

# **Chapter I**

## **Employee Motivation & Proper Work Culture**

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There is a general perception that work culture has deteriorated due to lack of motivation of employees and efficiency of the government has suffered. To improve this situation, the Assam Administrative Reforms Commission makes the following recommendations.

### **I. Performance-linked Incentives**

Incentives – both positive and negative – linked to individual performance should be introduced to motivate employees and improve work culture. In the current system, there is little reward for good work, bad work frequently goes unpunished, and non-performance has become a low-risk hiding strategy. Positive incentives could be non-monetary, linked to individual performance, in the form of recognition, e.g., appreciation letters signed by the Secretary/ CS/ CM, etc., which inspire others and encourage the individual to keep doing well. These should be based on explicit criteria made known to all concerned well in advance so that expectations could be set and performance measured periodically over the year through a participatory appraisal system (explained in a later section below).

Unlike the impersonal, punishment-oriented system built into present service rules, the new system should be based on the employee and the supervisor working closely with mutual trust, agreed upon performance expectations, and fairness in rewards and corrective action. It would be possible to tackle poor performance or non-performance proactively, as the employee would be under regular scrutiny of the supervisor, affording opportunities for timely corrective action and minimizing recourse to complex, time-consuming departmental proceedings, which would still be needed for intractable cases.

### **II. Performance Appraisal**

In order to get the best out of the employees in a positive, mutually supportive manner, a new performance appraisal system will have to replace the current ACR system. This should be on the lines of the performance appraisal system followed in ISO 9000 organisations, with necessary modification suitable to Government. This appraisal has three clear advantages over the current ACR system –

- (a) **Participatory:** In the new system, the employee reported upon would be able to participate in own performance appraisal at all

stages, right from the initial goal setting, together with his/her supervisor.

- (b) **Timely:** Unlike the current system, where ACRs are written once for the year or a reporting period shorter than a year – and that too long after the reporting period is over, performance appraisal in the new system would be done at the end of every quarter of the reporting year. Each time, the employee would also be able to participate and would get to understand his/her strengths, scope for improvement, etc. The supervisor would use these opportunities to give both positive and negative feedback and to communicate the employee's progress. The appraisal reports would be signed in agreement by the employee as well as the supervisor, and the employee would have the right to bring on record any disagreement.
- (c) **Not impersonal:** Again, unlike the current ACR system, which lacks personal involvement of the employee and the reporting officer, the proposed appraisal system offers much opportunity for the supervisor to inspire desirable action, and to take timely corrective action.

### III. Reporting System and Organizational Chart

From the above description, it is obvious that the new system would also require changes in the reporting system. The current reporting system is impersonal, the emphasis is on designation and not on the individual; everyone works for the government, which is an abstract entity, and hardly anyone feels any real need for reporting to his/her immediate superior on a regular and direct basis. This allows (even forces) the employees (officers as well as staff) to be on their own. This “self-managed” system wishes that everyone would discharge his/her duties and responsibilities conscientiously in the greater public interest at all times, ignoring the human tendency of responding to incentives and disincentives – and without a sound reporting system, it would not be easy to have a well-functioning incentive system.

In order to have an effective reporting system, organizational charts with clear lines of reporting should be introduced in each department; each officer and staff should have a designated superior to report to. Everyone

should get in touch with his/her immediate supervisor almost on a daily basis, if even for a few minutes, and have “one-on-one” meetings every fortnight or month to share information, ideas, opinions, problems, etc.

Each department should have departmental officers' meeting every month and all-employee (officers as well staff) meeting every quarter.

#### **IV. Job Charts**

Well-defined job charts for employees at all levels should be introduced; these are necessary, since work is organized, expectations are set, and performance is appraised on the basis of the job charts. Although some flexibility would be needed, particularly at the higher levels of the organizational hierarchy, the core content for each category of work should be laid out clearly. That would enable every individual to know what he/she is supposed to deliver at the minimum, and not to feel genuinely bad if corrective action is taken for failure on that account.

#### **V. Selection and Promotion**

For improving the quality of personnel in the Secretariat, the following suggestions could be considered for implementation after due consultations.

1. Training should be mandatory across the career of the Assam Secretariat Service employees – induction training, refresher training at well-defined intervals, and trainings linked to promotions/ EB crossing/ selection to a different category post, etc. These trainings could be organized at the Assam Administrative Staff College, with appropriately designed content and the right kind of faculty, including guest faculty. Training modules could be obtained from outside sources as well, e.g., the Government of India, the Indian Institute of Public Administration, etc.
2. The Secretariat Training School should be shifted to, or even merged with, the Assam Administrative Staff College for improving the quality of training to the Secretariat employees, and also the field level employees, who are supposed to be trained at the Secretariat Training School.
3. Promotion from Grade IV to Assistants should be carefully scrutinized; this avenue should be available only on the merit or merit-cum-seniority basis – and that too when the educational qualifications are met, and not on the seniority basis alone.
4. The empanelment system should be considered for promotion to the Joint Secretary level in the ACS.
5. Similarly, there should be empanelment for promotion of the Secretariat Superintendents to the Under Secretary level.

## **VI. Work Environment**

Poor condition physical environment is known to affect the quality of work output in all human organizations, and the Assam Secretariat cannot be an exception. Cramped and dirty work areas, broken or dilapidated furniture, non-ergonomic seats, poor lighting, unhygienic toilet facilities, etc., are well-known problems. Solving these problems will be of definite help in improving employee productivity.

The new Secretariat building should be so designed that a whole department could be accommodated in a hall like accommodation with all necessary infrastructure and facilities at one place as followed in corporate offices. Even states like Haryana has been following this pattern and getting good results.

## **VII. Holidays**

While discussing work culture of State Government employees, we must not fail to highlight that in our state the list of holidays for State Government Offices is too long to be conducive for improving work culture and efficiency in the public administration. Frequent closure of offices on different occasions has definitely adversely effected the economic growth of the State. The Commission recommends that the total number of holidays for State Government Offices including Sundays, Second and Fourth Saturdays should not exceed 90 days (i.e., one fourth of 365 days) in a year.

For the interest of all round development of the State, time has come to discard the general feeling that by declaring holidays in the memory of great people, we have been paying respect to them.