits.

Harley Davidson Motorcycles is riding the success of recognizing the importance of employee and union involvement. At one point, the company dropped from an 80 percent market share to 23 percent. It was forced to request government assistance and tariff protection. Due to its high cost structure and poor quality, the company could not contend with Japanese competitors. Today it reigns as the top-quality manufacturer and sales agent of not only motorcycles, but as a marketer of Harley Davidson products and clothing.

The Harley Davidson turnaround and reliance on employee involvement and labor-management relations is fully documented. *More than a Motorcycle* is a book authored by the principals involved in the turnaround, Lee Ozley, a consultant, and Rich Teerlink, the Harley Davidson Chief Financial Officer. A few points were recognized early in the company's improvement effort:

- The people of Harley Davidson contributed to the company's best and most distinctive competitive advantage
- Harley Davidson's management needed to persuade the company's employees to take ownership of the company, that is, to be individually responsible and accountable for the success of the company
- The company needed to eliminate the command-and-control style of management which contributed to lack of acceptance of personal responsibility, to a focus on narrow tasks and duties, to limited input into problem-solving and decision-making, to a "not my job" syndrome, and to an attitude of compliance rather than commitment.
- Employees needed to appreciate that the current corporate model was not in their own best interest over the long term. They needed to be prepared that the involvement process is a long-term commitment.

The results are evident. The branding and public persona of Harley Davidson spans generations from infant to aged. There is nothing "touchy-feely" about employees pulling the organization out of disaster and thrusting it into a profitable position envied by corporations on seven continents. The transit industry faces the same challenges and possesses the same opportunities as manufacturing and services industries.

The case studies that follow provide a glimpse into the variety of ways the transit agencies featured have worked with employees to maximize the benefit of labor-management partnerships.

TRANSIT LABOR-MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDIES

Annapolis Department of Transportation (ADT)—Annapolis, Maryland

Local #3406, Maryland Public Employees Council 67, American Federation of State County & Municipal Employees, AFL–CIO represents ADT employees. The ADT director

states that the flexibility adopted by the department in recruitment, retention, and training strategies could not have been accomplished without the full participation, knowledge, and cooperation of the union. The department enjoys a climate of "few or no grievances or issues." The positive relationship between labor and management is facilitated by the Labor Management Committee (LMC), which has an informal structure and meets on an as-needed basis. Due to ADT's size and the cooperative working relationship, issues are usually handled in informal meetings between the director, the employee, and the shop steward. The director states, "This is possible because both parties have the best interest of the employee at heart." The union president meets once a year with the mayor of the City of Annapolis to discuss contract issues. Changes and decisions are made at this level and communicated to ADT.

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA)—Pittsfield, Massachusetts

BRTA credits an active LMC with being the most effective retention tool for communication and feedback with employees. The LMC was formed in 1999 to address employee and management issues and to provide a forum for discussion and formal feedback to employees. The general manager describes the committee "as an extension of our open-door philosophy." The LMC, which has a formal structure, meets once monthly with key members of management and labor in attendance. Wages for union employees participating in LMC meetings are paid on an alternating basis by labor and management. Issues raised by the members of the committee include training, operations, maintenance, work rules, and schedule and route changes.

The LMC posts meeting minutes in the work area, giving employees a direct and immediate avenue for receiving responses to issues. The general manager states that one advantage of the LMC is that it provides a better two-way communication process than the typical memo route and gives "management an opportunity to discuss policies and to elaborate detail. All involved develop a better picture and the issue is owned by both labor and management. We deal with all kinds of operations and employees issues in the labor-management committee. It has a direct impact on retention by fostering input from and communication to employees." The committee is successful because both labor and management jointly own issues and solutions. One of the challenges for management is to help LMC members distinguish between labor-management and administrative policy issues.

ATC Phoenix—Phoenix, Arizona

Management and union officials meet in regularly scheduled meetings to review contractual and non-contractual issues. These open and frank meetings focus on how ATC Phoenix and the union can continue to build a strong and solid presence in the service area. The strategic partnering that results from improved management practices continues to be a primary by-product of these monthly and quarterly meetings. Oftentimes, national union leaders attend the meetings, which adds an even greater emphasis on labor-management partnership.

Sunline Transit Agency—Thousands Palms, California

SunLine has a history of partnering with the union to establish new job classifications and job descriptions when there is a need to respond to service development. When a curriculum was required to train employees to use an alternative fuel, the agency partnered with the College of the Desert, the Southern California Gas Company, and the ATU. The director of HR stated that ". . . the partnering concept initiated with the strategic plan continues to produce positive results for the agency." The organization's ability to recruit and retain employees while maintaining a turnover rate of less than 3 percent for the entire agency supports this statement.

Regional Transportation Commission (RTC/Citifare)—Reno, Nevada

RTC/Citifare has a limited labor-management partnership between management and Teamsters Local Union 533, which represents bus operators. Quarterly, union stewards and management meet to discuss issues that may be of concern. This regularly scheduled meeting prevents small issues from growing into larger ones. Through the relationship built during the meet-and-discuss process, the agency has successfully initiated programs that offer development opportunities to union members, such as the mentor program, without opposition from the union. During the last collective bargaining negotiations, the union agreed to allow operators to be cross-trained to the customer service and dispatcher roles.

Duluth Transit Authority (DTA)—Duluth, Minnesota

As a result of the high level of interaction that occurs between represented employees and management staff in other committees, the formal monthly two-hour meetings of the Labor Management Team's (LMT) agendas and interactions are fairly low key. The committee, established in 1996 by a side agreement to the collective bargaining agreement, has as its mission "To create a positive atmosphere by fostering a working environment of trust and honesty, utilizing the strengths of both labor and management with a healthy respect for the teamwork needed to reach common goals, through open communication, problem solving and information sharing." The group retained a local labor-management association to help establish ground rules and

bylaws. Any represented employee can get an item of interest placed on the agenda by contacting a committee member or completing an Issues and Concerns form. Committee deliberations are advisory to both labor and management. One union steward cited the successes of other committees, such as the Safety Goals 2000 and the Ad Hoc Scheduling Committees, and participation in activities, such as paint-a-thons and ramp building projects, as outgrowths of cooperation fostered within the LMT. In 1999, the team received an award presented by the Lake Superior Area Labor Management Association in recognition of partnership efforts that led to ". . . satisfied customers and an increase in overall ridership."

Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)—Baltimore, Maryland

Three unions represent employees at the MTA. The Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) represents 2,300 operators and mechanics. The Office and Professional Employees International Union (O.P.E.I.U.) represents 170 clerical employees. The American Federation of State County Municipal Employees (A.F.S.C.M.E.), Council 67, Local 1859, represents 150 police officers.

The deputy director, Office of Administrative Services, summarizes the history of labor relations at the MTA as inconsistent for a number of years. For the most part, the relationship depended on the administrations in the union and at the MTA. Cordial relationships would be followed by turbulent and adversarial periods, which proved difficult for the organization, the employees, and the union. In 1995, the new ATU International President entered an agreement with the MTA to develop a collaborative working arrangement. The O.P.E.I.U. and A.F.S.C.M.E. also agreed to participate. The parties entered the Labor and Management Partnership (LAMP Memorandum of Agreement).

The agreement clearly identifies that the purpose of the participants is to "establish and sustain a working relationship between the unions representing employees and MTA management that is consistent with, and supportive of the mission, vision and values of the MTA." The MTA as an organization has well-developed mission, vision, and value statements that employees and the unions recognized and accepted. The participants collaboratively developed and incorporated the parties' "Vision of the Ideal Relationship," in addition to a "Code of Trust" into the agreement.

The parties included a provision allowing committees to deal with any subject, without fear of conflicting with an existing collective bargaining agreement. The LAMP agreement or any action pursuant to the process would not change provisions of existing collective bargaining agreements or compromise any historical position with respect to the labor contracts. However, if the leadership of the union and the MTA choose to enter into new agreements based upon a solution surfaced by the process, then nothing precludes them from reaching such agreements.

The structure of the process includes the MTA management team, the ATU executive board, a representative of the A.F.S.C.M.E. Council 67, and a representative of O.P.E.I.U. Local 2. Both labor and management co-chair LAMP. LAMP consists of six work groups: work environment, ridership and customer service, communication, training, government relations, and economic and business activity.

The participants agreed that the process would be evaluated annually to determine any need for amendment. Labor and management mutually agree not to withdraw without first evaluating the conditions that provoke the intent to withdraw. If the evaluation fails to provide a solution, a third party who will aid the process must be agreed upon in an attempt to assist in a good faith effort to resolve the problem.

The relationship for the first two years focused on the development of process and procedure with some minimal success. The employer was concerned that the meetings were becoming gripe sessions. Regardless of this concern, the union and management were communicating at all levels. They were building relationships and trust. The union was receiving a better appreciation of the big picture because they were better informed. Therefore, after two years of exposure, the unions were more appreciative of the MTA administrator's explanation of the problems the agency faced with its upcoming budget request. Union and management became allies in a significant effort to provide appropriate explanations to justify funding vital to the organization. It proved to be a significant collaborative accomplishment and positioned the parties to collaborate in the effort to recruit and retain employees after the loss of employees associated with the early retirement.

Pierce Transit (PT)—Tacoma, Washington

The LMC at PT is a standing committee composed of the chief executive officer (CEO), ATU Local #758 president and other labor leaders, and representatives of departments in which employees are represented by the union. Typically both the CEO and ATU president participate in committee meetings. Committee members describe their method of functioning as very flexible. At monthly two-hour meetings, any member may place an item on the agenda and the union president can bring any member of the union to the committee meeting to bring an issue before the group at his discretion. Represented employees are paid for the time spent attending the meeting. Meeting minutes reveal the variety of subjects discussed, from safety issues, to drug and alcohol program administration, to grievances and arbitration.

Depending on the complexity of the issue, more than one meeting may be devoted to bringing a matter to conclusion. The committee records and maintains minutes of each meeting, which are distributed then throughout the organization. The group feels that the PT labor-management partnership has been in place for such a long time, it is now a way of

doing business. Outcomes of the labor-management partnership are evident from a review of LMC activities/minutes:

1. Union support of internships that allow union employees to work temporarily in other jobs as a means of preparing employees for future opportunities. The union sees this as a retention strategy that benefits employees and the agency at the same time.
2. Management and the union worked together to ensure smooth drug and alcohol policy development and implementation.
3. The committee is currently discussing a mock sign-up for relief operators to alleviate the uncertainty of assignments and reduce restrictive work scheduling for these part-time employees.
4. Employees filed only four grievances in 1998 and five in 1999 and 2000 each, compared with an average of 10 per year in 1996 and 1997.

Regional Transportation District (RTD)—Denver, Colorado

The RTD general manager initiated discussions with ATU leaders about forming the LMC in 1998 as a means of mutually resolving problems and enhancing working relationships between RTD labor and management. In a three-day off-site workshop in June 1998, the LMC, with the support of a representative of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, established 17 ground rules, a mission statement, and objectives and action plans for the Relationship-by-Objective (RBO) Program. The group established objectives, action steps, commitments, and timetables in five areas: policies and procedures, communications, contract administration, joint training and education, and attitude and practices. The agreement signed by the 22 LMC labor and management representatives states "We, the undersigned, are fully committed to the improvement objectives and actions developed during the workshop. We also recognize that this action plan is not designed to interfere with, conflict with, or substitute for the Collective Bargaining Agreement." (Regional Transportation District/Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1001, Relationship-by-Objective Manual, June 1998.)

The LMC, co-chaired by the RTD general manager and ATU president, uses the June 1998 objectives and action plans as the framework for ongoing committee activities. The group posts meeting dates and agendas in the "Monday Morning Q," the weekly bulletin published by the general manager's office. Minutes of the half-day quarterly meetings are distributed to committee members and posted on bulletin boards throughout RTD facilities.

Accomplishments of the LMC related to the recruitment and retention of employees include

1. The union asking, "How can we help?" and setting up a recruitment booth at a local flea market.
2. Improved relationships that promote timely and responsive decision-making on issues of concern to labor or management and genuine collaborative conflict resolution.
3. Greater willingness by labor and management to work out issues at the lowest possible level. More grievances are now resolved at the information level versus the first-level grievance hearing.
4. Employees in other job classifications can now serve as relief bus operators under special circumstances.
5. Increased flexibility in work rules. For instance, the union agreed to allow new bus operators to "hold down" a piece of work for up to two weeks upon completion of training rather than having to go immediately on the extra-board. This retention strategy allows the new operator to develop confidence before he or she faces the uncertainty of a different route and schedule each day, as commonly occurs on the extra-board.
6. The union's lack of opposition to the implementation of the $0.75 premium for any bus operator performing extra-board assignments.
7. The union's signoff of the RTD workplace violence prevention program.
8. Reduction in pending arbitrations from 77 in 1997 to 20 in 2000.

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)—San Jose, California

The VTA maintains a number of labor-management partnerships that help to maintain a qualified workforce, directly or indirectly. One of these, the Benefits Committee that began meeting monthly in early 2000, is composed of five nonrepresented managers and representatives of three of the collective bargaining units. Service Employees International Union, Local 715, represents employees in clerical positions; Transportation Authority Engineers and Architects (TAEA) represents engineers; and the County Employees Management Association (CEMA) represents first-line and middle managers. The group operates under terms agreed to by side letters to establish and maintain a committee that focuses on making recommendations for uniform improvements in employee benefits reflective of the desires of employees.

Prior to beginning its work, the Benefits Committee conducted surveys of employees to see what they wanted the committee to consider. Operating under rules of consensus decision-making, the group only takes forth those recommendations with which the entire team agrees to their respective members. The group has recommended a number of changes that have been accepted by executive management:

1. Implementation of a medical spending account
2. Revision of the way life insurance is calculated from the past practice of basing the amount of coverage on one's salary. Employees can choose from $10,000 to $120,000. The employee pays the premium.

3. Change to a higher benefit long-term disability plan
4. Initiation of a medical insurance opt-out plan for employees who have other coverage

One of the greatest roadblocks to the committee's effectiveness in representing the interests of their constituents is that the ATU, the union representing the largest number of employees, is not on the committee. The ATU can, however, veto any recommendation made by the committee.

When VTA found itself with a 25 percent vacancy rate in the diesel mechanics position, the ATU and maintenance training staff collaborated in designing a training program to alleviate this situation. Agreed to in a side letter, the program includes 11 modules designed by a team that included the maintenance department training staff and the ATU business agent for maintenance. The business agent remained engaged through the time of the kick-off of the program in that he helped to orient new trainees, communicating ATU's support to the program, letting them know what would be required of them during training, and what they could expect regarding hours and pay. The program's success has led to a decision that the training program will stay in place even when all positions are filled, given the expected expansion of rail and bus systems and an appreciable number of expected retirements among current diesel mechanics.

One of the challenges at VTA is a legacy of adversarial relationships between labor and management carried over from when transit services were under the auspices of county government. Of particular concern for the retention of bus operators and mechanics is the relationship between executive management and the direct managers and supervisors of operators and mechanics, who are represented by the CEMA organization. According to CEMA representatives, the management philosophy instilled in supervisors hired prior to 1995 was that of an autocratic "transit cop - write them up" nature. That philosophy is reportedly still favored by a sizeable number of current supervisors and managers, even with the emphasis on employee empowerment and ownership being in place since 1995. To address differences in beliefs and practices about how to treat employees, CEMA and executive management began monthly meetings in late 1999. For at least 6 months, the focus of the meetings was on trust building and the resolution of lingering grievances. To some extent, communication issues remain. After 1 year, the group is just beginning to address how to develop the partnership needed to foster an environment of employee ownership.

Sun Tran—Tucson, Arizona

The LMC, which meets monthly, is outlined in the labor agreement, and has been in place for 20 years. The committee consists of approximately 20 members, including shop stewards, maintenance and operations representatives, safety stewards, and a representative from each department. Periodically, the union business representative attends the meeting. Management representation includes the general manager, assistant general manager, director of maintenance, human-resources director, and operations director. Management and labor leaders rotate facilitation of the meeting.

The committee was restructured 2 years ago to be more formalized, an action that resulted in increased effectiveness of the group. Each meeting, the committee reviews minutes of the previous meeting, and each member, for a maximum of 5 minutes, may discuss items on the current agenda. A "round table" process allows members an opportunity to raise issues. Typical items of discussion include marketing, operations, facilities, training, and safety issues. The group tracks current and past issues and monitors progress with a procedure called *Labor Management Project Minutes.* The chart lists each concern/issue raised, the date, a summary of the action plan, the person responsible for the issue, and the status of the issue. The project chart is updated monthly and allows all members to stay abreast of committee business. The number of concerns/issues listed on the project chart varies from fewer than 6 to as many as 24 at a time.

Utah Transit Authority (UTA)—Salt Lake City, Utah

Employee involvement, a major focus at UTA, has been given the title of *partnering.* Partnering has taken place in significant ways over the past 3 years. Bargaining teams for UTA and ATU agreed to spend their first day of labor contract negotiations in 1998 negotiating a definition of partnering from a labor-management perspective. The parties agreed:

> "Partnering means managers are willing to share responsibility for employee interests and the union representatives are willing to share responsibility for running the business in an effective, customer focused manner. Managers must take the responsibility for considering in good faith, the interests of the employee when making business decisions, while the union must take responsibility for considering in good faith, the business' interest while advocating for the employee." (*UTA/ATU Contract Newsletter, 1998*)

Much of the focus of labor-management partnering has been on formal programs, especially between the top management and union leadership. Several broad organizational improvements have resulted. Many of these initiatives, which would traditionally have been reserved for formal labor contract negotiations, were accomplished through partnering mid-term of the labor contract. Specifically, structured partnering resulted in improvements in employee pensions, work scheduling practices, repair parts availability, and employee involvement in the opening of a new division.

In 1997, UTA's general manager instituted the guidance team (GT), a group that leads the implementation of the agency's strategic priorities. A 20-member committee, the GT includes the UTA executive team—the general manager and department directors—the ATU president, and representatives from different functional areas of the organization. The GT's

specific purpose is to manage change. It works in conjunction with the normal organizational structure, without supplanting day-to-day operations of individual work units. The GT focuses on issues that require crossing established departmental or other boundaries in order to bring about sustainable organizational change.

GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING A LABOR-MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

Prior to committing significant time and resources on any labor-management activity, an organization should determine the value it expects to receive from participation. Labor organizations and management in the transit industry exist because of one another. Management provides service to the public by directing a labor-intensive operation. Labor unions represent the transit labor force and have a significant role in determining the quality of service. The two entities interact intimately and the nature of the relationship affects the transit agency's internal and external environments.

A management team may wish to calculate in dollars the percentage of the operating budget that is controlled and influenced by labor. This can simply be determined by deducting wages and benefits from the total operating costs. "Peeling the onion" a little farther, one may assess the portion of the operating budget affected through productivity cost controlled by the labor agreement. Identifying lost time, down time, premium pay, and other work rules is a healthy exercise because managers are expected to manage those costs.

Union executives have the distinct privilege of being elected to represent employees. To the extent that they participate to increase the level of service and jobs, they receive direct recognition and support from current and future constituents. If an organization's costs increase in order to maintain present service levels, the organization must look to cut operating costs in salaries and benefits. In that event, the union is faced with protecting the threatened operating funds designated to compensate employees. The union is focused on protecting current levels of manpower. Fear and insecurity among constituents reduce morale and politically inhibit the union's options. A cooperative effort to protect jobs and increase employee opportunities is a much more preferable position for the union.

Potential union and management collaborators should consider the above prior to engaging in a labor-management relationship. Each party should remember the similarity of the popular colloquialisms "you're only as good as your last rush hour" and "you're only as good as your last election." In transit one influences the other. There is a greater co-dependence upon one another than many stakeholders may realize.

Cooperation between labor and management in response to a crisis that threatens funding or jobs is an interest-based collaboration. How does one generate similar cooperation without crisis? It requires a "culture change" predicated on a shared vision or the mutual acceptance of a vision. Andrew Bielat, the president of Pilot Advisors, has undertaken such projects in transit and identifies the successful components of a change process as follows:

- Establish Vision
- Begin Living Vision
- Prepare Parties to Succeed
- Define Performance Measures
- Develop Teams
- Assess Performance

As shown in the following paragraphs, each of these components has elements that contribute to the successful implementation of performance enhancement.

Establish Vision

Many agencies do not have the luxury of determining the time in which to introduce culture change that successfully supports labor-management partnerships. *Carpe diem* is an expression that is appropriate in this instance. Introducing a labor-management partnership shortly after the settlement of a labor contract provides optimum opportunity. If the settlement went well, the parties can build from the momentum of the agreement. If the negotiations went poorly or resulted in strike, the timing will provide the opportunity to establish dialogue and rebuild relationships and morale. Culture change is an opportunity to heal in addition to improve.

Using negotiation of a labor agreement to introduce a paradigm shift from confrontational bargaining to interest-based bargaining with the intent to establish an improved labor-management relationship has its own special set of difficulties. Stephen P. Cohen, President of The Negotiations Skills Co., Inc., in Prides Crossing, Massachusetts, trains companies all over the world in a two-day Interest-Based Bargaining Program. He calls it "Fighting Fires Without Burning Bridges." He believes that we spend most of our lives negotiating over our interest in a range of personal activities. In his view, it is easier to learn and develop specific interest-based skills before we are required to perform under pressure. He states that three of the important elements of interest-based discussion are (1) separate the people from the problem ("Negotiation is a not a competitive sport"); (2) distinguish between interest and positions; and (3) most negotiations have to be viewed as episodes in ongoing relationships. The pressure of labor negotiations does not always allow for learning and practicing these points as a new skill.

Begin Living Vision

Living the vision requires commitment to communication among all participating parties. Developing a communication strategy is imperative for the success of the program. Management should assess the internal and external audi-

ence and apprise them of its intentions. The parties must clearly articulate what will be undertaken and why it is in the audience's interest. The union traditionally has good communication techniques and channels with members. However, it should not underestimate the importance of helping members understand the goals of the process. Both parties are usually surprised at how much demystification is needed. In 1998, at Utah Transit Authority the membership failed to ratify a good settlement based on misunderstanding of the process. Subsequently, when the agreement was jointly presented and clearly articulated, it was better received. Designing a communication plan early can avoid difficulties later.

Prepare Parties to Succeed

Prior to participating in a collaborative labor-management program both parties should have instruction and support. A professional who will comfortably support both parties in explaining process and procedure and who will assist in clarifying expectations should provide the training. Most of the agencies in this study's case studies used training and/or facilitators to begin labor-management partnerships. There are a number of consultants who specialize in culture change and who have assisted transit agencies in assessing or aligning the labor-management program with an organization's vision, mission, and goals. If an agency is strictly interested in a labor committee, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service provides training along those lines. The ATU International President James LaSala has long been a proponent of training and of interest-based bargaining.

Once undertaken, the process can have a profound impact on the organization and the relationships within and outside of the organization. It is essential that the commitment come from the top of the organization and from the top of the union. Once accepted by top leadership, union and management must develop a plan of action for educating and committing each level of their respective organizations to the new ideals. The selection for training and support deserves considerable thought because of the length and nature of the commitment required.

Define Performance Measures

It is helpful for the union and management to conduct an assessment of their respective interests in order to define performance measures. Operating department managers and supervisors have a better appreciation for the effort and the potential success if they contribute at the beginning of the process. Union executive boards have the advantage of polling and confirming interests among their respective departments or divisions when this process occurs. This process is similar to the effort that a consultant engages in when evaluating organizational issues for a client. It confirms most of what is already known, uncovers other issues, and helps to prioritize tasks.

Develop Teams

Developing teams or committees which work together in a timely fashion to train, communicate, and assess is fundamental to the change process. The labor-management partnership structures at the case study agencies have several common features and the literature researched provided additional suggestions.

What is a labor-management committee?

1. Forum used by labor and management to improve labor/management relations
2. Cooperative process jointly designed by both parties
3. Composed of union members and management representatives
4. Committee discusses and develops interests vital to employees, customers, and the organization

What does a labor-management committee look like?

Each organization must evaluate the number of committees and the nature of the committees:

1. The executive oversight committee gives direction and authority from the top management and union.
2. The steering committee manages the agenda within the organization.
3. The implementing teams are composed of working groups at the local levels.
4. The feedback teams respond to implementation.

The common tasks among each of these committees are to establish ground rules and the issue resolution process, to maintain team-meeting notes, and to have an equal number of labor and management members.

Assess Performance

Performance of teams can be assessed by a number of means. The following are just some of the ways to measure changes and/or improvements.

- Compare goals at the beginning and end of the process
- Measure the achievement of each goal at intermittent stages
- 360-degree feedback
- Survey constituents
- Task team assessment and individual evaluations
- Feedback teams
- Written, oral, and role-play assessment

Getting Started

Each labor-management partnership examined in the case studies possesses similarities and differences. Every transit agency has different circumstances. Examples of differences

are the size of the operation, the number of unions, differing modes of operation, funding, equipment, and geographic or political differences. Therefore, a “one-size fits all” solution will not achieve a successful program. SunLine, ADT, and BRTA have an informal approach to their labor-management relations. In each case, the agency affords the union access to decisions and decision makers. Management seeks union input and keeps the union informed of upcoming plans. This approach is comfortable for these three relatively small agencies. The MTA has a much more formal approach. Labor-management committees structure agenda and meetings to work systematically on issues. The MTA developed its partnership pursuant to the organization vision. The UTA introduced its program in an attempt to change the climate and approach to collective bargaining.

With regard to similarities among programs implemented, each maintains various levels of success, which has translated into an increase in funding and in jobs. Each organization is attempting to shift the relationship from the conventional adversarial or positional approach to an interest-based approach. Examination of interest can stimulate a desire for a long-range approach to problem solving.

Summary

The following checklist is intended to summarize the salient points of the text.

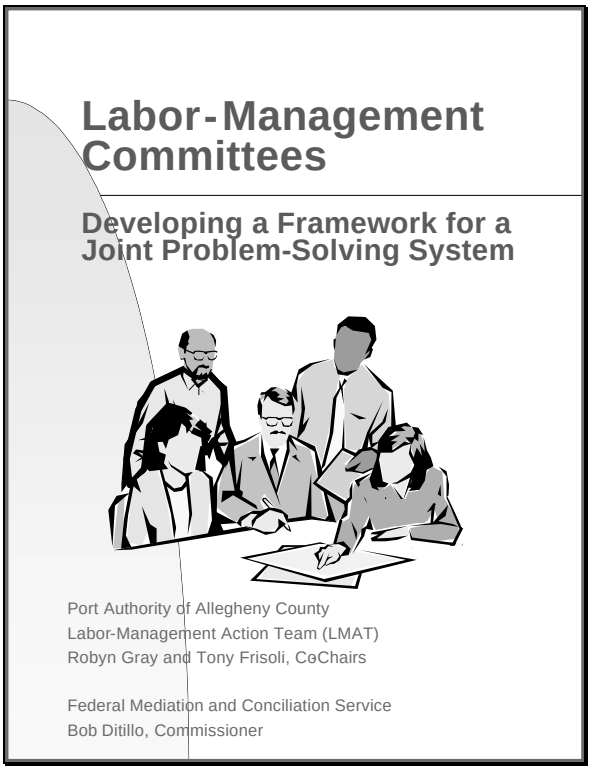
- Think before you leap
- Calculate the operating dollar value, which is positively or negatively affected and calculate the significance of the relationship and the dependency upon each other
- Approach a design that fits your agency and your interest
- Assess, identify, and validate your interest
- Appreciate the need for culture change and training
- Develop a communication strategy
- Consider timing
- Structure

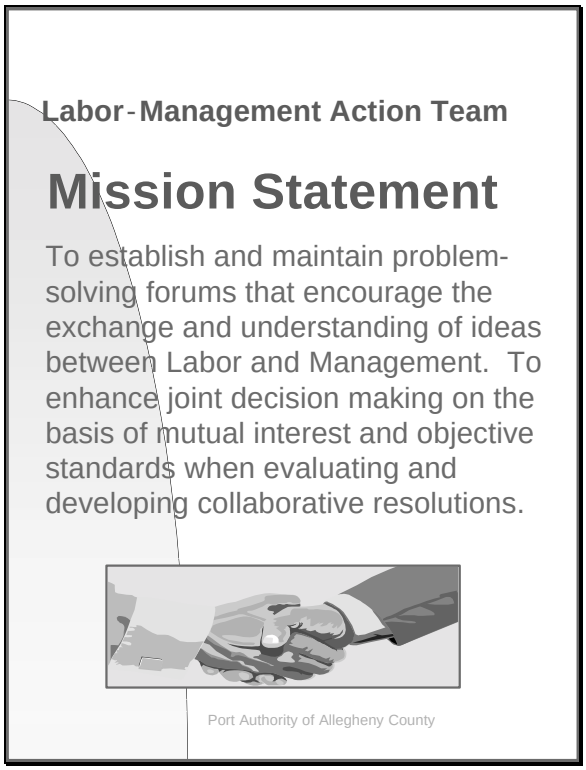
ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Port Authority of Allegheny County LMAT
- Attachment B: Regional Transportation District Ground Rules & Agreement to the Action Plan
- Attachment C: Secrets to Labor-Management Committee Success
- Attachment D: Requirements of Labor and Management
- Attachment E: LAMP Memorandum of Agreement

ATTACHMENT A

PORT AUTHORITY OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY LMAT





LMAT Ground Rules

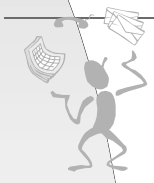
- Commitment
- Mutual respect
- Listen to understand
- Stay professional (emotions out and no personal attacks)
- No active grievances will be discussed
- No bargaining issues covered by the CBAís
- Nothing stated in meetings will be used by either party in a grievance or arbitration hearing
- Projects and recommendations belong to the Team, not to either Union or Management
- Peaceful and collaborative resolution through consensus decisionmaking
- Team members must be recognized by the Team Leader before speaking during Team meetings

Port Authority of Allegheny County

TEAM MEETINGS
ROLES

LEADER

- Opens meeting and reviews agenda
- Helps maintain orderliness during the meeting
- Encourages team members to participate

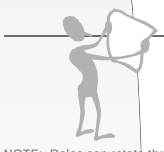


TIMEKEEPER

- Keeps the team on time according to the agenda
- Gives two minute warnings
- If team is off on a tangent, timekeeper should ask how this applies to the agenda item
- Basic job is to keep things on schedule and eliminate wasted time

NOTEKEEPER

- Takes minutes
- Keeps Action Plan (what, when, whom)
- May need to keep list of issues that came up but will not be discussed at the current meeting



GATEKEEPER

- Keeps team on track (on the agenda)
- Enforces the code of conduct
- Shares responsibility with the timekeeper for timeliness

NOTE: Roles can rotate throughout the team.

Port Authority of Allegheny County

STRUCTURE

STEERING COMMITTEE

LMAT CoChairs
Union Presidents
Director, Employee Relations

LABOR-MANAGEMENT ACTION TEAM

Management Chair Person
Labor Chair Person
Sub-Committee Representatives
Employees

SUB-COMMITTEE	SUB-COMMITTEE	SUB-COMMITTEE
LMAT Representative	LMAT Representative	LMAT Representative
Union Board Person	Union Board Person	Union Board Person
Employees	Employees	Employees
Employee Relations Rep	Employee Relations Rep	Employee Relations Rep

Port Authority of Allegheny County

Issue Resolution Process

Issue Form Completed
↓
Submitted in Drop Box
↓
Retrieved by Sub-Committee
↓
Receipt of Issue Sent
↓
Entered Into Tracking Log
↓
Evaluated by Sub-Committee
↓
Feedback Correspondence
↓
Update Tracking Log
↓
Evaluated by LMAT
↓
Feedback Correspondence
↓
Update Tracking Log
↓
Evaluated by Steering Committee
↓
Action Taken
↓
Issue Resolved (Implementation)
↓
Notification of Resolution

Port Authority of Allegheny County

Labor-Management Action Team Issue Submittal Instructions

1. Obtain an Issue Submittal form from the Drop Box immediately below this notice.
2. Complete the Form and deposit the original in the Drop Box. Retain the yellow copy for your records.
3. Forms will be collected and routed to the appropriate LMAT for review and disposition.
4. You will receive an acknowledgement card notifying you that your issue has been received and logged.

5. When your issue has be resolved, you will receive a notice describing the resolution and corrective recommendations.

Port Authority of Allegheny County

PORT AUTHORITY
LABOR/MANAGEMENT ACTION TEAM

ISSUE SUBMITTAL FORM

To be completed by employee: (Please Print)

Name_____**PR#**_____**Date**_____

Location #_____**Dept. #**_____**Position**_____**Phone#**_____

ISSUE:_____

SUGGESTED RESOLUTION_____

May we use your name in resolution of this issue: _____ **(yes)** _____ **(no)**

_____
Signature

To be completed by Labor/Management Action Team (LMAT):

Date Received: _____ **Date Evaluated:**_____

RECOMMENDATION:_____

Date Resolved:_____ **Div. Log #**_____

RESOLVED BY (√): **SUBCOMMITTEE**_____ **LMAT**_____

Port Authority of Allegheny County

DEAR PORT AUTHORITY EMPLOYEE

Labor-Management Action Team

*This card is to acknowledge receipt of your employee issue submittal form dated*_____.

We are investigating this matter and will respond to you as soon as the Labor-Management Action Team has taken appropriate action.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to serve you.

Sincerely,

Labor-Management Action Team

*Div. Log #*_____

Port Authority of Allegheny County

LABOR-MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE TRACKING LOG

ISSUE#	DATE	RESPONSIBILITY/ LOCATION	PROBLEM/DESCRIPTION	CATEGORY	DATE RECEIVED	STATUS	RESPONSIBILITY	DATE RESOLVED	LEVEL	RESOLUTION

Port Authority of Allegheny County

DATE: _____

Labor-Management Action Team
SUBCOMMITTEE SIGN-IN SHEET

NAME	PR#	POSITION	LOCATION/DEPT.	REPORTING SUPERVISOR	MGT/LABOR

Port Authority of Allegheny County

PORT AUTHORITY OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY

LABOR-MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTE TEAM

DIVISION:_____

PLACE _____

DATE _____

TIME: _____

AGENDA

I.	**Review minutes of previous meeting** **-Sign attendance sheet**	**min.**
II.	**Reports**	**min.**
III.	**Unfinished Business**	**min.**
IV.	**New Business**	**min.**
V.	**Open Discussion**	**min.**
VI.	**Action Plan**	**min.**
VII.	**Plan next meeting**	**min.**

Port Authority of Allegheny County

Developing a Framework for a Joint Problem-Solving System

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service

Labor-Management Committees

Labor-Management Committees

Port-Authority Transit

A.T.U. 85 - I.B.E.W. 29 - P.A.T.P.A.

Presented by:

Robert S. Ditillo

Commissioner

Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service

Port Authority of Allegheny County

What is a Labor-Management Committee (LMC)?

- Forum used by labor and management to improve labor/management relations
- Cooperative process jointly determined by both parties
- Comprised of union members and management representatives
- To discuss and resolve issues not covered by the collective bargaining agreement

Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service
Port Authority of Allegheny County

An LMC is NOT:

- Substitute for the grievance procedure
- Substitute for contract negotiations
- Management/union concession
- Unilaterally implemented
- The solution to all work place problems

Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service
Port Authority of Allegheny County

The Role of FMCS

- Consultation
  - Training
- Needs Assessment
  - Facilitation & Follow-up
- Program Design

Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service
Port Authority of Allegheny County

Committee Effectiveness Training (CET)

- Effectiveness Planning
- Effectiveness Meetings
- Group Problem Solving
- Consensus Decision Making

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Port Authority of Allegheny County

CET (continued)

- Effectiveness Communication
- Understanding Self and Others
- Interpersonal Skills
- Group Dynamics

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Port Authority of Allegheny County

Training and Logistical Considerations

- Time Frame
  - Length
- Type of training
  - Location
- Participants
  - Materials/Equipment

Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service
Port Authority of Allegheny County

P.A.T. Project Rollout

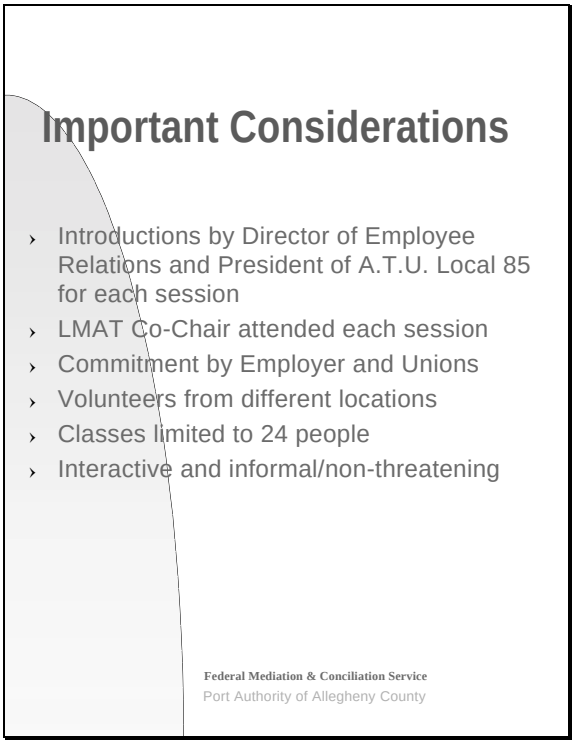
- May, 1998: Consultation
- July, 1998: Assessment
- August, 1998: Training Proposal
- November, 1998: Training
- February, 1999: Training
- March, 1999: Training
- April, 1999: Training

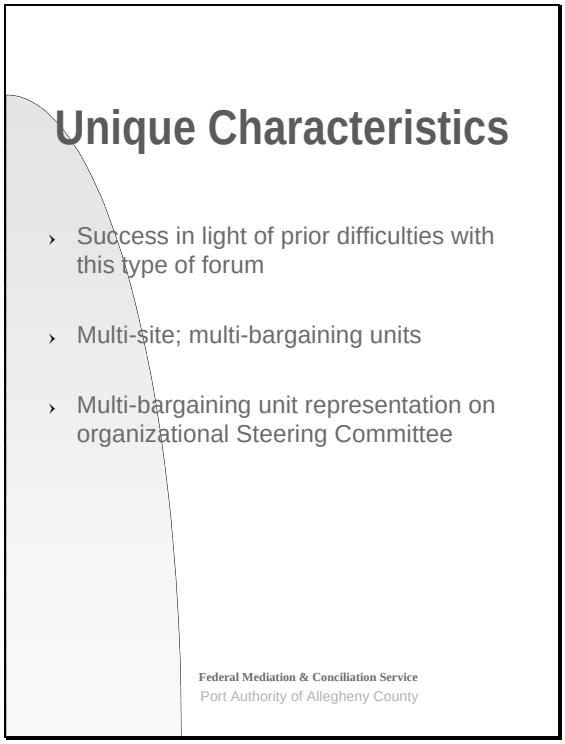
Port Authority of Allegheny County

Training Agenda

- Day 1
  - Communications
  - Critical Skill Brainstorming
  - Critical Skill Consensus Decision Making
  - Team Building
- Day 2
  - Group Problem Solving Model

Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service
Port Authority of Allegheny County





ATTACHMENT B

Ground Rules

Regional Transportation District Labor-Management Committee (LMC), Denver, CO

Mission Statement: To mutually resolve problems and enhance working relations between RTD Labor and Management. The parties stipulate that no procedures or agreements implemented as a result of the LMC's work will be construed as an amendment, modification or supplement to the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Further, the LMC is not to be as a forum to negotiate changes to the CBA. LMC minutes and discussions are not precedent setting nor will either party in a grievance arbitration or legal action use them.

Structure

- LMC will be co-chaired by Labor and Management
- LMC will be constituted by the highest level representation of Labor and Management
- Meeting agendas will be prepared and distributed by the co-chairs well in advance of meeting
- Dress code for LMC meetings is casual
- Modest beverages and lunch during whole day meetings will be provided
- Cost will be shared equally by Labor and Management
- Minutes will be kept, distributed and approved at all LMC meetings (secretary to be mutually appointed) (Bullet point summaries of discussion will be recorded on flip charts throughout each meeting and formalized on minutes)
- Minutes will be posted on RTD customary locations
- LMC meeting dates and agendas will be posted in the RTD Monday Morning "Q"
- A joint data gathering committee will be established as required
- LMC meetings will be held quarterly unless called earlier by the co-chairs
- LMC meetings will be held approximately on the 2nd Wednesday of prescribed quarters established by the LMC and conducted in half-day format from 1:00–5:00
- Meeting will be held only when a quorum of at least 5 members on each side are present
- Meetings can be canceled/rescheduled by mutual consent of the co-chairs

Behavior

- A positive constructive meeting environment will be maintained at all times
- Titles and positions will be left outside of room
- Focus on issues not personalities
- Professional decorum will be maintained at all times
- Communicate honestly
- Admit and accept responsibility for mistakes
- Treat each other with respect
- It's okay to disagree, but consensus compromise should result on issues
- Actively listen and seek to understand before being understood
- LMC member will be enthusiastic

Process

- LMC meetings will be conducted in a professional manner
- Both parties agree to timely and responsive decision-making process
- Both parties agree to genuine collaborative conflict resolutions
- One person speaks at any one time, to be controlled by co-chairs
- Complete agreed upon tasks by agreed upon date
- Each party gives their understanding of the other party's issue
- Ground rules can be amended by LMC consensus
- Expert or resource individuals not represented by the LMC may be invited to render opinions on issues mutually requested by the LMC
- LMC meetings will be attended only by LMC appointees
- LMC meetings are not open to observers
- Issues can be revisited by prior placement on the agenda
- Start and end on time
- Everyone will be given an opportunity to speak
- A consensus reached by the presiding LMC will not be changed by disagreement of someone absent from the meeting during which consensus was previously reached
- Issues may be deferred pending the accumulation of essential data/resources
- Co-chairs are responsible for keeping discussions on-track; digressions will be immediately terminated
- Individual comments should be brief and to the point; no long-winded "filibustering" or unanticipated controversy to clarify the issue
- Resolution of issues will be handled one at a time; multiple issues will be divided into individual parts

Regional Transportation District

RTD

Affiliated with
COLORADO AFL-CIO
DENVER AREA LABOR FEDERATION

Agreement to the Action Plan

On June 10, 1998, Union and Management representatives of RTD met and participated in a Relationship-by-Objectives Program conducted by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. Together, we embarked upon this process to develop better relationships between Union and Management and to create a better working environment for all employees.

We, the undersigned, are fully committed to the improvement objectives and actions developed during the workshop. We also recognize that this action plan is not designed to interfere with, conflict with, or substitute for the Collective Bargaining Agreement. We urge the support and cooperation of all employees as we move forward into the future.

ATTACHMENT C

Secrets to Labor-Management Committee (LMC) Success; (Reproduced with permission of Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, Los Angeles Office)

1. Equal numbers selected by union and management
2. Training by outside consultants
3. Complete equality of all LMC members
4. Rotating facilitators
5. Top management and union leadership support
6. No job lost
7. Start with easy problems (let success breed success)
8. Trust needs to be earned
9. Carefully define problem and objectives
10. Listen really listen
11. Everybody participates
12. Use brainstorming
13. Avoid "killer phrases"
14. Use "I language"
15. "Rule of One"
16. Reach genuine consensus; don't vote
17. You have to be trustworthy to be trusted
18. Take time out to discuss ground rules when behavior becomes a problem
19. Treat a problem as an "it"—not a "you"

Common Failure Reasons

1. Lack of top management involvement
2. Middle management fears loss of control
3. Expecting too much too soon
4. Organizational culture resistant to change
5. Viewing differences of interests as failures
6. Conspiracies and coalitions inside LMC
7. Forgetting to "loop out"

The Secrets of Successful Labor-Management Committees (National Labor Management Association web site: www.nlma.org. Used by permission.)

What is an LMC?

- Joint Union-Management problem-solving team

How are LMC members chosen?

- Jointly by Union and Management
- From all levels in the organization

Assumptions underlying LMCs

- Employees at all levels of the organization are capable of creative problem solving
- The employee closest to the job is the best qualified to solve the problems

Remember:

- Don't expect too much too soon
- Don't start problem solving meetings until everybody has been trained in the process
- Don't jump to conclusions about the cause of a problem or what the solutions should be

ATTACHMENT D

Requirements of Labor and Management (Adapted from the National Labor Management Association: www.nlma.org. Used by permission.)

1. Management must believe that the union serves a legitimate and valued purpose. Management can no longer go to the union with only management issues; it must work with the union on its interests and problems as an institution.

   The union must truly believe that effective management of the enterprise is a valuable and essential function. Unions must publicly acknowledge the importance of effective management.
2. Management must stop going to the union with a solution. They must go to the union with a problem and assume that together they can find a solution.

   Unions must publicly acknowledge that highly profitable companies, which are continuously improving cost, quality, and customer satisfaction are strong and essential ingredients to a strong and viable union movement, as the United Steelworkers recently did. Helping companies to be successful is the business of the union. Cooperative partnerships simply cannot occur unless union officials acknowledge and support the achievements of continuous improvement.
3. Management must communicate much more often and with considerably more depth with its union officials than most organizations do now. A true partnership requires a routine communication about all business issues. Union leaders need to understand the economic and other business realities that management leadership is facing.

   Union officials must take the lead in convincing their members that management is sincere. Once behaviors and actions, rather than rhetoric, show the sincerity of management in cooperative efforts, union leaders have the responsibility to convince the union membership of the need for change and the need for cooperation in the locations that merit such cooperation. Union officials must take a stand.
4. Management must earn a positive reaction from the union institution; it takes time and positive experiences before management can realistically expect union offi-

cials to venture forward and assert their influence upon their members to achieve continuous improvement. After all, every company has the kind of union-management relationship that management created. It may well not have been the current management that created the relationship, however, it was management that created the impression in the mind of the employee that they needed a union. Management must take the lead in creating the environment in which a true partnership can emerge.

Union officials must encourage and support truly joint efforts. This creates opportunities for union members to participate in continuous improvements and the day-to-day decisionmaking process. After all, unions were created to provide a vehicle through which workers could influence decision making.

5. Management must pay attention and be willing to address subjects of interest to unions. These interests include continuous training and development, safety, and health. This results in sharing the economic gain and employment security and union viability.

   Union officials must stop hiding behind the belief that cooperative partnerships weaken the collective bargaining process. This simply is not true. There is an extraordinary amount of evidence that effective, joint collaborative efforts serve to strengthen the collective bargaining process.

6. Finally, in essence, a true partnership with the union requires that management view the institution of organized labor as a stakeholder in the enterprise; union officials must accept the responsibility that comes with being a stakeholder of the enterprise. Union officials cannot pick the elements that are easy for them and stonewall those that are risky or difficult.

Researcher Commentary

Management and union leaders never start with all or even most of the above requirements in place. Bringing those requirements about demands commitment and patience on the part of the top leadership in both organizations. It requires expenditure of time and financial resources, and it almost always requires outside consulting assistance.

According to the UTA general manager and ATU president, the continuous involvement and assistance of Consultant Kent Kingman allowed the basis for discussion and the continuous progress described in the UTA case study. The parties had success and setbacks. However, the external guidance by Kingman as a neutral and objective supporter helped the union and management to practice new skills until they mastered them

Ronald Freeland, MTA administrator, recognized the value of the external consultant and used that resource to help the union and the management at the MTA in Baltimore to improve the existing process under the LAMP Agreement. In the words of the MTA's labor relations manager, "He (consultant) elevated a gripe session to a constructive and productive process, which is what both the union and the management had hoped to accomplish."

National Steel Corporation was losing market share to imported steel, profits were declining, and the rate of grievances brought by the United Steelworkers of America was high. Over a five-year period, labor and management forged a cooperative partnership agreement. Now National Steel earns the highest profits of any integrated steel company in the United States; the grievance rate is the lowest of any company represented by the Steelworkers.

Xerox Corporation, which suffered from Japanese competition, also reversed its fortunes through a labor-management partnership. One example is the Webster, New York, plant where teams of salaried employees and members of the Amalgamated Textile Workers Union worked together and cut costs by more than 25 percent.

Union leadership and their members have also helped Harley-Davidson, General Mills, Bethlehem Steel, Ford Motor Company and hundreds of other companies to forge improvements in job security through continuous improvements in quality and cost. Many companies and unions have tried to establish a partnership and have not been successful or only partially successful. Those that have succeeded have reaped tremendous rewards in their long-term competitive position, bottom-line profitability, and job security for employees.

Private enterprise has many examples of the struggle that saved the organization and the employee jobs. It is now time for the public sector and the transit industry to learn from the winners. The management and the rank and file employees should receive copies and examples of the case studies of private employers and unions that win. Who cannot relate to Harley-Davidson? The American Motorcycle Company crosses socio-economic boundaries. From railroader to Rolex wearer, it is the bike and industrial success story available for modeling. The company and its unions employed most of the tools utilized in the transit case studies and provide a model that every industry can relate to. Their cooperative struggle has placed Harley or its merchandise in most American homes.

ATTACHMENT E

LAMP MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

I **Purpose of the Agreement**

The purpose of this agreement is to establish and sustain a working relationship between the unions representing MTA employees and MTA management that is consistent with and supportive of the mission, vision and values of the MTA.

These principles and agreements will guide labor and management as they develop cooperative relationships. The agreement is intended to clearly identify expectations and interests of management and labor so that the autonomy of both groups is protected while their interdependence is also acknowledged.

II. **Mission, Vision and Values of the Mass Transit Administration**

1.Mission

- The Mass Transit Administration is a state-wide public organization committed to providing a network of accessible transportation services to our customers. We operate and support safe, efficient and reliable bus, METRO, light rail, MARC commuter rail, ride-sharing and rail freight services.

2.Vision

- We are committed to excellence in Customer Service. Our customers:

- Feel appreciated
- Enjoy using our services
- Are attracted by the variety of high-quality services
- Are increasing in numbers daily
- Find that their expectations are exceeded

- Our people are proud to be members of the MTA team. They are:

- Known for their integrity
- Creative, talented and knowledgeable
- Educated and motivated to achieve excellence through continuous improvement
- Treated fairly, respected and supportive of each other
- Recognized and rewarded for outstanding performance
- Encouraged to communicate openly and be involved
- Known for their leadership qualities

3. Values

- Caring - is our concern and support for each other, the MTA and the customer.
  - is listening, considering and treating all people fairly.
- Leadership - is the involvement of everyone taking the initiative To make a difference.
- Innovation - is open-minded, creative thinking and action.
- Pride - is feeling good about who we are, what we do and how we do it.
- Integrity - is honest and ethical conduct.
- Communication - is the open exchange of information and ideas.
- Teamwork - is dedicated people working together to achieve excellence.
- Quality - dedicated people working together to achieve excellence.
- Quality Service - is consistently meeting the needs of our customers by making service better than yesterday, but not as good as tomorrow.

III. **Vision of the Ideal Relationship**

Through a process of participative management and open communication, MTA management and union leadership will be responsible and accountable for jointly developing policies and goals which will be mutually beneficial to all groups. Adequate training and resources will be provided to participants in this process which will also be sensitive to both the political and public relations arenas.

The organizations are able to strive together to boost morale and accept change because their relationship is based on mutual respect, trust and honesty. Each party has an understanding of the other's needs and incorporates that knowledge into their own decision-making processes.

All parties are committed to fostering policies founded on the principles of fairness, equal treatment and volunteerism in the community.

IV **Code of Trust**

Representatives of LAMP agree to conduct themselves in such a manner that:

- An atmosphere of mutual respect, trust and openness is fostered. No parties will take unfair advantage of the other, such as attempts to undermine or embarrass the other party with their constituents.
- A climate of openness and good faith will be established. The participants will treat each other as equals. All opinions will be represented and ideas will be valued for their merit without respect to the positions or the rank of the person originating the idea.
- An environment, that is safe for all participants will be created. No one need fear retaliation for issues raised or opinions expressed and that participants will use discretion when dealing with LAMP matters.
- A spirit of stewardship will be maintained. Participants will pursue the well-being of the communities served by MTA, the managers, employees and the administration, itself, rather than seeking personal advantage.

V **Employee Relations Principles**

MTA recognizes that its employees are its most important assets and, therefore, is committed to creating an environment that supports the personal and professional growth of its employees. The Employee Relations Principles were developed to reflect the MTA mission, vision, and values and are dependent upon the support, cooperation and pride of the employees. These principles also set the .stage for enhancing teamwork, cooperation and trust between management and both union and nonunion employees.

The entire organization and its managers are accountable for the implementation of these principles and will:

- Foster employee pride through a dedication to quality and customer service,
- Strive for cooperative working relationship between management, employees and union leadership,
- Solicit employee and union input to assist management in making better decisions,
- Maintain an agency-wide environment that fosters recognition and fair, consistent, respectful treatment of employees,
- Encourage and support the relationship between employees and their supervisors,

- Empower employees to perform effectively on their jobs,
- Encourage new ideas and intelligent risk taking, and
- Seek the highest level of quality and productivity through employee involvement.

VI **Relationship to Collective Bargaining and Management Rights**

1. Any issue that the parties' leadership mutually agree to address can't be discussed in this partnership.

2. When an issue surfaces that is covered by a collective bargaining agreement the parties' historic stance on the provision is not compromised by open discussion unless agreement to a modification ensues.

3. The appropriate union and management representatives may authorize a union-management committees to discuss the issue and develop proposals, but the parties' leaders are responsible for any final decision or direction.

4. This agreement, in and of itself, shall not change, modify nor infringe on collective bargaining agreements.

VII **The Structure of LAMP**

1. The current membership of LAMP includes the following representation:

   - MTA management team
   - ATU Executive Board
   - Representative of AFSCME Council 67
   - Representative of OPEIU Local 2

2. The LAMP is co-chaired by labor and management. Management and labor shall each select their chairperson.

3. LAMP consists of six work groups composed of representatives from both management and the unions. Each work group shall have established goals and objectives which may change from time to time.

   a. Work Environment - Support and resources will be provided to all MTA workplaces so that all workers have the opportunity to continuously improve the working environment.

b. Ridership and Customer Service - To ensure the economic viability of public transportation, the MTA and its employees will grow its business through increased ridership and improved customer services.

c. Communication - To determine the information and communications needs of MTA and LAMP, and develop regular, formal, and consistent ways of communicating important events, activities and developments to LAMP and all MTA employees.

d. Training - To develop and administer a systematic program of training and staff development, through a combination of formal coursework and on-the-job experience, which provides each employee with the skills and knowledge necessary to perform assigned responsibilities.

e. Government Relations - To develop an active coalition of Union and Management with an agenda which supports public transportation. Using our collective strengths we work together to gain support for mass transit.

f. Economic and Business Activity -

4. LAMP shall establish parameters for Union Representation in the Total Quality process, to include:

a. Union and Management will agree separately from the LAMP forum on selection of union member participants for teams with operating oriented tasks.

b. Operating rules shall be the generally accepted standard team rules established in T.Q. theory plus,

- Differences with regard to LAMP representation will be addressed by LAMP.

- Pay for union members on T.Q. teams will be governed by their respective collective bargaining agreements.

- Issues for development by T.Q. Teams are intended to enhance the work environment without infringement on collective bargaining agreements.

c. Receive feedback as to Team(s) status -

- Union team members will advise union leaders of all formal management presentation schedules for their attendance.

- A Total Quality update report will be prepared for each LAMP session.

VIII **Operating principles of LAMP**

- The meetings will start on time.
- We show each other courtesy.
- We stick to the subject at hand.
- We respect the views of others though we may not agree.
- We deal with difficult issues - we don't deny they exist.
- We approach all subjects with an open mind.
- We accept compromise as part of the process.
- We set the next meeting date and agenda as the last agenda item for all meetings.
- We record and distribute the minutes no later than the week before the next meeting.
- We accept that it is OK to have fun.
- We are committed to focusing on our mutual goals.

IX. **Duration and Amendment**

1. This agreement represents an on-going commitment by MTA's management and labor unions within LAMP to work together. In order to ensure that this partnership continues to meet the needs of both labor and management, this agreement will be evaluated at least yearly and may be amended as necessary with the combined consensus of management and the labor unions participating in the agreement.

2. Labor and management agree not to withdraw from this cooperation agreement unless an evaluation indicates that the partnership is not in their best interest. If this occurs, labor and management must first engage the services of mutually agreed upon third party to make a good faith attempt at surfacing and resolving the difficulty. If this effort does not succeed in restoring the partnership, the withdrawing party must give 90 days notice of the termination of their participation.

This joint labor-management agreement is entered into this 20 day of April, 1995.

For the Employer

For the Unions

- A.T.U., Local 1300

- A.F.S.C.M.E., Council 67, Local 1859

- O.P.E.I.U., Local 2

SECTION 3: HUMAN RESOURCES SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR MAINTAINING A QUALIFIED WORKFORCE IN DIFFICULT-TO-RECRUIT AND DIFFICULT-TO-RETAIN POSITIONS

INTRODUCTION

This self-assessment tool is intended to assist the transit agency in examining policies, practices, and other factors that may influence its ability to maintain a qualified workforce, especially in difficult-to-recruit and difficult-to-retain positions. The tool is not intended to be all inclusive of factors that can be considered in maintaining a qualified workforce. It does include major categories essential to such efforts. Responding to the tool may require a team effort in that the authors view recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce from a total system perspective.

HR MISSION

1. Does your organization have an identified functional unit accountable for human-resources activities?
   _____ Yes _____ No

2. Does that functional unit have a clear mission?
   _____ Yes _____ No

3. Is the mission of the human-resources function clearly aligned with the organizational mission?
   _____ Yes _____ No

4. How often is the human-resources mission considered in making decisions that affect the workforce? (Circle one of the following: never, sometimes, usually, always)

5. Does the human-resources function have a strategic or other business plan (three years or more?)
   _____ Yes _____ No

6. If the answer to question 5 is yes, how does the overall organizational strategic or other business plan influence the content of the human-resources function plan?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR HR ACTIVITIES

1. Have key result areas for maintaining a qualified workforce been identified and communicated organization-wide? _____ Yes _____ No

2. Is there one position that is accountable for the management of the entire human-resources function?
   _____ Yes ____ No

3. If the answer to the previous question is yes, at what level in the organization is that position? Circle one: senior management, middle management, supervisory or administrative support level

4. If one position is accountable for managing human-resources activities, how does the person in that position keep abreast of current best practices relating to staffing and selection? Circle as many as applicable: conferences, networking with other human-resources professionals, seminars, formal education, self-study, other _____.

5. Does the person accountable for managing human-resources have direct and frequent access to the chief executive officer? _____ Yes _____ No

6. Do senior managers consult the person accountable for managing human resources prior to making decisions that affect employees in their departments?
   _____ Yes _____No

7. If the answer to Question 2 is no, is labor relations a separate entity? _____ Yes _____ No

8. If labor relations is a separate entity, what is the interface between the person responsible for managing human resources and the person responsible for labor relations?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

DIFFICULT-TO-RECRUIT POSITIONS

1. List the most difficult-to-recruit positions in your agency.
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. List major factors contributing to difficulty recruiting each position.
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. Which of these factors are caused by internal structural components such as compensation policies, recruiting procedures, work design, location, etc. (Specify positions and factors.)

_____
_____
_____
_____

4. How much leeway does the person(s) accountable for human-resources activities have in making or recommending changes to these factors?

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Are there upcoming organizational changes that are likely to contribute to increasing or decreasing the challenge of recruiting employees in the difficult-to-recruit positions? If so, describe.

_____
_____
_____
_____

6. When are these changes anticipated and what are the planning steps and timelines for addressing the changes?

_____
_____
_____
_____

7. Do you have a mechanism for knowing the talent pool within your organization? _____ Yes _____ No

8. List the top five resources available in your hiring area for acquiring applicants for difficult-to-recruit positions?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being high, rate the agency's effectiveness in accessing those resources. _____

10. If the answer to the previous question is 3 or less, what inhibits the agency's effectiveness?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

11. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your effectiveness in developing new resources for filling difficult-to-recruit positions. _____

12. What strategies has your agency used in the past year to develop additional resources for attracting employees in difficult-to-recruit positions?

_____
_____
_____
_____

13. How often do you benchmark positions in the difficult-to-recruit positions related to job content, structure, and compensation?

_____

14. How is benchmarking data used?

_____
_____
_____

15. What data does the human-resources information system (HRIS) provide about employee recruitment and retention (e.g., who, what, when, where, how many)?

_____
_____
_____
_____

16. How is any of this data used?

_____
_____
_____
_____

DIFFICULT-TO-RETAIN POSITIONS

1. List the most difficult-to-retain positions.

_____
_____
_____

2. What is the annual turnover rate in the most difficult-to-retain positions?

Position title _____ Turnover rate _____
Position title _____ Turnover rate _____

3. What are the three most frequent reasons employees in difficult-to-retain positions give for leaving your organization?

_____
_____
_____

4. Who uses that information and for what purpose?

   _____
   _____
   _____

5. What management development activities are required for managers and supervisors?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. Is employee retention a component of the performance evaluation for managers? _____ Yes _____ No

7. What are the structured opportunities for professional development of employees in difficult-to-retain positions?

   _____
   _____
   _____

8. How are employees recognized for their contributions to the organization?

   _____
   _____

9. Does your organization have an employee replacement plan? _____ Yes _____ No

APPENDIX C
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The National Academy of Sciences is a private, nonprofit, self-perpetuating society of distinguished scholars engaged in scientific and engineering research, dedicated to the furtherance of science and technology and to their use for the general welfare. Upon the authority of the charter granted to it by the Congress in 1863, the Academy has a mandate that requires it to advise the federal government on scientific and technical matters. Dr. Bruce M. Alberts is president of the National Academy of Sciences.

The National Academy of Engineering was established in 1964, under the charter of the National Academy of Sciences, as a parallel organization of outstanding engineers. It is autonomous in its administration and in the selection of its members, sharing with the National Academy of Sciences the responsibility for advising the federal government. The National Academy of Engineering also sponsors engineering programs aimed at meeting national needs, encourages education and research, and recognizes the superior achievements of engineers. Dr. William A. Wulf is president of the National Academy of Engineering.

The Institute of Medicine was established in 1970 by the National Academy of Sciences to secure the services of eminent members of appropriate professions in the examination of policy matters pertaining to the health of the public. The Institute acts under the responsibility given to the National Academy of Sciences by its congressional charter to be an adviser to the federal government and, upon its own initiative, to identify issues of medical care, research, and education. Dr. Kenneth I. Shine is president of the Institute of Medicine.

The National Research Council was organized by the National Academy of Sciences in 1916 to associate the broad community of science and technology with the Academy's purpose of furthering knowledge and advising the federal government. Functioning in accordance with general policies determined by the Academy, the Council has become the principal operating agency of both the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering in providing services to the government, the public, and the scientific and engineering communities. The Council is administered jointly by both the Academies and the Institute of Medicine. Dr. Bruce M. Alberts and Dr. William A. Wulf are chairman and vice chairman, respectively, of the National Research Council.

Abbreviations used without definitions in TRB publications:

AASHO	American Association of State Highway Officials
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
ASCE	American Society of Civil Engineers
ASME	American Society of Mechanical Engineers
ASTM	American Society for Testing and Materials
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
ITE	Institute of Transportation Engineers
NCHRP	National Cooperative Highway Research Program
NCTRP	National Cooperative Transit Research and Development Program
NHTSA	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
SAE	Society of Automotive Engineers
TCRP	Transit Cooperative Research Program
TRB	Transportation Research Board
U.S.DOT	United States Department of Transportation

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