

*The Political Officer  
in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade*

*PROPOSAL: The department should launch its own Working Smarter campaign, articulating a departmental code of conduct for managing time and workloads at headquarters and missions, establishing incentives for adhering to the code, tracking performance, and taking action when corporate systems are found to be dysfunctional.*

*PROPOSAL: The department should institute an upward appraisal system for managers at all levels.*

*PROPOSAL: The department should return to the practice of preparing annual staff directories, arrange for the directories to list officers both at headquarters and in the field, include biographical sketches, and ensure that directories are ready for distribution by October 1 of each year.*

***Developing the individual***

- In 1992, a State Department task force studying the future of the US foreign service lamented the absence of “a strategy that explicitly links the Department’s mission with the personnel charged with accomplishing it”. It recommended the development of “a strategic personnel planning mechanism that provides a coordinated mix of top level management oversight, centralized guidance, and decentralized planning and execution” including a personnel “early warning system” to identify emerging needs for particular knowledge and competencies.
- In the mid 1990s, the Foreign Office prepared career profiles on every officer in the organization. Individuals were interviewed to determine their career aspirations and counseled on the assignment tracks which would open up possibilities for advancement and the achievement of their goals.
- The German foreign ministry brings in new recruits at either the Third or Second Secretary level depending on their academic credentials and performance in a weeklong series of examinations. While most officers are “mainstreamed”, some are identified for more rapid advancement. Officers particularly suited to policy work, for example, would have career plans structured around assignments at headquarters in policy planning or international security affairs and postings to key capitals, the UN, etc.

*PROPOSAL: In addition to the work it is already doing on career management and development, the department should prepare career plans for each officer, based on interviews with officers to determine their career aspirations; assessments of individuals’ current knowledge, skills and experience; and professional advice on career paths.*