



APEX

What Executives Are Saying

**A report on consultations with
federal Public Service Executives**

2008

ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL EXECUTIVES
OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

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1 HIGHLIGHTS

Consultations remain a cornerstone of APEX's work throughout each year. And while the dialogue in 2008, both formal and informal, underscored some of the challenges facing executives in an increasingly complex work environment, one of the things that stood out is the very high level of commitment that executives have to their roles and work as public servants. Even as they remain committed to their work, executives also say they face greater challenges associated with what they describe as a centralization of policy and decision-making in Ottawa, a climate of mistrust of public servants, risk aversion in the system, and added rules, regulations, and processes that are time-consuming but add little or no value.

They worry about a work culture where they find little tolerance for mistakes, and thus little room for risk-taking which in turn impedes innovation. Executives in regions expressed particular frustration that they see decision-making happening more and more in Ottawa and without their valuable input, which they say relegates them to feeling downgraded and isolated on the front lines.

"The level of control needs to be decentralized – we have to call Ottawa for everything"

The issues that are most on the minds of executives are heavy workloads that affect work-life balance, the impacts of perceived tensions between civil servants and politicians, the role of executives in public service renewal, and some human resources issues like staffing practices and the application of the pay-at-risk component of their salaries.

In 2008, a few key themes emerged from dialogue with executives:

- Their commitment remains high and does not change, even as they express some frustration about the **current work environment**: relationships with elected officials, control and centralization of policy and decision-making, effects of working within a minority government, impacts of past scandals, risk aversion, and the general public's perceptions of civil servants.
- **Heavy workload** is resulting in some executives being constantly in reaction mode, and the relentless pace leaves little time for collaboration, horizontality with colleagues and/or regions.
- **Human resources management** remains a significant challenge for executives, with upward delegation increasingly making senior executives "paper pushers"

because they alone have signing authority, because of the practice of retaining it at very senior levels. Thus, they cannot delegate responsibilities to their managers, but aren't clear on why HR authorities no longer rest with line managers. The rationale for the change has not been clearly communicated.

- **Public Service Renewal (PSR)** is very much supported by executives, some who recommend an orientation program for senior managers joining the public service mid or late career, to ensure they too walk the talk on values, ethics and codes of conduct. Some executives also do not know why the new norm is for executives to compete for positions at their current level (vs. deploying) which seems at odds with the flexibilities promised by the PSEA. If this is related to PSR, it has not been explained. So while executives are willing and ready to participate in PSR, they perceive a lack of clarity related to governance, and are confused by the number of people and organizations involved in the initiative which makes it difficult for them to know how to support and contribute.

These are some, but not all of the issues on the minds of executives, who understand the importance of situating them in different ways in order for them to be addressed:

- The role of the individual executive in taking action,
- The responsibility of the federal system to address these issues,
- The role of APEX in responding to members and having a positive influence on decision-makers.

2 OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

This report reflects both ongoing consultations by APEX over the course of a year, such as bilateral meetings with Deputy Heads, meetings with senior decision-makers, feedback during and after the annual Symposium, APEX-sponsored workshops and other learning events, informal dialogue, and the key annual consultations that help APEX develop its policy positions.

There was also a half-day consultation session held with executives in small agencies of the federal government, co-chaired by Ian Wilson, Librarian and Archivist of Canada and Michel Smith, Chief Executive Officer of APEX.

For the annual consultation process, participants self select by registering in advance of a scheduled session. In 2008, the APEX secretariat visited with executives in regions and in

the National Capital Region to “take the pulse” on current and emerging issues and trends affecting them. Sessions were held in Montreal, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Toronto, Moncton, Charlottetown, Halifax, St. John’s, Ottawa and nearly 250 executives participated.

This year, the consultations took the form of a one-day session devoted to executives and the issues that mattered to them, and included learning opportunities that participants wanted, as per feedback from previous consultations.

This one-day session included an environmental scan provided by Chief Executive Officer Michel Smith, a group discussion on the issues most important to participants, a four-year retrospective report on the Advisory Service for Executives provided by APEX, information on the APEX Survey on the Health & Well-Being of Executives, and a special presentation on “If Opportunity Knocks, Will You Be Ready?” that included information on “Suicidal CVs, How to Nail a Board, and Introspection.”

3 SCAN OF THE EXECUTIVE MOOD

Throughout the year, APEX liaises with members, Deputy Heads, Central Agencies, like-minded organizations, and others, and always shares general input and feedback with members during the more formal annual consultation process.

Some executives expressed their anxiety of functioning effectively in their **workplace**, and see words like “transparency”, “speaking truth to power”, “providing fearless advice” etc. as rhetoric, versus a role they should undertake. They see executives as having to tread carefully and toe the public service line, and they attribute this to an environment that has an attitude of being in permanent pre-election mode. There is a minority government and a perceived, or possibly real lack of trust and respect between elected officials and public servants; there is centralized control in the Privy Council Office (PCO) and the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO).

In addition, over the year, APEX also heard worries from executives about what they describe as a “zero tolerance” for mistakes – one strike and you’re out – which contributes to a **lack of risk taking**, and accordingly, a **lack of innovation**.

Public Service Renewal remains an issue for executives, who support the goals and objectives, but some are uncomfortable with how the current work culture lacks support for the more seasoned and experienced executives who have no retirement plans for the next several years.

Executives are concerned about many **Human Resources issues**: succession planning, aging staff, recruitment, retention, talent management to name a few. They also question the benefits of the change to the new PSEA which many do not see as an improvement. Executives also worry about the increased turnover in leadership and management positions because of the potential impacts that include knowledge loss, and a lack of experience and maturity of some new senior executives.

The “**web of rules**” and lack of flexibility is an issue, and contributes to already **heavy workloads**. In turn, **work life balance and health concerns** have been expressed by executives.

Regional executives remain concerned about increased **centralization of policy development and decision-making** from which they are excluded; they are then frustrated at having to implement bad policy on the front lines – a situation that would have been avoided had they been included at the development stage. As well, some regional executives see policy as trumping service delivery, which is the actual interface with the Canadians served by government.

4 HEALTH OF EXECUTIVES

For a decade, APEX has been proactively involved in researching and monitoring the health and well-being of executives. The first study was undertaken in 1997 and followed up five years later in 2002, and toward the end of 2007, APEX conducted its third extensive survey. Preliminary, descriptive findings at the 2008 Annual APEX Symposium in June. For example, according to the early data which at the time of this report does not include secondary analysis so correlations between data elements can be made, executives are tired. 75% of them reported fatigue, and there is extensive literature about health issues that lack of sleep and fatigue can cause.

“How conscious are the leaders? What can be done at the individual level?”

The executives who participated in the consultation process examined preliminary, descriptive data and discussed their thoughts on a “Health Summit” being planned in 2009.

Those who participated in the consultations support having this summit, and in doing other follow up, and see it as important to:

- promote, where possible, partnering between/among organizations
- consider regions and regional perspectives at the Health Summit

- keep focused on issues specific to executives, and to recognize that there are shared responsibilities and accountabilities for actions (APEX, individuals, departments, central agencies, etc.)
- keep premises in context – i.e. APEX to focus on issues specific to executives, their views and proposed actions on their health and well-being:

Participants offered views and suggestions for following up on the survey, which included: tools (e.g. an EX Well-Being Toolkit”), a health diagnostic including both physical and mental for each executive; a number of suggestions for raising awareness, sharing information, and improving communications. As well, executives want to see more involvement in this issue by Deputy Heads and the public service system in general; some recommend that Deputy Heads have this issue in their own performance agreements.

“travel demands are high on EXs from regions. Monday morning meetings in Ottawa mean Sunday travel for most...show respect for regional EXs.”

The issue of effective advocacy by APEX, including specific events and initiatives was also discussed, as well as some possible learning opportunities specific to health and well-being, as well as research and sharing of promising practices.

Some executives also wanted to see concrete action on the “fatigue” issue, and some tools and/or incentives for promoting health (e.g. eligibility for all executives to have a fitness club membership subsidy). Discussion also included ways to encourage better priority setting to help balance heavy workload and thus work/life, mentoring programs, the benefits and challenges of technology, hours of work (including flex, and a suggestion of a non-discretionary 5 days per year of special leave).

5 THE ADVISORY SERVICE FOR EXECUTIVES

A four year retrospective report was shared with participants; this fourth annual report of the Advisory Service for Executives (ASE) positions the data for 2007 as part of a four year retrospective on the Service since its inception.

As with previous annual reports, this one provides a full demographic profile of clients served, the reasons the executives sought out this executive support service, their reported levels of satisfaction, and recommendations for change.

Although the ASE was established to address the needs of individual executive clients, the composite data in this four year compilation can provide a unique perspective on the

collective needs, issues, concerns, aspirations and frustrations of a large cross-section of the senior leadership cadre of the Public Service.

Given the number of important reports recently issued relating to the subject of Public Service Renewal, the data in this report can hopefully contribute to that important dialogue currently underway, by adding the “voices” and experiences of over 800 executives.

“How we treat and support our workforce will have telling consequences on our ability to attract new talent, retain current talent, and carry out the delicate transition management challenges we face.”

2007 ASE Report

The issues that were most on the minds of client executives over the past four years include:

- Career Management
- Relationship with Superiors
- Reorganizations,
- Performance Management Program
- “Dismissals”
- Harassment
- Health-related concerns

6 BEING PREPARED FOR CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

“If Opportunity Knocks, Will You Be Ready” was an APEX-hosted workshop provided to participants during the consultation process. This learning opportunity reflects the wishes of APEX members, who provided organizers with suggestions for what could be discussed during the consultation session.

Making a career move within the public service can be a daunting experience for executives, who wanted tips and tools for how to capitalize on opportunities. The workshop better equipped participants to be able to:

- Identify the key issues to be addressed when making a decision to change
- Examine opportunities for change – pros and cons
- Identify the good and the not so good reasons to change

The interview portion for executives provided participants with:

- An understanding of the type of interviews conducted within the Public Service including changes re: new PSEA
- Tips on how to prepare for an interview
- Insights into types of questions asked
- Shared experiences – good and bad – concerning interviews
- Tips on behavior during interviews

This workshop also examined “suicidal CVs” and provided information on effective resumes and references.

7 CONCLUSION

There is a wealth of talent and expertise in the executive cadre of the Public Service, and an enormous opportunity to engage and motivate them to be an integral part of current priorities, including building the public service of the future. The consultations and ongoing dialogue during 2008 with executives, including very senior decision-makers, clearly show a deep commitment to public service in general, and a professional dedication to how they approach their work and responsibilities.

The APEX health survey result that executives are “fatigued” was corroborated during both formal and informal consultations. There are executives who are uncertain about how to meet the challenges they currently face because of added rules, added procedures, added responsibility, added workload, high staff turnover, and alarming signals they say they receive about waning trust in their expertise and professionalism. In this climate, some executives say they are increasingly overwhelmed by workloads that impede their ability to strike a better work-life balance, and they worry about current or potential impacts on their health.

They also shared the stress they feel at the widening gap they perceive between politicians and civil servants, and some are at a loss as to how to approach bridging the distance. Many executives say they clearly understand their individual responsibility to provide objective advice and excellent service, and to influence positive change in terms of trust and relationships, but some also worry that there is no mechanism in the current system for this advice to be heard. They expressed a wish for APEX to encourage and try to influence changes and better relations so they would be better equipped to meet their accountabilities and responsibilities, and more importantly, that they would be better positioned to serve government and all Canadians.

8 **SNAPSHOT: EXECUTIVE DEMOGRAPHICS**

As of December 31, 2007

- 5813 Executives in the PS (4856 in the CPA and 957 in Public Administration)
- 71.5% in NCR
- 23.7% in regions
- 4.8% outside Canada
- 41.3% of all Executives are women and yet 56% of all PS employees are women
- 7.6% of Executives are under 40 years of age
- 13.5% are between 40-44
- 23.1% are between 45-49
- 49.3% are between 50-59
- 6.5% are between 60-69
- 29% of all executives are francophone
- The average age of executives in 1987 was 48.7 years and today it is 51
- The average age of an ADM is 54

9 **ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL EXECUTIVES OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA**

APEX, the national association for federal public service executives, fosters excellence in leadership and is a strong advocate on behalf of executive interests. Created in 1984, the Association focuses on issues such as compensation, the work environment and public service management reform. The organization enjoys a strong and solid reputation for representing the interests of executives in a constructive and commendable manner.

Over its 25 year history, as trends and issues of interest evolved, so did APEX, and the Association's goals and objectives have grown from "promoting opportunities for

professional enrichment and fostering a collegial environment” to “advocating for the executive community and promoting excellence in leadership and management.”

As such, the **APEX VISION** is

“To inspire excellence, honesty and trust in Public Service for Canada and all Canadians. As the acknowledged voice of the federal executive community, APEX is a vibrant national organization whose counsel on key government issues is solicited and acted upon by leaders both domestically and internationally.”

APEX recognizes that the public service work environment can, and does shift from time to time because of external and other factors, and therefore, understands it must be vigilant in assessing current challenges and in forecasting which trends today will become tomorrow’s realities. This ability of APEX to be nimble, responsive, adaptable and respectful has reaped considerable success, and has furthered the interests of public service executives.

The vision is complemented, and guided by the **APEX MISSION**:

“To promote a quality Public Service by fostering excellence in leadership and management and by contributing to the well-being of executives in the Public Service of Canada.”

Members are committed to promoting management excellence and the highest level of professionalism in the Public Service of Canada; hold high standards of personal integrity and competence; work with Canadians in developing and putting in place innovative federal policies and programs; give timely and responsive service to Canadians in an equitable fashion; give advice to the government objectively, using their best judgment and exercising discretion; are team players, supporting and collaborating with their colleagues; lead and support employees with respect, care and fairness, allowing them to perform to their highest level and to achieve their career aspirations.



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10 VOICES: As It Was Heard

- *Hasn't the bureaucracy simply over-reacted to Gomery*
- *Increased "bean-counting" in the regions*
- *Centralization of policy – regions feel excluded; lack of understanding of client, lack of "regional" experience /appreciation*
- *Difficult to attract policy people to the regions*
- *Need to have increased openness/recognition of the value of regional experience*
- *Increased interest by NHQ in what is happening in regions but no increased regional input into decisions – decision making still centralized*
- *Increased scrutiny of expenditures such as travel*
- *"Not snow on the mountains, it is paper from Ottawa!"*
- *Want to achieve – frustrating micro management*
 - *have to feed the machine*
 - *taking away tools*
 - *losing flexibility to manage*
 - *takes away from service to Canadians*

- *Health – your time is the first thing that goes*
- *Lack of control – amount of time spent working*
- *Mobility issues/financial issues – regional rates of pay needed to take into consideration different costs of living*
- *Need for mentoring – senior executives as mentors*
- *Reporting – goes into a black HQ hole*
- *More for less – do things differently but don't have the flexibility to do so*
- *Region not hooked into the rich policy discussions at HQ – need to tap into the process*
- *Put the analyst from TBS into the region*
- *There should be a regional ADM on every ADM committee in Ottawa*
- *Constant shrinking of regional responsibilities*
- *General malaise among EXs – moral bad – at all levels*

- *Increased lack of respect by NHQ for regions*
- *Increased silos at HQ*
- *Increased paranoia about media – always pre-election mode*
- *Approval for even good news story is difficult ex. Request for interview have to be approved by Ottawa*
- *Level of control needs to be decentralized*
- *MO staff very young and inexperienced – takes time in transition*
- *Regional visits by MO staff not happening – no-one is going out MO-DM-ADM*

- *Regional visits possible when house is not sitting*
 - *Too many priorities – not enough time – HR, Finance, performance mgt, reporting, etc.*
 - *Maybe need a special position – Operational Associate DM*
 - *HR probably working longer hours – regional have better work life balance*
 - *But “can’t remember the last time I truly took a sick day and did not actually work”*
 - *“working when you are sick is a stress releaser – can manage my time better when I am sick”*
 - *Need regional salaries to recognize regional cost of living*
 - *Amount of dollars available for training has decreased*
 - *Relocation and travel costs need increased flexibility*
 - *Need to increase mobility*
 - *PMP must be applied fairly and equally*
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- *Disconnect between values and recognition*
 - *PS renewal is a disconnect*
 - *Need to influence the image of PS with Canadians – no-one defends the P.S.*
 - *In regions PS have more “face”*
 - *How much is connected to current “relationship issues” with parliamentarians*
 - *We are always in a reactive mode*
 - *Risk aversion culture is not conducive to talking HR risks*
 - *Lost generation of leaders*
 - *Policy vs. operational work not equally valued*
 - *Pace of work – no time for reflection; always in react mode*
 - *Discourages horizontal work – no time to include others including regions*
 - *Need to use tools such as BB strategically – re-think use – can be used as a trade off to provide balance i.e. Look at e-mails throughout the weekend means you don’t have to spend all Monday morning looking at e-mails.*
 - *Horizontal work – takes time – question of accountability (who is accountable in a horizontal work environment)*
 - *Existing rules and laws do not support horizontality*
 - *Need a safe haven/third party/neutral place to have conversations – need a collaborative space such as APEX*
 - *Lack of patience to have things happen i.e. Let “nature take its course”*
 - *Lack of time to think strategically*
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- *Risk aversion – centralization – system becomes dysfunctional – nothing gets done – it is regression not progression*
 - *Need to focus on mid-career recruits – lack of knowledge – need for training on p.s. culture*
 - *No-one wants to rock the boat – therefore, things stop*

- *PSMA high expectations not met – need better understanding of flexibilities*
 - *People not willing to take work of Executives on*
 - *Doing more reporting than doing – not attractive career*
 - *High degree of impatience – everyone wants direct or immediate return*
 - *Nothing ever stops – i.e. get a new program but then never drop the old ones.*
 - *Need accountability, authority and responsibility*
 - *Does the system allow or recognize the time needed to change behaviour.*
 - *Politicization of the bureaucracy – climate is not ready to push back*
 - *Should have a session “how do you hire” – tips for hiring managers.*
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- *Terminology of PMP not inspiring: “met most”*
 - *Terminology of PMP is offensive*
 - *Managers have to defend/explain a rating made by rating committee*
 - *Process not clear nor standard*
 - *Need to push back*
 - *What is the point – system is broken- not used properly – not transparent – no-one cares*
 - *How is the ability to manage people going to be monitored?*
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- *Need to value health – put in DM deliverables*
 - *Need to demonstrate impact on retention issue*
 - *Need to reward appropriate behaviours*
 - *Health as part of MAF*
 - *Need to identify best practices*
 - *“risks associated with a career in the public service”*
 - *Need sustained action*
 - *Let everyone have an all encompassing medical health assessment*
 - *Identify three areas for concentrated action*
 - *Need to take ownership of the issue*
 - *Executives need to set the right balance*
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- *Insufficient input received from Centre*
 - *Issues raised by regions are not heard by Ottawa. We never hear back from them*
 - *No recognition on our issues. We are “master of our own fate”*
 - *There are less and less Executives in the Atlantic. Positions disappear and moved to Ottawa or decentralized to other Atlantic provinces (i.e. Halifax). Big impact on transition exercise.*
 - *Less people on the ground has an impact on our ability to accomplish regional representation or attend regional events*
 - *Diversity includes also regional representation. Regional intelligence and knowledge are being missed because Executives do not want to relocate.*
 - *How to make the country a better governed country?*

- *How to incorporate this regional intelligence into policy making.*
 - *We are tapping into things we are not responsible for. But we do such a great job at it; they don't see the need to increase capacity.*
 - *Ottawa favours people with policy experience. They do not use regional expertise.*
 - *Tools are outdated*
 - *Lack of understanding from senior leaders in Ottawa. We have a value-different perspective that needs to be heard.*
 - *Big turnover in Ottawa; lack of willingness to understand the capacity in the regions*
 - *APEX should advocate and bring forward the message that the regional capacity is there*
 - *As well as we always manage the crises, nobody knows that there is an issue; maybe it's never going to change*
 - *Staffing and recruitment: not easier than before. Managers are on their own. The system is too cumbersome. Process too long.*
 - *University recruits – none from Newfoundland. PSC is not serving its function; we have very highly qualified students.*
 - *Organize an Atlantic debate. Invite DMs and Heads of Central Agencies to address the issues and talk about solutions. Have the four Federal Councils to help organize. Paul Mills will contact the other chairs of FC.*
 - *A lot of the issues raised have been addressed a number of times to Federal Councils and TBS but they still remain*
 - *APEX Symposium should look at more regional issues*
 - *There are unique challenges faced by St. John's. Show common regional concerns but unique concerns as well.*
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- *Same work environment issues as 20 years ago*
 - *Reflection of government in power (1980.. and now)*
 - *Senior personnel are not visionary-futurist. Too busy doing operations stuff that their staff should be doing.*
 - *Too reactive; should be sitting down and looking at what we are doing*
 - *Reflection of what the Ministers are expecting from their DMs. We do the same thing over and over but they are expecting different results*
 - *Decision-making at all level is difficult. It is being taken away to Ottawa. They don't end up encouraging leadership. No development.*
 - *Tendencies will always remain the same whether who is the Clerk. You can always influence the organization, but how do you do this? External influence will always be there.*
 - *E-communiqués are excellent. Should also send succinct e-letter on different issues (i.e. health survey, etc)*
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- *Too frequent turn around in senior management in Ottawa. They don't know the regions very well. We are not part of discussion in decision-making*

- *For public servants who do not want leave their region, there should be a process to give them the experience and provide them with opportunities to grow.*
- *Policies are not made for regions*
- *No abilities to grow and expand*
- *Managing poor performers. No support from HR specialists*
- *Lack of knowledge in department on how to deal with poor performers*
- *Beaucoup d'emphasis sur les jeunes et gestionnaires mais pas pour les cadres supérieurs.*
- *Important rôle de l'APEX pour les cadres supérieurs*
- *Mettre l'emphasis sur le recrutement au lieu de mettre l'emphasis sur le transfert de connaissance*

- *There are leadership programs for managers but nothing for executives.*
- *Difficulty in tracking and maintaining talent in PEI. Been a struggle for the past 2 years.*
- *We are asked to take risks but we have new audits, we have to find a way to respond to audits and at the same time make the department look good*

- *Risk adverse – “call Ottawa for everything”*
- *“briefing note after briefing note after briefing note”*
- *People not enjoying their work anymore*
- *Mixed messages – take risks but increased reporting and audit and accounting*
- *More people (players) in Ottawa means more people asking the same question of the regions each time with a small different nuance*
- *Lack of appreciation at the centre for where the work is done*
- *Regions have an inability to recognize the work done by EX minus one and two*
- *Regional jobs are more fun – greater sense of community*
- *Modern comptrollership led to greater centralization led to downward classification i.e. Now regional people directly reporting to HQ – loss of regional management positions*
- *Negative impact on morale*
- *Central control of HR, Finance and Communications has an impact on manager's accountability*
- *“authority being drawn back to Ottawa”*
- *“things are changing all the time in Ottawa – difficult to keep on top of things – “feel that staff think I am not in the loop – impacts level of trust in my direction”*
- *“constantly interpreting someone else's direction”*
- *“Can't change the nature of the relation with Ottawa” – but that is a key component of PS renewal but it is not happening.*
- *Disconnect with the messaging re. PS renewal – talent management*

- *“unconditional cheerleading – that is the requirement” – frustrating – fear*
- *General impact*
- *Need to do a better job in selling our image*

- *“not a lot of people in the room who want their talent managed” – individual ownership of career*
- *regional perspective and diversity needs to be recognized as important*
- *Loss of “go to” person in the region – centralization to Ottawa has resulted in fewer and fewer regional “departmental” leads.*
- *Lack of field experience in HQ*
- *“As a manager, I was always accountable. You didn’t have to tell me. Now someone is being accountable for me” – re increased reporting, looking over my shoulder*
- *continuous offloading of corporate reporting to regions – no resources ex. So much MAF reporting takes away from my “day job”*
- *New demographics – if we don’t change our systems – how will we keep them? – how do we manage their expectations?*
- *Need to focus not only on high flyers but also on “solid employees”*
- *What kind of culture and values will we have in the future?*
- *“people want to make an impact but have lost the ability – the opportunity to make it”*
- *Need to talk about the “good” things about being an Executive*

Small Agencies

- *Limited career paths for Agency staff*
- *HR network that Agencies tap into but limited opportunities for networking in other functional areas*
- *Salary inversions between executives and the senior professional/technical staff who report to them*
- *Central agencies don’t understand that strategic reviews don’t work well at small agency level – 25% cut when already at “bare-bones” level is a major challenge*
- *Agency context is comparable to regional dynamic....once outside in an agency, you’re a nobody*
- *Heads of Agencies are not treated on par with Deputies: they are not invited to DMs’ Breakfasts*
- *Work-life balance and job satisfaction is a factor of control: many feel a lack of control associated with workload, long work hours, and increased stress*
- *Like EXs, EX minus 1 and minus 2 levels are struggling with workload and as a result, don’t aspire to EX positions*
- *A culture of obedience exists across the system...staff do not even try to negotiate with senior management on work-related issues....just get it done. Very hard to reward team effort in a system that is based on individual performance: current PMP is lacking in this regard*

- *Changing the PMP rules mid-stream must stop. Even if the change is good, it cannot be introduced mid-cycle: doing so breeds cynicism amongst executives*
- *Desire for a "bell curve" also breeds cynicism...some departments / agencies may have had an extraordinary year where the performance of several staff was exceptional*
- *The Clerk's priorities are never publicized on time....they are always after the PMP call is out*

ANNEX

FEEDBACK ON EXECUTIVE HEALTH

November 24, 2008

Feedback from Atlantic, Toronto, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Montreal and NCR Consultations on Executive health.

THE DRAFT PREMISES

There was broad support across all regional offices for the survey follow-up premises (some observations immediately below).

- *Important to keep the premises in context. APEX to focus on EX specific issues. Recognize that there are shared responsibilities and accountabilities for action (APEX, individuals, departments, central agencies etc. (T).*
- *Important to ensure strategic as well as tactical approach. (P).*
- *Partnering between organizations, wherever possible should be promoted. (P)*
- *Regional perspectives should be considered at Health summit. (P)*
- *Explicitly seek support from senior leaders for the premises and get commitment from the PCO (NCR)*
- *Be sure to define short, medium and longer term health goals (NCR)*

SUGGESTIONS FOR SHORT TERM ACTIONS/INTERVENTIONS

Take individual action across the EX category (NCR)

- *Attend to physical health. Use exercise sites as available.*
- *Exercise. Walk at lunch. Learn from the military culture (NCR)*
- *The culture is us. EXs have to take responsibility. All EXs should take it upon themselves to do something to address health and well-being (NCR)*
- *Push back (P)*
- *Tools should be developed to help EXs push back (T)*

Ensure visibility for all interventions (A)

- *We need interventions (whichever ones we choose) that have precision, are serious, practical and highly visible. (M)*

Develop tools

- We need an “EX Well-Being Toolkit” with all of the various resources aggregated. (P)
- Develop diagnostic well-being tools in support of “self diagnostics” as well as organizational diagnostics. (P)

Medical baseline option

- EXs should have the option of a full, professional health diagnostic (mental and physical). It would not necessarily be mandatory. It could perhaps be part of a comprehensive offer at orientation; a medical baseline. (P)
- We should negotiate with a company like Sun Life and engage TBS in having insurance policies that include comprehensive medical exams with more tests in recognition of the pressures placed on Public Service Executives e.g. heart tests (M)

Raise awareness, share information and improve communication

- Ensure the survey results are shared broadly across all the EX community (P)
- We need to raise awareness of health-related challenges and consequences. There needs to be more focus on prevention.(A)
- Disseminate more information on the topic of health in the workplace. The more information APEX puts out, the more informed managers will be as to what the effects are and what actions and decisions they can take at the individual level. (A).
- APEX should help educate EXs on nutrition, lifestyle, business lunches etc. (NCR)
- Include regular, short, health-related hints, tips and links in APEX communications. (A)
- When communicating, be short and “to the point”. This is very useful. (A)
- We need to address mental health the same way we did cancer. 20 years ago we did not talk much about cancer. Now the discussion is routine. We need the same dialogue on health/mental health. (A)
- Get mental health out of the closet. (P)
- It’s important to raise awareness so that EXs have a better chance of recognizing symptoms of stress and mental health. (A)
- Reassert positive side of Public Service and being an EX. Discuss the traditions and culture. Engage in story-telling, emphasizing pride in role. (P)

Have APEX representatives speak to Deputies about the survey during the annual consultations (T)

- Present Survey findings to Deputies at a Deputies’ Breakfast. (M)

Make the business case for health in organizations

- DMs have dashboards in organizations. We need to make the case for health in organizations. (P)
- Develop a dashboard/business case and take the information to the Clerk every six months. Explain, for example, that doing X = reduced sick leave (NCR)
- Focus on action and measurement (NCR)
- Make the business case to parliament and to Canadians as a whole. (P).
- Look at the costs and risks of poor health. (P)

Engage in Senior-level, departmental health discussions

- DMs, ADMs and all other EXs should hold retreats where the issue of Executive health can be openly discussed and commitments and interventions can be developed at the departmental level. (A)
- For example, what is the feeling in the various departments about such issues as flexibility in the workplace for EXs? How many EXs take advantage of flex options? What would the various departments support and commit to? Is there a stigma to EXs taking advantage of the full range of options? (A)
- We should consider “lieu time off”. (A)

Advocate

- APEX should continue to advocate on behalf of EXs on the issue of Executive health. (A)
- APEX should talk to the Deputies about the survey when meeting with them one-on-one. There has been denial in the past. (T)
- APEX should attend leadership council and departmental management meetings and Executive Committee retreats to discuss the survey. (T)
- Promote strategic action with the central agencies. Link the action to the survey findings. (P)
- APEX should invite itself to management teams, retreats, DM breakfasts etc (NCR)

Address the issue of toxic managers at the Health Summit (NCR)

Stage an Atlantic Regional Symposium and kick start regional meetings of EXs

- Bring together the Atlantic councils (“Symposium” model) to discuss issues, including those related to improving health in the workplace. (A)
- Could APEX kick-start regional, informal EX meetings to discuss issues. There are no regular networks in the regions.

PMP opportunities and the development “two-way Management Accountability contracts

- Ensure that performance metrics in the PMAs are real in regards to people management e.g. upward feedback and follow-up (NCR)
- Ensure “two-way contracts” between Executives and their bosses. (*These are my deliverables; what flexibility and health-related support will I receive from you as my manager?*). This would constitute a parallel support contract; a personalized contract that would affect the more senior manager’s performance pay. (A)
- We need a code of conduct or a “code of good sense”. We need different processes for recognizing EXs and dealing with options like special leave. (M)
- The two-way accountability contract is a good idea. It would form a “social contract” (NCR)

Maximize learning opportunities

- Teach EXs about good health and diet etc (P).
- More education is needed to help change behavior. We cannot change the reality of work, but we can educate people better in how to respond. (A)
- EXs should take advantage of stress management and time management courses. (A)
- EXs should use campus direct more often as a time saving, efficient source of support. (A)
- APEX should deliver workshops in the regions. (A)

- EX orientation training should be mandatory. Habits start early. There should be a focus on well-being as one component of this learning. We need to raise awareness. (P)
- We need to improve orientation and training for EXs. (T)
- Develop structured EX orientation and development programs. The concept and practice of a mandatory and stringent EX development process and curriculum has largely been abandoned. A more structured process including mandatory EX entry training would be of great value (e.g. two-week EX residential). (A)
- A second part of EX orientation should be “Taking Care of Yourself and Others” (M)
- Orientation training should include a health component. (M)
- Ensure that CSPS training offers more consistently high quality courses. There is much inconsistency at present. (A)
- EXs should pipe into arm-chairs by computer. (A)
- Take the Symposium on the road. (T)
- Bring good managers to the EX forums to share good practices and show how they do it (NCR)

Research and share promising practices

- APEX should organize exchange forums for Executives so that information can be shared. (M)
- Identify best practices in all organizations (P)
- Partner, wherever possible. (P)
- Share good practices between departments. (A)
- Research promising practices in other jurisdictions and share the information. (A)
- Share “Advisors” between departments; maximize available skill-sets. (A)
- APEX should pursue the idea of partnering with other organizations such as universities, the provinces and the private sector to advance our knowledge and capacity in addressing Executive health. (A)
- Learn from history – good and bad (P)
- Some EXs face a “demographic squeeze” (elder care/child care). (P)

Raise awareness and take more advantage of Advisory Services for EXs

- Raise awareness of the APEX Advisory Service. EXs should use this more. Is there enough capacity? (A)
- EXs should also take advantage of other available services (EAP experts). (A)

Address the “fatigue” issue

- APEX should advocate on measure to reduce fatigue e.g. travel. (T)
- To help address fatigue we should consider more job-shadowing to help prepare younger managers and ensure they have the support and knowledge they need. (A)
- We need more flexibility in terms of conditions of work. There is no reason why EXs could not work from home on various aspects of their work, from time to time. (A)
- Allow people nearing the end of their career to “detach” from the workplace in a more effective manner (mentoring, four-day weeks, coaching etc.). (A)
- EXs should be encouraged to take advantage of sick leave when needed. (M)

Provide Subsidy for EX fitness

- EXs should be eligible for \$250.00 or so for fitness club membership. (P)
- A yearly allocation of \$500.00 to \$1000.00 should be made available to all EXs in support of maintaining their health. (M)
- Support gym membership (NCR)

Encourage better priority setting (A)

Reduce duplication of effort (NCR)

- A lot of the workload is driven from central agencies. Efforts should be made to reduce duplication of effort (NCR).
- Catalogue the demands made from central agencies on organizations and assess the impact (NCR)

Develop mentoring programs

- There is a need to develop more mentoring capacity. As we move to hire more EXs at a younger age to replace the baby boomers, the more support they receive from selected mentors, the better chance they will have to withstand the pressures of the job. (A)
- It is perhaps time to consider having a mentor for every new EX. (A)
- When we hire EXs from outside the public service it is important for them to learn the culture. Mentors can help in this regard. (A)
- We should have a coaching and mentoring program for younger EXs. We should develop a basin of retired EXs interested in coaching. (M).

Support relocating EXs

- APEX should support relocating EXs. The situation now is that EXs have no support or network when they arrive in a new city. (A)

Address technology issues

- Consider options and initiatives such as the e-mail-free Friday to enable Executives to focus attention on critical issues. (A)
- Help executives understand that they have choices (e.g. when to shut off the BB). Don't be tied to technology. (A)

Regional APEX representation

- People should be assigned/allocated to the regions to support APEX. (M)

Demonstrate sensitivity and respect toward regional EXs

- Whenever the Public Service considers a "national" initiative, careful consideration to its impact on the regions and how it will work. (M)
- Travel demands are high on EXs from the regions. Monday morning meetings in Ottawa mean Sunday travel for most participating regional EXs, rather than a video conference that respects regional differences in time. We should, for example, maximize existing technology such as videoconferencing to save time and show respect for regional EXs. (A)
- EXs should travel on business time and to facilitate this meetings requiring travel should not start before noon on Monday and should end no later than noon on Friday (NCR)
- Try to use technology rather than travel to diminish stress (NCR)

- There should be more commitment to have EXs travel on “company time”. (T)
- Address the issue of travel pressures. This takes a toll. (P)
- Limit travel. (P)

Establish meeting and blackberry protocols (NCR)

- *Establish guidelines and protocols for calling management meetings e.g. under normal circumstances, no meetings called before a certain time of the day and no meetings to be convened after a certain time of the day so that managers. This enables managers with children, elderly care or other personal responsibilities to plan their time.*
- *We need rules that address culture e.g. blackberry use, meeting times etc. (NCR)*
- *APEX should engage the DM community on the basic rules of engagement in areas like blackberries (NCR)*

Determine if there are “sector-specific” health issues

- *Research should be conducted into the question of health specific challenges across government sectors (e.g. scientific, central agency, defense, Foreign service-related etc.). What could be done at the portfolio level? (A)*

Consider a “champion”

- *We should consider having a “champion” for health and well-being in the Public service. (A)*

Look at issues of regional relativity

- *EXs with the same job in different regions are paid the same but their responsibility levels differ in such areas as span of control. This should be assessed. (T)*
- *Address the issue of regional relativity/compensation levels. We don’t get recognized in the regions for our responsibilities. (P)*

Address the “responsibility – Control” issue

- *Dig down and address this issue. (P)*
- *Empower EXs at appropriate levels. Decision making has been taken away and that is stressful.(P)*

Promote/resolve leave option issues

- *Start the conversation with Deputies regarding Executive special leave. (P)*
- *We need consistency in non-discretionary management leave e.g. five days per year. This should be automatic. (P)*
- *Flex hours should be available to EXs. (P)*
- *Reduce barriers to taking advantage of and approving special leave (NCR)*

Exit strategies

- *APEX should work on exit strategies for EXs; perhaps do a survey of retired EXs so that we could share the information with current EXs on what to expect. (A)*
- *APEX should provide more info on pre-retirement bridging. (T)*