

Learning on the Run 29: HR Service Priority Reality Check

How to help an HR Team assess it's service priorities?

The Request. A City Director of Human Resources was wanting to help his department look at their current and future work priorities. He was asking us to facilitate a one-day meeting of his entire staff so that they might review and perhaps adjust their strategic projects and services. The basic questions were: To what extent were we meeting the needs of our clients? How well did our current services match our mission?

Larger Context. The Director was unclear if his department was meeting the important needs of the city's Senior Leadership team and their managers. He wanted to understand what his staff thought were the priorities for his department. He also thought it important to consider how those priorities fit with the goals and purposes of the HR department and the individuals who staffed it. The staff worked as internal HR consultants to the other city departments and so there was a constant need to say yes to some work and no to other requests.

Consulting Intervention. To jump-start the discussion of priorities, the staff agreed to complete a survey prior to the meeting. The pre-work consisted of each staff listing the major jobs, services or projects that they were involved in over the past year and to describe in a sentence or two the role they played. They were asked to rate how well each project fit with a key city-wide business objective, a senior leader's priority, the mission of HR and the personal vision of individual staff members. These ratings were combined into overall scores for each service or project and the services were grouped into high, middle or low categories. We used the image of a target as a summary display of the data with the highest scoring services being closer to the center. During the meeting, with the data summary available, the staff responded to a series of discussion questions. During the discussions, some staff were asked to take on the role and viewpoint of senior leaders and others were asked to adopt the role of HR professionals.

Last line: One way to help determine a service office's future work is to ask staff to rate how well their current services fit with key agency objectives, leadership's priorities, the office mission and an individual staff's purpose.