

City of Portland — Bureau of Human Resources IPMA-HR — Agency Award of Excellence 2019

The City of Portland's Bureau of Human Resources took on a gargantuan challenge beginning in June of 2017. That's when Serilda Summers-McGee took the helm as bureau Director. Serilda's directive: Human Resources transformation. In a department of 82, serving a workforce of 10,000, this was initiative that raised eyebrows around the City. Issues to be addressed included transparency, efficiency, processes, communication, employee experience, service quality, bureau infrastructure, and dealing with the day-to-day surprises that exemplify the role of Human Resources. Serilda surrounded herself with a leadership team made up of six managers, each with expertise in critical areas, creating a multi-pronged approach to provide better service internally to employees, which in turn, has resulted in a workforce better serving the City of Portland.

Early on the Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) made a commitment to City Council, hiring managers, and applicants to shorten the City's recruitment process to attract and retain top talent. An **HR Analytics Dashboard** was created to support recruitments, tracking and sharing key metrics along with streamlining the process. This contributed to the shortened timeframe for recruitments, resulting in improved applicant experiences; presented as the **100-Day Recruitment** initiative. BHR's Workforce Recruitment and Training team also launched the City's first-ever targeted **Executive Recruiting Process**, hiring an in-house executive recruiter to deploy a skilled and comprehensive approach to identifying local national, and international candidates not currently in the job market. Multiple stakeholder focus groups and one-on-one meetings were conducted to inform and direct recruitment efforts. Staff time dedicated to job posting, tracking, and fulfillment was improved with the implementation of **Systems, Applications, and Products (SAP) software**. Leveraging this software, efficiency increased, and the team was able to introduce an **Electronic Referral Process**; enabling a more centralized hiring system and most of all an improved and more responsive job candidate experience.

Focusing on overall transformation, BHR engaged in a variety of exercises to inventory the vast services we provide to internal and external stakeholders. We now share that information in the form of an online **Services Catalogue**, created to help employees and stakeholders understand all the ways "human resources" can be accessed and benefitted from. Paper copies can be obtained by employees who don't have email access. BHR also partnered with the City's Bureau of Technology Services to launch a new Learning Management System in August 2017. The system, **CityLearner**, is cloud-based and can even be accessed from smartphones and tablets. Managers and supervisors can assign necessary classes and employees are also able to recommend favorites to co-workers. This feature provides a more social aspect to the online learning environment. In November 2018, a **Centralized Online Performance Management System** was piloted. Four City bureaus were selected to participate in the pilot to provide user experience insight, so the system could be maximized to assist with simplified and practical employee performance reviews.

In the interest of work-life balance and employing healthy happy people, BHR **raised vacation accrual rates**, and **raised allotted sick leave amounts**. Our Benefits team established a **Benefits Days** program; designed to provide employees with in-person access to information pertaining specifically to them. HR reps travel to worksites to speak to the workforce one-on-one. Interest has drawn as many as 100 people at selected sites. A **Benefits Text Club** has also been created; relevant benefits, wellness information and reminders are now delivered to employees by text message. Club membership continues to grow every day. In keeping with the goal of employing healthy happy people, the City's

Benefits Newsletter was launched. It provides detailed information on how to stay healthy physically as well as financially. The newsletter is filled with interesting articles and often includes surprises such as Nike, Adidas, and Columbia Sportswear employee store passes. Feedback regarding the newsletter has been very positive. In July 2018, the HR Benefits team grew by absorbing the City's **Occupational Health and Wellbeing Program**. Goals were immediately established, a nurse practitioner was hired, and within six months positive outcomes were produced through worksite flu vaccine distribution. The added HR discipline is an example of how to build a comprehensive, consistent, and timely program.

In continuing to promote cross-bureau collaboration, BHR began working with Portland's Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) to lighten demands on staff dedicated to administrative leave management. By piloting a program dedicated to **Centralized Leave Administration**, Human Resources was able to take over leave administration duties within three months, for a bureau that averages over 500 leave actions per fiscal year. Employees are pleased with the process turnaround times and PBOT can now focus more on its mission to plan, build, manage and maintain an effective and safe transportation system.

Human Resources values the relationships we have with our union partners and we are always looking for ways to improve the quality of service to represented employees. With that in mind, we created a new **Professional Development Fund**; designated funds put in place to support professional growth and education for represented staff. To build consistency, efficiency, and employee job satisfaction, BHR moved from a three-person site management model to a **Site Team Centralization** model when working with represented staff. In February 2018, all union related supervision was converted into one employee relations team led by a single manager. This conversion was in response to inconsistent messaging that can happen when employing multiple leaders in the same area. HR is now able to provide centralized training, consistent coaching, streamlined systems and shorter processing timelines, as well as a heightened ability to provide better quality service with clear and timely feedback and responses. To explore new ways to service our union partners, for the first time ever in the City of Portland, a **Labor/City non-Bargaining Committee** was formed. The committee was comprised of members from HR's labor relations team along with union representatives. The concept is to address an issue by researching a similar issue involving public sector employers in a different city and/or region. Research leads to a committee recommendation, rather than traditional collective bargaining. In our first case, the topic was vacation accruals. The committee researched models and policies in 17 surrounding city, county, and state municipalities. The work revealed three separate accrual models which were recommended. An option was chosen by Chief Human Resources Officer Serilda Summers-McGee—she presented it at City Council, where it was enthusiastically approved. BHR also **transitioned Public Works and Emergency Communications Supervisors to Non-Exempt** status. We examined the nature of work being performed in a comparison of duties in similar public sector jurisdictions, and it made sense to make an adjustment. We supported the decision of non-exempt status by making the classification transition compliant with the Fair Labor Standards Act.

BHR has made human resources quantifiable! We have **developed and implemented statistical data and metrics**. This means our goals are based on measurables. Those metrics determine the success of recruitment, training, class compensation, benefits, and more. We set timelines and hold each other accountable. This has proven to be invaluable in our effort to transform an entire bureau—how we view ourselves and the services we provide. In 2018 we also **improved the quality of our intranet**. We examined the structure and content, and discovered a lot of outdated information that made the site unappealing and overwhelming. So, BHR tackled the issue by forming a committee to start with one of the most intimidating categories—forms. The committee combed through every form, removed the irrelevant, updated format, and made recommendations for how to maintain the forms page moving

forward. We continue to monitor content and believe in the solution by committee approach in this area.

2018 saw one of the bureaus biggest undertakings to date literally payoff at completion. Four years of incredibly difficult work finally came to fruition in December when new structures of Class Compensation began to go into effect. The completion of a non-represented **Class Compensation Study** informed updates to the City's multiple job classifications and now ensures compensation is equitable across all 28 of the City's bureaus. The new classification and compensation structures eliminate possibilities of the same or similar work to be classified differently resulting in significant compensation differences as was found in some cases in the past. Today all non-represented City wage and/or salary offers run through an HR Classification and Compensation team that determines acceptable pay ranges to meet the City's pay equity requirements. This study was transformational in and of itself.

Listed above are 23 actions that came together to achieve one goal. There is multiple usage of the words: **launch, pilot, create, implement, establish, and share**—all words reflecting transformation. This challenge was not led by a shotgun or reactionary approach, it has been visionary all the way through. The results have benefitted employees in all roles represented and non-represented. This transformation has driven an effort to provide superior service to the City of Portland and elevated the City Bureau of Human Resources to a model of ongoing success. Moving forward, we remain open-minded, knowing that great ideas can come from anyone working in any role. We acknowledge that transformation is open-ended and continue to look within while driving the vision: Human Resources Transformation.