Revising our Organizational Structure

In the Court’s 2013-2017 Strategic Plan one of the priority actions listed states that the Court must “review, clarify and where necessary adjust roles, responsibilities and lines of authority at strategic and operational levels and improve communication and interrelationships throughout the entire organization in order to maximise the outcome of all strategic and operational levels.” In light of that, with the Court’s ten-year anniversary approaching in 2015, the Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission (RJLSC) and Court embarked upon a restructuring exercise to ensure that the structure of the CCJ was better aligned to execute its strategy as it prepares for the next decade of its existence.

The exercise involved the “functional analysis of the Court and Commission, a rational collation of duties and responsibilities, the clear demarcation of reporting responsibilities as well as the establishment of specialist offices for internal auditing and human resources management which did not previously exist”. There are new specific branches for (1) communications and information (2) finance and administration (3) court registry and case management (4) court security and logistics and (5) human resource management.

After the retirement of the CEA in 2014, the Commission elected not to fill the vacant post but instead to subsume certain duties performed by that office with that of the Registrar and Marshal in keeping with best practices in the Commonwealth for small courts. This decision also prompted changes to the role of the Deputy CEA and the position was eliminated in the newly adopted structure. Figure 1 on the following page shows the new administrative structure, replacing the one previously used since the inauguration of the Court in 2005. The structure reflects the vision of the CCJ for the journey forward and equips the Court with a dynamic and strategic orientation.
The importance of the human resources of the CCJ is undoubtedly acknowledged by the management of the Court as stated in its 2013-17 Strategic Plan – Goal 3.1: “The CCJ will develop and promote a strong and engaged workforce.” The commitment of the staff is crucial to the organisation fulfilling its mandate as an apex Court serving the CARICOM region. This importance has caused the management of the CCJ to actively continue to build strong relations amongst the employees with the undertaking of various initiatives for staff as well as requiring their involvement in several ways. The main objective of these initiatives was to motivate staff and engage them at various levels and in multiple ways. The management concluded that promoting and sustaining an environment of high performance in the Court was dependent on how well it was able to do this.

It was on this premise that a function to “respond appropriately and cater to the human resource needs of all staff” was highlighted as a priority action in the Court’s current strategic plan. Consequently, the Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission (RJLSC) recruited an experienced and qualified Human Resources Manager in the first quarter of 2014. A natural follow-through to this was the placement of the human resources management services of the Court under a single Human Resources Department rather than as an addendum to other functions in the Court. The Department’s mandate was to streamline, review and enhance existing human resource management systems, policies, procedures and processes so that they are aligned with human resource management best practices.

During the period under review, the Human Resources Department sought to ensure greater compliance with the Court’s Staff Regulations and facilitated the smooth transitioning of recruitment of staff from the point of engagement by the RJLSC, which has responsibility for recruitment, to their assumption of duty at the Court. Under the direction of the RJLSC and with the support of its Executive Secretary, the recruitment for six (6) vacancies at the Court and the JURIST Project was completed. The responsibilities of the Human Resources Department ranged from the development of job descriptions and specifications to finalizing arrangements for the assumption of staff at the Seat of the Court.

Of significance, due to the hard work of the Human Resources Assistant, retired employees of the Court were afforded coverage under the CCJ Retirees’ Group Health Plan with effect from July 2014. This was a significant achievement that resulted in the reduction of the cost of retirement benefits to the Court.

The importance of organizational knowledge and continuity as critical components to the sustainability of the Court and the roadmap for the journey ahead in making the strategic theme “high performance work environment and workforce engagement”, as enunciated in the 2013 - 2017 Strategic Plan, a reality now and into the future, must be underscored. As a consequence, the Human Resources Department recommended development opportunities for staff through job rotation and job assignments for eight (8) employees at varied levels within and across functional areas in the Court and RJLSC. These opportunities were in the Facilities & Asset Management, Public Education & Communication, Protocol & Information and Human Resources Units. This served to strengthen the knowledge base of the Court as well as reward and recognize employees for assuming additional responsibilities.