

ANZSOG Case Program

A new direction for Inland Revenue in Solomon Islands (B)

2016-43.2

Working out how best to communicate important organisational messages to staff was a challenge for Solomon Islands Deputy Commissioner of Inland Revenue George Tapo, who had no previous experience in communications training. 'At first, it sounded very easy. But I found I had to sit down and think about what type of training was required, who to involve and what impacts this training would have on staff in their attitude to work – were they open in discussions and giving feedback?'

After consulting with the Division's Human Resources Advisor and the Director of the Solomon Islands Institute for Public Administration and Management, it was decided that Tapo would deliver the first communication training workshop at an upcoming Emerging Leaders programme. Subsequent workshops were held for Assistant Deputy Commissioners and team leaders so that they could communicate the organisation's vision and purpose to their teams. By 2013, the programme had become part of the annual induction course for new Inland Revenue Division staff.

George Tapo said the training had made a visible – and sometimes unexpected – impact across the Division. Not only did staff have a better understanding of the business and their own part in it, but they tended to be more confident and proactive. They were more likely to contribute ideas to the business planning process, and to request training and development that would help them improve their skills and knowledge. All staff now had individual training plans.

In the past, staff didn't willingly give feedback about issues that affected the business. They held back – they weren't sure if their ideas were good. Now they are much more likely to come forward with suggestions or solutions. This training has helped them feel they are part of the organisation, and that it will only go forward if they contribute their ideas.

This case was written by Margot Schwass under the supervision of Professor John Alford and Dr Richard Norman as a basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a managerial situation. The support of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), and the assistance of George Tapo and the Inland Revenue Division of the Solomon Islands Ministry of Finance and Treasury in the development of this case is gratefully acknowledged, but responsibility for the content herein rests with ANZSOG.

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A more confident, skilled staff would be increasingly important as the Inland Revenue Division worked to consolidate the gains of the past few years – and to meet the challenges ahead. The country’s single largest source of revenue, logging, was coming to an end as forestry reserves dwindled. Despite the improving commercial climate, few viable alternative sources of growth and revenue had emerged to replace it. Additionally, as a small and open economy, Solomon Islands remained acutely vulnerable to global market forces.¹ Maximising revenue collection would remain of paramount importance for many years to come.

¹ RAMSI, ‘Revenue’. Retrieved from <http://www.ramsi.org/our-work/economic-governance/revenue.html>, 20/10/2012.