

# ENGAGING EVERY STAFF MEMBER AND DEVELOPING A PURPOSE DRIVEN ORGANISATION FOR ACCOUNTABLE SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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## ABSTRACT

The KwaZulu Natal Department of Transport has taken a bold step ahead of traditional public service entities in its approach to capacity building and human resource development by embarking on a holistic, systematic organisational development program that strikes a balance between gaining commitment of every employee and the continuous improvement of processes towards service excellence.

Capacity building links numerous elements to achieve the desired outcome of improved service delivery or competitiveness. The challenge facing the organisation is to translate these key elements into accountable service excellence - meaning that results, people and workplaces should be judged and found to be world-class by any measure. This is being achieved through the implementation of the Mission-directed Work Team (MDWT) program, which has globally recognised best practice tools and techniques that assist leaders and their teams to - establish business focus resulting in simultaneous improvement of quality, speed of delivery, cost effectiveness and morale; create a safe working environment; streamline their structures; identify and eliminate waste thus enabling value to flow; and create a learning organisation.

In the context of capacity building, any organisation can buy machines or set up infrastructure, but its people that make the difference!

Some of the key elements to unleashing the collective creative capacity of the people in an organisation is to create a purpose driven organisation and a service-centric culture; establish goal alignment; involve people in measuring, managing and improving their own performance; focus on innovation and continuous improvement; and to create an environment that is characterised by teamwork, participation, flexibility and learning.

## 1. BACKGROUND

“Pen-pushers and guardians of rubber stamps, thieves intent on self-enrichment, bureaucrats who think they have the right to ignore the vision of Batho Pele, who come to work as late as possible and knock off as early as possible” this is how President Thabo Mbeki described some employees in the public service as he emphatically highlighted the importance of addressing the issue of culture in his State of the Nation Address on 6 February 2004.

This description is a widely spread perception of the public service in South Africa and in many instances we could have equally deserved the same criticism. Staff members were often not driven by a higher order purpose nor did they have commitment to the organization since failure of any part may have resulted in the failure of own component.

People worked in isolated silos not caring or knowing about the role, contribution, challenges or achievements of their colleagues working in the same organization but in a different component. The organisation could have been described as individualistic in nature and comments such as 'it's not in my job description' or 'leave me alone, I know what I'm doing' were the order of the day.

Productivity was low, typically not measured and if measured, very little feedback or further training or assistance was given by supervisors. Success was measured in terms of the extent to which the budget had been spent. The budget was often viewed in isolation to the quality of the service or the quantity of services delivered.

Absenteeism remained a problem for many years as attendance at work was not measured effectively or recognised. Team members believed that their ideas would not be valued. Therefore no, or very few, suggestions for improvements were made or implemented at the place of work.

Reward for performance in many cases was lacking and very difficult to do as the measurables and outputs were either ill defined or nonexistent. It was difficult to gauge the level of performance of individuals and more importantly – teams. Supervising staff were often rewarded, not for their supervising abilities or motivational abilities, but rather on elements away from the line function such as their ability to write a report or their help with non line function activities.

## **2. BUILD CAPACITY THROUGH ORGANISATION, HR AND MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT**

We saw the need to change and in 1997 the white paper on transforming the public service with the Batho Pele principles was the catalyst that kick-started us into a course of action.

The value system practiced by team members in any organization determines its culture. It is people who make or break service delivery – through their work ethic, ethos, attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and so forth. Hence it is important to address the issue of culture in a systematic fashion.

Whilst the Batho Pele principles are a noble government initiative and we enjoyed pockets of excellence winning some of the highest accolades in the Province at the time, it soon became apparent that meaningful transformation throughout the organisation was not being achieved. There was no fundamental change in the organisational culture and it was still 'business as usual'.

We realized that the drive in its current form lacked mechanisms to engage front-line staff in the business. Historically officials had not been exposed to a climate of participation, nor had they been given the 'tools', skills and authority to meaningfully meet the requirements of each Batho Pele Principle. They did not participate in decision-making. We had to find a way that would help team members to break the bonds of apathy and mere compliance to rules and regulations.

How do we turn all these negatives around? In particular how do we do this when we are still surrounded by -

- Red tape;
- Bureaucratic management styles;
- Poor record system in place;
- Lack of capacity;
- Poorly developed skills in many areas; and
- Restricted budget?

Whilst we knew some of the answers and we knew where we wanted to go, we needed to know the 'how'... 'how do we become world-class?'. We needed a holistic, systematic organizational development intervention that would address organization, human resource and management development.

We then scanned the market for a program that would help us to address some of our shortcomings and we chose the 'Mission-directed Work Teams' (MDWT) program.

### 3. THE PROGRAMME

The ten areas of competence, in other words the modules, addressed by the programme are illustrated below. The blue "orbit" includes the modules relating to the "commitment and development of people" aspect of the model. The red "orbit" includes the modules relating to the "improvement of processes". Initially we introduced the two foundation modules being "Goal Alignment" and "Visual Workplace" as they prepared our teams and their workplaces for the remaining modules. All four Regions have recently completed the training on "Service Quality – the Batho Pele way' (in line with the revitalisation program led by the Department of Public Service and Administration) and 'Process Improvement – identifying and eliminating waste'. Our mechanical workshop teams have also embarked on the Asset Care module.

The modules represent skills and competencies the team leader needs to master; however, the front line team members are engaged in the implementation to achieve business results.

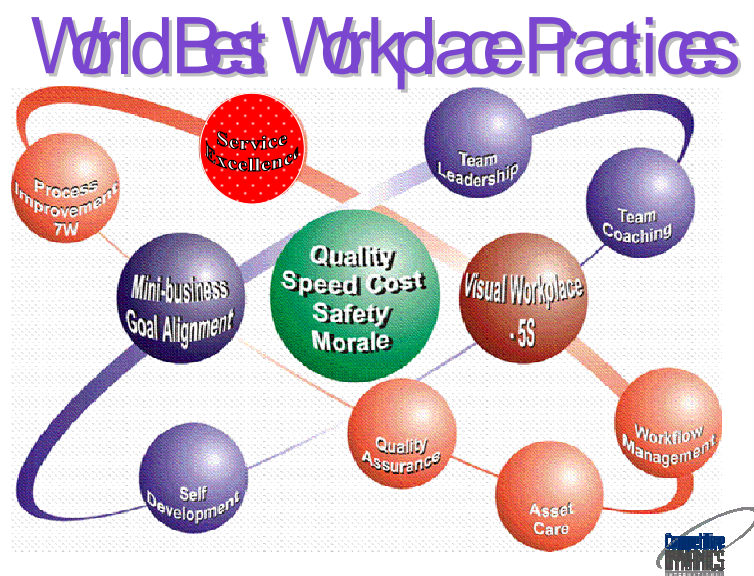


Figure 1. Areas of competence.

#### **4. CREATING PASSION**

We differentiate between world class and non-world class organisations in terms of levels. The worst case is a level 1 which is individualistic in character and you would hear language like 'it's not my job' or 'leave me alone, I know what I am doing'. The 'silo' effect best describes a level 2, whilst level 3 is a top-down approach. Level 4 is a good place to be in terms of progress as it is customer-focused whilst Level 5 is purpose-driven. This is an organisation that is impacting on the greater good of mankind, where people believe that they are truly contributing to the upliftment of society in a meaningful way – this is when passion is created, people find meaning in their work and creative power is unleashed.

In government, if one area of performance is not performing well, it does not impact on another and thus there is no pooling of ideas or effort to resolve issues. Perhaps in the private sector it is easier to create passion for the well being of the organization as a whole as the ultimate well being of the organization is dependant on the well being of each individual component e.g. sales vs production, etc.

Also best practices in one area are not shared in other areas as very little cross pollination exists. The only mechanism available to bind the organization was for us to create passion in the minds of the employees a higher purpose or the ultimate impact of their service delivery on the lives of their customers. For example, the mission for teams in the Road Traffic Inspectorate is to 'Save Lives through effective traffic policing'. This mission also stands for a blacktop patching team, a signs team etc. Therefore the outputs or outcomes generated by that particular component must equal to the reduction in road deaths.

This may sound dangerous as it may encourage individual units not to care for the well being of other units but if this mission of the individual components is aligned with the vision or overall mission of the organization in terms of service delivery then individuals will develop a passion for their mission and that of the organization.

#### **5. INSTIL A CULTURE OF EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE AND FRIENDLY SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE DEPARTMENT**

It is not just one element but the total contribution of many factors that instils a service-centric culture. A critical starting point was to measure performance, have leadership drive the process in order to establish ownership at all levels and instil pride in the workplace. The MDWT program compelled us to be customer driven and to do the right thing in the right way – always through the eyes and experiences of our customers. There are certain things in the program that we have to do and when people see us doing these things we instil confidence. For example, our customers assess and give the team feedback on their performance. This forms the basis for continuous improvement.

#### **6. ENSURE GOAL ALIGNMENT FROM STRATEGIC THROUGH TO FRONT LINE LEVELS**

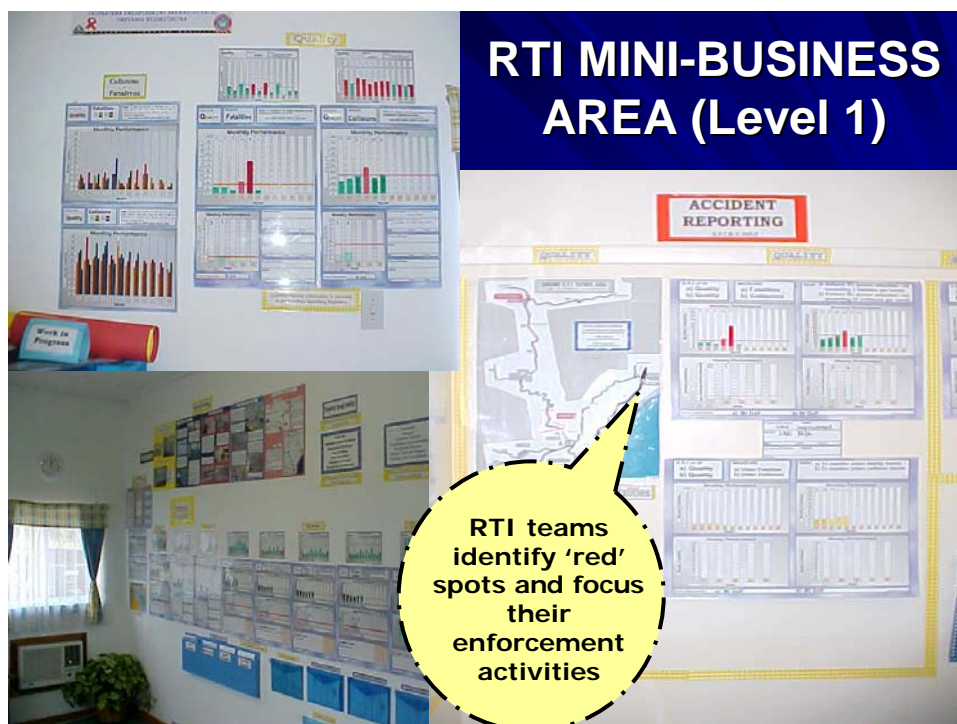
We operate at a provincial level where every Department has clearly identified core business and they must deliver on their mandate. The strategic plan flows from this and provides the necessary guidance to teams within the Department ensuring that everyone is focused in the same direction. However, the challenge remains to purify the functions of

all the different Departments so that we can eliminate possible duplication and maximise our limited resources. It is becoming increasingly critical for us, as Government, to offer integrated services.

The front line teams are the wheels of service delivery and as such they must all be aligned, go in the same direction and go in the right direction. They actually deliver the services and as such must feel part of the organisation if we are to achieve our aims. In our organisation they know what the organisational goals are and what their contribution is towards achieving those goals.

## 7. MEASURE WHAT WE DO AND MANAGE OUR PERFORMANCE

Traditionally measures were dubious and therefore no targets were set for any activity and teams performed at a pace without much concern for importance or consequence. With the MDWT program teams are required to set targets based upon the realistic potential of the team and its resources. These targets are broken down to daily outputs and are then measured on a daily basis. All performance is depicted in a visual manner in an area accessible to all members of the team. Results are shown in red, where the target has not been met, or green if the target has been met. When the colour red is seen this must always be accompanied by an action plan to explain how the poor performance is to be corrected. Team members are encouraged to meet daily and at these meetings members are requested to give input regarding the resolution of problem areas. Team members are given a chance to update the charts so that the measures and performance of the team is understood by all.



**Figure 2. RTI mini-business area.**

Results achieved are reported to management through various mediums. In the region, the reporting structure has been changed and currently has 4 levels as opposed to the 16 previous levels.

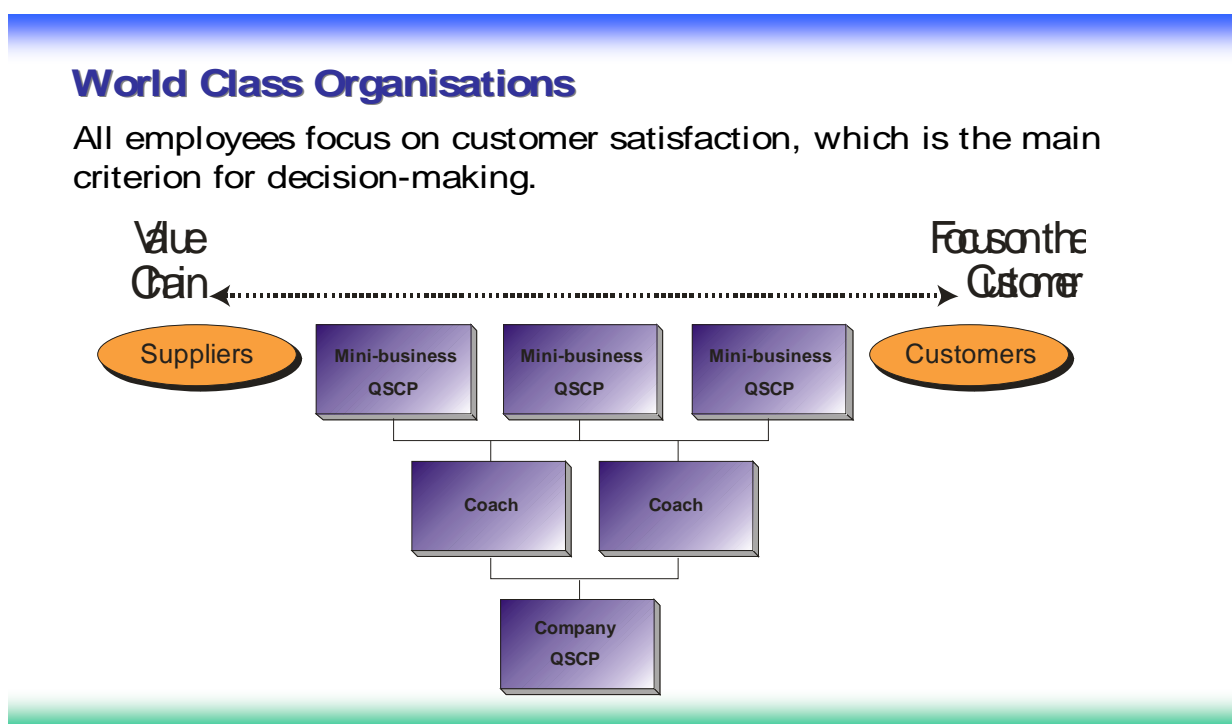
Monthly multi-level meetings are held during which, for example, Level 1 reports to level 3 and similarly level 2 reports to level 4. Level 4 is at director level and through this reporting

mechanism the regional head or senior manager is kept up to date regarding the performance of each team but also very importantly, what problems and difficulties are being experienced by them.

At all levels in the organization team members are encouraged to present new ideas, innovations and suggestions. These are all recorded and maintained in terms of implementation. Monthly awards are given to those employees/team members for the best implemented suggestions. These ideas are pooled and distributed to other components in the organization.

## 8. RATIONALISE THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

In the MDWT program there is a maximum of 6 levels in the reporting structure as opposed to traditional organisations that may have in excess of 24 levels for the same number of employees and activities.



**Figure 3. Reporting structure.**

The leaders in our organisation are as follows -

- Mini-business Leaders being any supervisor at the front line, typically foremen, shift supervisors, administrative supervisors, etc;
- Coaches are the first line of management and would typically be station commanders, district superintendents, middle managers, etc;
- Master Coaches are middle managers and would typically be regional commanders, cost centre managers, technical managers, etc;
- Process Drivers are senior managers and would typically be directors;
- Strategic Drivers operate at a strategic level and would typically be chief directors; and
- Finally the Head of Department.

The organizational structure has been flattened considerably resulting in devolved authority, shorter reporting lines, improved speed of communication, quicker responses to problem solving and better decision-making. The organisation has become more adaptable, responsive to and focused on customer service.

Line function leaders are required to take responsibility for the performance of sub-ordinates rather than the traditional role of expecting HR to perform basic management responsibilities and functions. The size of teams has become more manageable with reporting ratios at the front line of approximately 8 to 12 members in a team.

An on-going process is to

- Utilise internal customers/suppliers and external suppliers more effectively;
- Identify and eliminate bureaucracy, duplication and waste through purification of roles;
- Promote greater accountability ensuring that EVERY position adds value and that performance can be measured (quantify, qualify) at an individual level;
- Address representativeness and affirmative action; and
- Create an environment that is characterized by teamwork, participation and continuous learning.

This rationalization of the organizational structure has resulted in information being processed speedily to the highest level, the accuracy of information is retained and the fact that the information is presented by the employees at the coal face in the organization.

## **9. REVITALISE AND ENTRENCH THE PRINCIPLES OF BATHO PELE**

In response to the need to re-orientate the character of the Public Service towards a people and service-centric culture, the DPISA, in partnership with national departments and provincial administrations has initiated and embarked on a Public Service-wide Batho Pele Change Engagement Programme, dubbed, *“Together Beating the Drum for Service Delivery”*.

In most public service entities the culture of merely complying and apathy are a real danger to organisational effectiveness. Due to the fact that the Department has embarked on the MDWT program, the organisation has been able to respond quickly to the revitalisation drive and we have aligned ourselves to this National policy. Because we are implementing globally recognised best practices, good governance is a way of life already. There are numerous examples of how each principle is being demonstrated in the day-to-day working lives of our leaders and their teams.

## **10. ENTRENCH EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (ERM) STRATEGIES**

Traditionally the management of people has been seen to be the domain of the Human Resources component. In the public service the largest portion of the budget is spent on human resources and therefore to manage effectively, ownership of the business by the line management makes good business sense and the management of human resources becomes a line management function. The role of the ‘old’ Human Resources management component has changed to managing the employment relationship, hence the change of title as well. It is important therefore that Line managers are intimately familiar with all ERM strategies and that these are managed by them.

## **11. SUSTAINING THE PROGRAM**

Whilst the Department is clearly a leader in building capacity through the MDWT program, it still faces a number of challenges. As with most new ideas or methods this work procedure and management program will slowly die out if not sustained.

Individuals from within the organization and representing all teams are selected annually to form audit teams. These audit teams visit each team at level 1 and level 2 monthly to audit results presented visually in the various work places. Auditing is done against a specific list of best practice benchmarks monthly and results are evaluated against targets set. Similarly, team members are questioned about the results to ensure their co-operation and understanding of the activities and functions of the team. Also each member is required to know and be able to give the stated vision and mission of the organization, their purpose and organizational values. Members are challenged to give examples of actions or specifics where this has been done or implemented. In the same process, they are expected to measure, manage and improve on their performance.

## **12. BENEFITS OF THIS CAPACITY BUILDING DRIVE**

The challenge of the program was taken up by the officials of the Department and numerous benefits are being enjoyed, amongst them being –

- More focus on core business and front line performance is aligned to the organization's strategy i.e. the vision, goals and values of the Department.
- Improved efficiency and effectiveness (see appendix 1 for improvement of results).
- Tangible measurements that can confirm improvements to service delivery or highlight shortfalls so that corrective measures can be put in place;
- It is designed to engage the head (knowledge), heart (passion) and hands (practice) of every team member in the organisation and therefore we have seen improvements in communication, pride of officials, morale, participation and teamwork;
- An environment for team members to become innovative and suggestions are tabled, tracked and implemented on a daily basis by the teams themselves;
- The tools help us to achieve service excellence and we have a safer, cleaner and a more professional working environment where redundant and unused equipment has been identified and either utilized elsewhere or removed;
- Extensive application of the Batho Pele principles, the transformation objectives and other governing legislation;
- Skills transfer and empowerment of team members is taking place;
- Improved public perception through better service delivery which is proved through customer audits, teams have received a number of positive letters and comments from members of the community. Supplier performance is also tracked and managed; and
- Leadership is strengthened.

## **13. CONCLUSION**

Our approach to service excellence and in fact all our efforts cannot be achieved without the commitment and passion of ordinary people like you and I, doing an extraordinary task in delivering critical services.

## **14. REFERENCE**

- [1] Lange, Dr D., 2005. Program – “Mission-directed Work Teams”.



APPENDIX 1

**COST CENTRE MANAGER PERFORMANCE - ESHOWE**

Performance Measure		Performance Targets (TOTALS)					VARIANCES		
							Year-on-Year Variance (actual)	Year-on-Year Variance (actual)	Year-on-Year Variance (actual)
							(b) against (a)	(c) against (b)	(d) against (c)
		2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	%	%	%
<b>SURFACED ROADS - REHABILITATION</b>									
Quality	TARGET	83	90	90	95	95			
	ACTUAL	73	83	93	95	0	114	112	103
Speed kms	TARGET	11	11	15	18	11			
	ACTUAL	11	12	15	19	0	109	125	127
Cost (R)	TARGET	R 400	R 400	R 400	R 400	R 400			
	ACTUAL	R 392	R 392	R 394	R 400	R 0	100	101	102
<b>SURFACED ROADS - MAINTENANCE</b>									
Quality	TARGET	72	88	90	94	95			
	ACTUAL	83	85	90	95	0	102	106	106
Speed - m <sup>2</sup> (Reseals, overlays & Black Top Patching)	TARGET	61400	65950	58800	80350	93900			
	ACTUAL	57500	65980	62550	81385	0	115	95	130
Speed – kms (Road Markings & Road Studs)	TARGET	60	75	80	100	120			
	ACTUAL	70	85	75	110	0	121	88	147
Cost (R)	TARGET	R 400	R 400	R 400	R 400	R 400			
	ACTUAL	R 392	R 394	R 398	R 400	R 0	101	101	101
<b>GRAVEL ROADS - CONSTRUCTION</b>									
Quality	TARGET	80	90	90	95	95			
	ACTUAL	75	85	85	90	0	113	100	106
Speed	TARGET	28	32	45	48	50			
	ACTUAL	25	30	40	50	0	120	133	125
Cost	TARGET	R 100	R 100	R 100	R 100	R 100			
	ACTUAL	R 98	R 98	R 100	R 100	R 0	100	102	100

<b>GRAVEL ROADS - MAINTENANCE</b>									
<b>Quality</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	85	90	91	95	97			
	<b>ACTUAL</b>	80	86	96	97	0	108	111	101
<b>Speed</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	12729	13230	14430	19635	20740			
	<b>ACTUAL</b>	12108	10318	13879	17360	0	85	135	125
<b>Cost</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	R 400	R 400	R 400	R 400	R 400			
	<b>ACTUAL</b>	R 338	R 388	R 385	R 400	R 0	115	99	104
<b>CONSTRUCTION OF CAUSEWAYS &amp; BRIDGES</b>									
<b>Quality</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	80	80	90	90	95			
	<b>ACTUAL</b>	70	70	85	90	0	100	121	106
<b>Speed</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	5	8	12	8	15			
	<b>ACTUAL</b>	5	6	11	8	0	120	183	73
<b>Cost</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	R 100	R 100	R 100	R 100	R 100			
	<b>ACTUAL</b>	R 80	R 100	R 98	R 100	R 0	125	98	102
<b>Attendance</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	100	100	100	100	100			
	<b>ACTUAL</b>	94	94	98	98		100	104	100
<b>Injuries on duty</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	5	5	3	3	2			
	<b>ACTUAL</b>	6	8	5	4		133	63	80
<b>Vehicle Accidents</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	3	3	2	2	2			
	<b>ACTUAL</b>	5	4	2	3		80	50	150
<b>Suggestions made vs No of employees</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	200	350	340	300	300			
	<b>ACTUAL</b>	150	190	210	220		127	111	105
<b>No of suggestions implemented</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	200	350	340	300	300			
	<b>ACTUAL</b>	140	170	190	210		121	112	111

**NOTE:** In order to comply with the SATC requirements for the submission of papers, the number of pages has restricted the inclusion of other results. However critical measures have been included in this paper.