

NYCDEP Bureau of Engineering, Design, and Construction Focuses on Recruiting and Talent Development

Background:

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) has one of the largest capital programs in the world, expending multiple billions of dollars each year on some of the largest and most complex water and wastewater infrastructure projects. Each project is connected to NYCDEP's goals of providing high quality water and wastewater service to New York City and safeguarding the regions waterways and reservoirs. The Bureau of Engineering Design and Construction (BEDC) serves as the capital project delivery arm of the organization, working closely with the operating bureaus to plan, design, construct and start-up capital projects. DEP BEDC has placed emphasis on recruiting and succession planning key workforce initiatives critical to the Bureau's continuing ability to deliver services to the citizens of New York City. A key role in the organization is the Accountable Manager. These are BEDC's project managers and the title of Accountable Manager indicates their primary responsibility to deliver projects on time, on budget and within the quality parameters established. The reason that BEDC is placing renewed emphasis on recruiting and succession planning because the market for engineering and technical talent is very competitive in the region. In addition, BEDC has the added challenge of dealing with the constraints of the civil service system. BEDC is now investing in outreach to high schools, local college programs, young professionals' groups, and women's groups. The objective is to market and brand DEP to a different audience than have been the traditional recruiting grounds

for the organization. In order to help young, talented professionals within BEDC see a valuable career path available inside the organization instead of seeking opportunities elsewhere, NYCDEP BEDC is investing in the skill development of its 125 Accountable Managers. Creating clear understanding and skill building for this important segment of the BEDC staff is not only intended to increase on time, on budget, on quality delivery of the multi-billion-dollar capital program, but also as a fertile ground for further developing strong talent in the organization who can become the next generation of leaders.

Methodology and Implementation:

BEDC's recruiting outreach efforts include visiting high schools and offering internships, following up with promising individuals in targeted local college programs, and providing reminders for upcoming civil service exams so that students who are prospects as potential DEP employees can be eligible for employment at the right time in the calendar cycle. In addition, young professionals are both being outreached to and doing outreach to others as a way to further engage the current and potential workforce members. DEP in general and BEDC specifically is a strong training ground for talent. BEDC is interested to minimize the attrition out of the organization of young, talented professionals by highlighting career paths, providing training opportunities, and demonstrating how adding key skills enable these individuals to be promoted at the appropriate times. One key program approach to this challenge is the Accountable Manager Certification Program. BEDC understands that the skills required to be a good Accountable Manager at NYCDEP are multiple and that different people learn most effectively in different ways. BEDC has created a 15-day course specifically targeted to Accountable Managers that covers the topics essential for critical skill building. This 15-

day course is being delivered to all 125 Accountable Managers over the course of approximately one year. Class size is limited to 20-25 individuals to encourage participation.

Thus, each course day is delivered five or six times in order to cover the entire Accountable Manager population. Class topics include: Project Planning, Scope Management, Schedule and Budget Controls, Quality Management, EHS, Sustainability, Risk Management, Claims Avoidance, Construction Standard Operating Procedures, Permitting, Design Commissioning, Contract Procurement, and Team Development. BEDC leadership has assigned a subject matter expert from the organization on each topic to serve as course facilitator for each day of the class. In this way, BEDC Accountable Managers are learning from those within the organization who have the most knowledge and credibility on each topic. Institutional knowledge is both preserved and transmitted by engaging BEDC's own SMEs in the knowledge process. Course design begins with several discussions with the SME to define the most challenging aspects of the course topic in real practice at BEDC. The class content is thus focused as much as possible on the areas requiring the most attention in order for project delivery performance to be improved. For example, within the topic of Quality Management, one of the most often observed challenges of Accountable Managers is the ability to coordinate technical reviews successfully, both within BEDC and with the operating bureaus. Significant time during the Quality Management course day was thus focused on this area. Course design recognizes that adults learn most effectively in different ways. The classes are a highly interactive mix of presentation, table discussion, group exercises, mock construction efforts, and hands-on tool

demonstration. Case examples are drawn directly from real-life project examples, including reviewing past scopes, design drawings and lessons learned from BEDC's own project delivery experience as well as lessons drawn from other organizations. Because the investment in BEDC's Accountable Managers is so significant as part of this training, each course day ends with a 20-question test. Accountable Managers must not only fully attend each of the 15 days of the course, they must also successfully pass the test at the end of each day. The test is open book and covers the key learning points as a final way of reinforcing the lessons from the day. This visibly demonstrates and reinforces to all attendees the importance of this knowledge development program towards achieving DEP's strategic goals. Professional Development Hours (PDHs) are provided for engineering staff as well. At the end of each course day, the facilitators review the day to identify adjustments to the facilitation. In addition, each course attendee is invited to complete an on-line feedback survey after each course day so that the learning program can be improved based on how participants are experiencing each class.

Conclusion:

BEDC's investment in recruiting and workforce engagement is helping the organization to recruit, hire, identify, train, retain, and promote strong talent through the organization. The Accountable Manager Certification Program is one critical aspect of this effort and is part of a larger effort of outreach and development of staff. DEP BEDC operates in a competitive talent environment, under significant financial and other constraints. Despite these challenges, BEDC is making strong strides in these areas, implementing

programs that demonstrate to their workforce that a career at BEDC is highly positive and rewarding.

Note: Keep your author information and presentation title separate from your abstract body when uploading. They will not count toward your word limit.

AUTHORS: A. Edwards¹, A. Gipson¹, B. Kundmueller¹, **S. Yoskowitz²**;

AFFILIATION:¹New York City Environmental Protection, NY, ²GHD, MD.