



Transportation Leadership Academy Grads Suggest Ways to Improve Employee Morale

Gail Harvey, supervisor, Fare Media Sales, gives a presentation during the Transportation Leadership Academy graduation exercises.

By Bill Heard, Editor

(Dec. 10) Morale issues were top-of-mind, Friday, among the latest graduates of the 21-member Transportation Leadership Academy.

In presentations to an audience that included MTA executive officers, four teams of TLA participants laid out recommendations for specific ways to make a positive impact on employee morale. The teams addressed issues raised in the Morale Report released earlier this year.

Internal communication

One team recommended an internal communication program to overcome the impact of unfavorable media coverage on employee morale. The members - Michael Funnye, Terry Davis, Linda Hui, Paras Sharma, Hector Rojas and Julie Ellis - also sought ways to increase respect and trust among employees.

The team proposed a "Thumbs Up" program in which that universal hand gesture would symbolize all that's right and positive about the MTA and its employees. The team also recommended publication of a periodic "good news" newsletter about employees.

A second team, whose members were Cynthia Karpman, Mila Asuncion, Regina Lim, Tony Martin and Steve Mullaly, recommended merit-based pay as an effective means of improving job satisfaction and morale. The program would require the support of the executive staff and should be incorporated in annual performance reviews, team members said.

Operator recovery time

Improving the quality of operator recovery time between runs was the topic of a team consisting of Karl Downs, Ed Smith, George Matejovsky, David Santana and Peter Braster.

Noting that the amount of operator recovery time is set by union contract, the team said the quality of recovery time could be improved if the cleanliness and availability of restroom facilities could be assured.

The team proposed an opinion survey of at least 400 operators on such job satisfaction issues as seats, bus cleanliness, radio communications and employee recognition. A sample survey of 13 operators indicated that the three top job satisfaction issues are seats, security and recovery time.

Ombudsperson position

The fourth TLA team recommended creation of an "Ombudsperson Position." The team defined an ombudsperson as "a neutral and independent third party who facilitates equitable resolutions to

employee concerns, issues and problems."

They developed the definition following interviews with several ombudsmen in organizations ranging from UCLA to the LAPD.

Research by team members Ralph Carapia, Beverly McWhorter, Gail Hervey, Dan Collonello and Rudy Rey found that every \$1 invested in such a position by an organization would yield \$2 to \$6 in savings in employee litigation costs. It also would help improve employee morale and retention, the team said.

Next class in January

The next Transportation Leadership Academy class is scheduled for orientation in late January. TLA consists of six full-day sessions and two half-day sessions, plus independent study, meetings with mentors, research and a team project. Graduates also are expected to meet with their teams quarterly during the following year to complete their projects.

TLA candidates are selected by department executive officers. Interested employees can contact their managers about possible participation in future classes.

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