

Session title : Walking the Tightrope : Balancing Increasing Demands with Diminishing Resources

Moderator/Panelists :

Carol Carson, Executive Director, Connecticut Office of State Ethics
Kristin E. Izumi-Nitao, Executive Director, Hawaii Campaign Spending Commission

David E. Freel, Senior Lecturer of Management & Human Resources, Fisher College of Business, Ohio State University and Former Executive Director, Ohio Ethics Commission

Date and time: Tuesday December 10 2013, 10:15 am

Rapporteur : Simon Bérubé

Session Summary

Carol Carson mentioned that she wanted the session to unfold as an open discussion with participants. Ms. Izumi-Nitao recounted her arrival in her agency, when she had to hire two new resource persons and commissioners had to step down after two years. In addition to having to draft a strategic plan, she was confronted with the legislative challenge of obtaining more means with which to enforce the law, mainly with regards to fines. In her view, to make such changes, you have to seize the opportunities that may arise in the political sphere.

Mr. Freel outlined some guiding principles for the drafting and implementation of a strategic development plan. In his view, it is essential to plan based on actions that need to be taken. Similarly, we must use critical thought as we confront things as they stand by making a thorough evaluation of the situation and identifying the problems while maintaining a high level of transparency. Fallout with respect to various stakeholders and the target public must also be assessed. Finally, the values and mission must be stated clearly, while seeking consensus.

Planning does not, however, prevent all crises. As well as knowing how to spot opportunities within the political context, Mr. Freel recommends tapping into organizational history to better cope with the unexpected.

As for human resources, Mr. Freel recommended making use of passionate people with established problem-solving skills, proven integrity and leadership.

In a context of budget cuts, the challenge lies in hiring the right people and motivating existing staff. The strategies outlined include identifying employees' strengths and interests in order to assign corresponding tasks while maintaining a balance with the organization's objectives, as Ms. Izumi-Nitao pointed out. As for Mr. Freel, he mentioned the importance of giving credit to employees for their accomplishments, indicating the role they are called upon to play within the strategic plan and giving them leeway while subjecting them to a form of accountability. Finally, good communication remains the centerpiece in human resource management.

Remuneration is no longer the only motivation for employees. Ms. Carson mentioned the importance of giving employees the opportunity to add to their résumés, of recognizing them by granting them functional titles, and of offering them the opportunity to give various presentations during conferences.

Several participants highlighted the difficulty of hiring specialists in information technology. Some indicated that the fact of working for a small agency can be used as a recruiting argument since the resource person may be called upon to become more involved at all levels. Contact with universities and the use of interns can be a way to ensure succession within the organization.