

LAYERS

We should de-layer the Foreign Service, by increasing mobility from the support to the line level, to help us address two related challenges.

The first of these is that the support function is mutating, with information technology reshaping the need for skills and numbers of rotational administrative personnel. We will need to keep recruiting and motivating an ever more sophisticated group at this level. To do that, we have to offer opportunities for advancement.

Secondly, the Management Stream has not offered the careers that many who joined it find satisfying. The evidence is that despite much experimentation, we have made a mistake in the way we structured our Management Stream. We have recruited individuals of exceptional calibre many of whom in one way or another have often been disappointed in the career that was on offer. We should recognize the structural problem we have created and correct it. We must, as a first step, staff the stream differently in future.

The creation of a career continuum that provides progression from support positions to management would help us manage both challenges.

The Administrative/Management Function of the Future

Perhaps no workers in the Ministry have been challenged with more radical change than those charged with providing support services. Information technology has revolutionized the way we manage communications, finances, human and physical resources (and should transform it further in the future). Tasks have disappeared and new ones created. Enormous adaptability was asked of our staff as they were challenged to acquire new skills, and to take on greater and more diverse responsibilities. The distinction between line and support functions have and will continue to blur as advances in IT continue to change our work environment. Increasingly we will need similar qualities in the workers who perform them. We are already fortunate in the quality of individuals in support roles. We should recognize and develop their capacity to contribute. By doing so, we are going to create a more unified and motivated workforce as well as a larger and more flexible pool of human capital.

We should create and recruit to a consolidated Management/Consular stream that begins at the support level, but offers entry at several points .

Recruitment to the Stream should, in future, be based on internal promotion from the support level as indicated above. Qualifications for the entry level should stress flexibility, a service orientation judgement, IT literacy and demonstrated capacity for continuous learning on the basis of completion of at least CEGEP or community college.