



The first part of an innovative new pilot program designed to develop the computer, security and information management skills of administrative assistants throughout the Department began November 31. Here are the eleven participants in the Information Assistant Certificate Program after five intense days of assessment, validation and planning: from left to right, Alice Power, Director, Centre for Corporate Services Learning (CFSS), Michael Carroll, Training Manager, CFSS, Sherrill Meyer, CFSS, Jocelyne Fortier, ACA, Carolyn Holyoke, JLO, Sherry Smith, SXMF, Joanne Charron, CFSI, Claire Sainte-Marie, GAF, Patricia Cambell, the instructor, Louise Madore, HRD, Maureen Francoeur, LSR, François Galarneau, TBF, Carolyn Robinson, ISRI, and Elizabeth Que-Blackburn, LXC. Missing from the photo is Muriel Easterman. The pilot continues with weekly coaching sessions.

DID YOU KNOW:

Being able to "fit in" to a foreign culture is important for all individuals and families on overseas assignment.

CFSL offers foreign language training for employees and members of their families over 14 years of age to help everyone find the right fit. With only one month of language training (two months for Arabic, Japanese and Mandarin) our graduates can; introduce themselves and others, give and understand simple instructions, ask for information and directions, understand public announcements, and handle emergencies.

In preparation for the 2000 posting cycle, CFSL is developing a series of foreign language classes aimed at helping DFAIT employees and their families increase their personal effectiveness and sense of well-being on assignment.

More on the Testing Unit

The Testing Unit offers value-added in its tester training program and various research activities. It compiles and analyses data to assess reliability between raters and conducts regular training sessions to keep its teams of testers "up to par" in language testing practices. The Unit also strives to stay at the cutting edge in a field that is evolving rapidly by conducting research projects and cultivating working relationships with other government language training centres and academia through participation in international conferences and symposia. It is collecting data on a pilot project in order to present the results at a colloquium in the near future. It is involved in researching the assessment of cultural pragmatics, or "speech acts," (requesting, refusing, apologizing, introducing someone, etc), And it is exploring computerized testing practices using multimedia and the Internet, which would allow staff at the Missions to take distance tests over the Intranet.

Readership Survey

HR and CFSI programs are Hot Topics

Initial reaction to the launch of CFSI's newsletter, *Savoir-faire*, brought valuable feedback about the publication.

As many readers noted that the text of the first newsletter was not easy to read, the font was changed in time for the second edition.

Some respondents were particularly interested in career development articles and one mentioned the need for information about possibilities for movement within the Public Service through exchanges and secondments.

Comments were constructive:

"Good start - now, where's the beef?" wrote a respondent who would like to see articles on HR policy, training opportunities and CFSI programs.

"Failure to report on progress may leave employees cynical," noted a reader who warned against publishing "simple, feel-good propaganda." Another wrote: "Employees are watching the HR area

with great interest and sincere hope for change through the implementation of the Champions' 138 recommendations." This was echoed in many other responses.

"We need articles for all streams: rotational, non-rotational and LES," commented one reader.

In a two-page response, another individual offered the following suggestions: "Please bear in mind that staff don't want to read messages from Deputies, ADMs or DGs, particularly when they are full of words like "champions", "recommendations", "issues" and "commitments." The reader would prefer to see a column where employees could ask questions to a DG or ADM. The reader also suggested using "plain language" to inform personnel "about what is being done to address the situation". He also expressed interest in seeing "a thought-provoking article by Suzanne Laporte on her priorities for HR." As well, the reader continued, "Ms. Laporte could solicit constructive input from staff."

Of the 130 responses received, the majority of respondents thought that the focus of *Savoir-faire* should be on the implementation of the new Human Resources strategy and on CFSI programs. Some readers enjoyed the human interest stories. Most indicated that they would be reading the next issue.