

Leadership 201 – Action Learning Scenario

March 2011

Leading a “Best Places to Work” in the Federal Government Effort

How can the USGS most effectively act upon employee feedback to enable the USGS to become one of the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government?

What are some of the most critical actions we can take to improve the USGS workplace?

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Issue: Employee satisfaction surveys are conducted on an annual basis for the purpose of determining what is and is not working for employees. The results are analyzed, employees are engaged, and action plans are developed. The Partnership for Public Service does an additional study, —Best Places to Work, in Federal government. Large and small federal agencies are rank ordered. The USGS moved being 108 out of 216 to 50 out of 224 in 2010! We need to focus our efforts in the most impactful ways to continue this positive trend.

Background: Historically, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has administered government-wide employee satisfaction surveys every other year. With the revamped survey in 2010, OPM and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) have decided to administer the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) every year, beginning in April, 2011. OPM will: (1) Conduct the FEVS on an annual basis; (2) Administer the survey to a full census of employees every even year, and a sample of employees on the odd years; (3) Conduct the survey in the April/May timeframe yearly; and (4) Require agencies to develop action plans, and report on progress related to stated goals in their action plans.

In the workforce today, we have five generations of employees, (year ranges vary slightly from study to study): Traditionalists (born before 1946—15% of the US population), Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964; 26%), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1976; 17%), Millennials (born between 1977 and 1997; 28%), and Generation 2020 (born after 1997; 14%). In the simplest of analogies, organizations like USGS span a full spectrum of society—we are a community made up of individuals with a common set of goals, working toward a single mission.

The 2010 USGS employee satisfaction survey results note that for USGS to achieve an improved rating as a best place to work, we need to enhance senior leadership communications and transparency, ensure adequate recognition for employees, make sure promotions and pay are based on performance, and help to make certain our employees have sufficient resources and reasonable workloads. It is critical in these times of restrained budgets, low public esteem for government workers, and the need to do more with less, that USGS leaders develop effective ways to support our mission functions and create efficient best practices that grow our strengths and make USGS a great place to work.

A Best Places to Work Council was established at USGS in February 2011. Its purpose is to help the USGS use the results of the surveys to engage employees in effecting changes that make the USGS a better place to work. The Council will also help develop strategies to engage employees before the annual surveys are deployed.

Leadership Challenge: We live in a rapidly changing world, and in a workplace with wildly differing sets of values, beliefs and expectations, essentially because USGS is somewhat unique in that all five generations of employees are in our workplaces. We need senior leaders, managers, supervisors and employees who, during these changing times, can demonstrate agility, flexibility and resiliency. The goals of this Action Learning Scenario about Best Places to Work are to:

- (1) Help the Best Places to Work Council and the ELT envision and design what our future ideal workplace will look like,
- (2) Help the Best Places to Work Council and the ELT develop strategies and recommendations that maximize employee engagement in making desired changes.
- (3) Recommend the highest impact action(s) the USGS can take to enhance the USGS work environment.

Achieving these goals will help the USGS Best Places to Work Council move this initiative forward, and help USGS reach a higher level of employee satisfaction and truly make USGS a —Best Place to Work !

Questions/Ideas to consider in your Action Learning Scenario discussions:

1. What resources do we need to invest in now to best prepare for the future ideal USGS workforce - one that is known as one of the best places to work in the federal government?
2. How do we attract and retain talent, intensely personalize what USGS has to offer, and provide the social and science experiences that develop, engage and retain talented employees across generations and geographies?
3. Knowing that the first line supervisor is the most critical influencer of employee satisfaction and engagement, how might we focus our efforts here and what might that look like?
4. What behaviors and actions can you suggest to senior leaders, managers and supervisors to help motivate, connect with, engage, develop, and listen to employees?

In your conversations and discussions related to this Action Learning Scenario, think function before form; think how to achieve optimal function; design ways to demonstrate to employees that we truly are trying to transform our organization, think of ways to enlist employees in the transformation to create a culture of satisfied and high performing employees at all levels of the USGS organization.

Put your Creativity and Imagination to Work. Collaborate and Innovate. Dream. Think BIG.

Attachments and Resources (data/information appropriate to the scenario will be included)