

Action Learning Scenario – Leadership 201 – June 2010

Talking Change: How to More Effectively Communicate About the Reorganization

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Issue: How do we use communication to facilitate a smooth and productive transition to a new organizational structure? How do we create an understanding and gain support among employees and customers/stakeholders about the need to change and the expected results of change? How do we use change to enhance employee morale?

Background: Organizational change is never easy, and setting new priorities can sometimes intimidate or frustrate employees. And the USGS has certainly experienced its fair share of change during the last decade. For the past two years, the USGS has been implementing the directions outlined in the USGS Science Strategy.

In 2007, we realigned our Regional Executives from leaders with responsibility for a single discipline in a larger region to leaders who represent all USGS science disciplines and capabilities in a smaller geographic area. This change has enhanced our ability to plan and execute multidisciplinary science, broadened capabilities we can offer to our customers and partners, and strengthened our ability to provide high-quality, unbiased science to decision makers.

Director McNutt is building on our Science Strategy implementation efforts and announced this past February steps she is taking to ensure that at the highest levels, the USGS is effectively organized and managed to achieve the Science Strategy goals. The next step includes aligning our senior executive leadership structure without Science Strategy goals and simplifying the management structure across the USGS while maintaining functionality.

Successful organizational change absolutely requires effective communication. There is not easy way to communicate important changes, especially long-term employees who are comfortable with the existing structure and have seen changes come and go. So how do we help employees better understand the need and reasons for change? How do we help them feel that they are a part of the change process rather than feeling as if it's something being done to them? What information should we communicate and when? How do employees want to receive this information?

Challenge: Based on the background information and resources provided, identify what employees want to and should know about the reorganization as well as opportunities and challenges that can be used in developing an effective communication strategy. Include ways we can gain employee support for change and increase morale. Identify ways we can create effective dialog with employees, including the ability to ask questions, request clarification, and make suggestions.

Resources:

1. Aligning our Senior Leadership Structure with the Science Strategy (Handout)
2. Facing Tomorrow's Challenges – U. S. Geological Survey Science in the Decade 2007-2017 – http://www.usgs.gov/science_strategy/
3. Making the Case for Integrated Science – A Sequel to the USGS Science Strategy (Handout)