FCOG

Best Practice #69

Contractor Assurance System Performance Communications Center

Title: The Performance Communications Center features a single internal web access to performance-related information at LANL and promotes continuous improvement.

Facility: Los Alamos National Laboratory

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Brief Description of Best Practice:

To increase understanding of performance-based management practices and encourage improved performance we introduced an interactive, dynamic web-based Performance Communications Center. An easy-access web presence and enabling technology was used to help increase employee understanding of performance-based management and accelerate the deployment of the Contractor Assurance System.

We leveraged the enabling software technology of a web-based content authoring system to develop a topical and timely Performance Communications Center accessible to all employees and NNSA oversight staff with access to the LANL internal yellow network.

To encourage feedback and continuous improvement, develop learning communities of practice, and stimulate discussion about performance topics we introduced social media such as a Performance Blog, Process Forums, and Chat with an Expert sessions. All discussions and feedback are fully transparent to employees, process owners, and NNSA oversight staff with access to the LANL internal yellow network.

Key tools such as the Policy center, the LANL Dashboard, Performance Feedback Improvement Tracking System, the Performance Evaluation Plan, and the LANL Integrated Assessment Schedule are prominently displayed with the CAS topic areas (processes and roles). Relevant Success Tips, Press Releases, Performance Messages, and the LANL Goals and Commitments constantly rotate or change, yet are ever-present on the Performance Communications Center home page. These elements provide the topical context of *performance* to the various CAS processes and the information provides the "bait" to encourage web visits.

The Performance Communications Center is a single access point for all performance related information at the Laboratory.

Why the best practice was used: Performance related topics and valuable information was difficult to find and access on the LANL internal web network. Institutional goals, requirements, policies, the dashboard, occurrence reporting, PAAA checklists, lessons learned, the performance feedback information tracking system, the Performance Evaluation Plan, safety and compliance metrics, commitment deliverables, and the HR PerforM system were scattered in different stovepipes of organizational information. It was difficult to understand the relationship and alignment of all. The topical (rather than organizational) Performance Communications Center integrates all performance related material into one, easily accessible place.

In addition to easy access and topical alignment, the objectives of the Performance Communications Center are to:

- engage LANL employees and NNSA- LASO oversight staff in using CAS tools and processes,

- improve proficiency levels of CAS users,

- encourage LANL employees and LASO oversight staff to learn and continuously improve performance,

- increase transparency and continuous feedback,

- offer expert assistance and direction.

What are the benefits of the best Practice:

Cost Effectiveness

- Increased efficiency resulted from eliminating duplication of effort in entering redundant information in several different places.

- Significant cost savings result from reducing the dependency upon html specialized programmers to update information.

Accelerated pace of learning acceptance of CAS

- Role-based content and learning material presented in the Performance Communications Centers is accessible 24/7.

- Role-based content and learning material presented in the Performance Communications Centers encourages self-directed learning.

- Social media such as Forums and Blogs support building informal learning communities of practice and in turn improves acceptance of CAS.

Continuous feedback supported

- Chat with the Expert encourages participation and solicits input from users and stakeholders about how to improve processes.

- Forums and Blogs are informal, transparent ways for dialog and improvement between process owners and employees.

What problems/issues were associated with the Best Practice:

- Interest and attention to the site caused the servers and the LANL Home page to crash on launch day. The level of interest and server load capacity was not anticipated or planned for appropriately. After diagnosis of the server load issue, additional equipment was requisitioned.

- The content authoring system software was new and specific functionality to enable independence from html programmers or programming was labor intensive in development. To date, not all is complete and some key functions are still a hybrid mix of content authoring software and html expert-dependent software.

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- As the center focal point of Performance topics at LANL, the coordination with internal communications and public relations is very important. As this is a new Performance Communication Center and topical scheme, no process exists for coordination and strategic messaging of institutional messages.

- The software used for Chat with an Expert, the Performance Blog, Process Forums is new to LANL. All software requires installation, establishing authorities, and training users. We discovered that employees need explicit instructions to use the new media including explaining the "code of conduct."

How the success of the Best Practice was measured:

We plan to measure the following:

- Performance Center Web Page Use (integrate with LANL Communications measures),

- CAS learning, proficiency, and professional development value,

- CAS role Qualification and Training Plan completion rate.

The Performance Communications Center will be considered successful when:

- employees demonstrate the proficiency necessary to support a CAS- based performance management system,

- continuous learning and improvement is an ongoing practice

- oversight transparency and ease of information retrieval is increased.

Description of process experience using the Best Practice:

The process of assigning Contributing Editors, Performance Bloggers and Forum Moderators to specialize in certain processes is effective. They build the frameworks that allow for learning, sharing, participation and ultimately a sustainable CAS.

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