



PACB's Evolution and Future of the Workplace Discussions

What We Heard Report



DGAPC

La **diversité**, la **créativité**
et l'**innovation** au service
d'un effectif productif

PACB

Embracing and Thriving
on **Diversity**, **Creativity**
and **Innovation**

Context and Opportunities



- PACB managers and supervisors were invited throughout the month of March and beginning of April to host team conversations on PACB's evolution and future of the workplace.
- In total, 9 questionnaires were submitted by managers or individuals, representing the views of more than 110 employees. The exercise helped identify common trends and employee expectations when it comes to workplace culture, preferences for unassigned seating arrangements and innovative ideas to overcome systemic challenges or barriers to diversity and inclusion, innovation, agility and experimentation.
- There is a need and opportunity for PACB to tailor its people management strategies, HR planning, and recruitment strategies to leverage these results.
- There is an opportunity for each DG/Director to champion initiatives for 2022-2023 at the branch-level and/or within their directorates to capitalize on ideas raised by employees and help change the status quo.

High Level Results by Themes



Unassigned Seating Needs

- Flexible, multi-purpose arrangements for multiple choices!
- Seating arrangements/conference tables will need be designed with a hybrid approach in mind and for more inclusivity
- Technology needs to work and be leveraged
- Need to be sensitive to employees' preferences and styles
- Planning and design phases to be co-created with employees

Agility, Innovation and Experimentation

- Create safe spaces for more conversations on barriers to agility, inclusion, creativity and innovation
- Consider creating a PACB free agent program
- Consider strategic onboarding and development of employees by offering opportunities to gain competencies and knowledge outside their main field of expertise

Workplace Culture Assessment

- Need for more authentic conversations, HR and planning discussions
- Strategies for knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing
- More mechanisms/approaches for equitable workload prioritization
- Inclusive language to be supportive of hybrid and remote workforce
- Need to define and provide concrete example of successful people-centric organisations

Wellness Priorities

- High degree of awareness of current service offering
- Newsletter content used as a conversation starter in some teams
- Coaching services appreciated
- Could promote additional resources like podcasts
- Biggest barrier to fully participate in wellness events is workload pressures and day-to-day operations
- Employees want learning sessions and conversations tailored to their needs - one size doesn't fit all

People Management Strategies

- Open and frank workload and time management discussions with senior management
- Develop clear guidance on hours of work, service standards and when and how to say no to last minute projects
- Pools opened across the country – Leverage regional expertise
- Multi-disciplinary teams – Mix of competencies

Leadership and Competencies of the Future

- Agility, flexibility, critical thinking, resilience
- Autonomy, empowerment and drive
- Working smarter not harder – creativity, innovation, thinking outside the box
- Continue to develop and nurture skills related to managing virtual and hybrid teams
- Program and policy development expertise, cross pollination across teams could be explored

Unassigned Seating Arrangements - Needs and Aspiration



“Moving to unassigned seating arrangements make sense and it helps reduce our footprint and GHG emissions. However, employees should continue to have a voice and share their preferences when it comes to a way forward. Open and frank discussions must occur around real operational requirements to come to the office.”

“Floor designs and technology will need to work for effective co-location and collaboration with employees working on site and remotely. Organizing ourselves as a Branch will be key - having telework arrangements in place, being diligent about confirming when people will be in the office, etc. We need to have the right balance with respect to process and flexibility. ”

- Floor concepts will need to be co-designed with employees and with the following considerations in mind:
 - Must provide value and inspire employees to come in and bond together, tackle projects and issues, brainstorm, and access state-of-the-art equipment and technology that they do not have at home;
 - Allow employees to chose from multiple options – quiet areas, collaborative spaces, confidential meeting rooms, areas to store personal belongings;
 - Be mindful of employee’s various needs, preferences and accommodation needs (accessible workplaces);
 - Increased access to videoconferencing service and bandwidth and broader regional access to technology to avoid exclusions

Unassigned Seating Arrangements – Fears and Concerns Expressed



“Not everyone is in Ottawa, people who gather in person may subconsciously create exclusions. This workplace advantage can be an unfair advantage in terms of career progression (research suggests there is a bias associated with face time).”

The following fears, concerns and considerations should be addressed in the planning and design phases of the unassigned seating pilot project:

- Many employees still want to continue working remotely and have expressed concerns with rigid hybrid approaches when you are requested to go in on specific days; they would want to have flexibility and choice in picking the right day to go; some teams have no operational requirements to go in and work in collaborative spaces.
- Some employees are concerned about the loss of productivity, concentration, work-life balance associated with hybrid models;
- Employees are concerned and fearful of bureaucracy involved in planning and securing a space.
- Some employees are concerned with cleanliness, safety, noise, etc.

Workplace Culture Assessment



Generally speaking, employees feel the Branch is going in the right direction in terms of people-centric vision, values, and culture of care. Some are still skeptical or internalising what this means for them individually and as a team. Numerous opportunities for improvements were identified:

“We need more open and frank conversations, and more strategic discussions around inclusion, employee accommodations’ needs, and recognition of preferences in terms of style and neurodiversity.”

“We need more time to get to know each other and learn from each other. We never seem to have time for important discussions.”

“We need more access to management and senior leaders, more conversations around workplace culture with concrete examples of expected behaviours, and lived experiences through storytelling.”

“Clearer and uniformly applied over time - entries, rules, and mechanisms to avoid putting all the load on over-performing/childless employees.”

“We need to recognize and value the right to disconnect and respect regular schedules.”

“Some teams would appreciate a workplace culture shift regarding unreasonable deadlines and number of meetings, in order to reduce stress and fatigue. We need a workplace culture that respects that people need breaks during the day and between meetings and we need to respect that when we say a deadline is impossible to meet.”

People Management Strategies



Building on the workplace culture assessment portion of the questionnaire, many teams provided ideas for additional people management strategies:

“Ongoing dialogue and a human touch on these issues are important, as it is hard to move people’s minds away from the day-to-day work – we need to make space to have meaningful and authentic conversations as we look towards implementing change and making our current work practices evolve. We need to focus on changing the status quo and finding solutions to long standing, systemic issues.”

Employees want less dashboards and more human interactions, training and awareness sessions – “We should have access to ALL people.”

“We need to create communities of interests and talents so employees can become ambassadors and steward of the environment”

“We need to value and nurture learning and prioritize employee’s strategic onboarding, growth and development. Could PACB be a Branch that more easily facilitates assignment, swaps, micro-assignments - you could go work anywhere in PACB...”

People Management Strategies



“We need to take an honest look at our current practices and see how it impacts ourselves, others and our workplace culture (i.e. are we our own worst enemies?). Are we applying resilience strategies and wellness practices in order to be role models? - We need reminders that we have flexibilities and choices.”

“We need to be sensitive to the ability of some teams to cope with changes. We need to be sensitive to signals and act accordingly.”

“We need to strengthen our agility when it comes to managing a diversified workforce and be open to a mix of styles, and competencies that transcend a group and level.”

“Perhaps a management/leadership retreat on displacing old management thinking for agility thinking and what that looks and sounds like would help bring this cultural change to fruition.”

Agility, Innovation and Experimentation



“The key to agility, innovation and experimentation is to ensure a psychologically safe environment where employees can freely express thoughts, ideas, opinions, and ask questions.”

“PACB needs to value a diversity of styles, opinions and preferences. Creative thinking and curiosity should be valued and employees who play an effective challenge function and propose new ideas should be valued and rewarded. Specific accountability for this should be in performance agreements.”

“We have a unique opportunity in PACB to be a leader for the Department and test some new approaches and concepts first in our Branch. We should consider creating PACB’s own free agent program.”

“We should leverage technology an effective use of M365 and other modern tools to manage our information.”

“Are we questioning certain processes? Asking why? Still too much emphasis on templates and standardized processes. We need to empower employees to work smarter and determine how best to tackle a project or issue.”

Agility, Innovation and Experimentation



“We could look at some innovation around how we work. Tiger teams could be formed to address long standing systemic issues like managing large volumes of email, workload management, etc. The goal would be to analyse the problems at the source and find proper practical strategies to address the identified issues.”

“We should encourage learning from others – regardless of position or rank.”

“ We need to develop more concrete strategies to increase and share knowledge for more agility.”

Wellness Priorities



There was strong interest and appreciation for the Branch's current wellness-oriented efforts and activities, as well as management's sincere efforts to provide meaningful opportunities for improved employee wellness and work-life balance.

Many were impressed that management is avidly working to make the Branch more employee-centric and seriously implementing a formal culture of care using wellness as one of the lynch pins for this.

Many teams suggested more diversified programming to encourage people to go outside, exercise, listen to inspiring podcasts, conduct walking meetings, etc. "Given the hours worked, computer/electronic fatigue is ongoing and cumulative over time, therefore attending virtual wellness events, or reading the newsletter or perusing the Wellness Channel is desk-based, computer-oriented, and not necessarily refreshing."

Solutions are not a quick fix – some teams need help in further developing resilience and coping strategies. – "It is hard to detach from work, our devices are addictive and we get all kinds of notifications. We need to set boundaries and continue to equip and empower teams to find solutions and strategies that work for them."

Wellness Priorities



“Wellness activities, when organized, need to be booked at consistent times and days so an employee’s attendance and participation can be scheduled more effectively (i.e. like “Family Hour” is), thereby improving attendance.”

“The role of micro-aggression in the workplace should be explored (with examples) and how it undermines and damages the psychological well-being of equity group members over time, and others considered “different” than the majority groups in the Branch.”

“Consider offering audio podcasts and make them available to all Branch employee’s phones so that one may get away from the computer/desk, go for a walk, and enjoy listening to the info as a form of relaxation and time management.”

“Keep promoting forest therapy, nature therapy, nature walks and hikes, organize a 10,000 Steps Challenge.”

“Yoga classes are great for some, but not for everyone. Many employees would like to do something more active such as stretching, or Zumba classes to move their body. A consistent schedule would be appreciated.”

Leadership of the Future



“The best leaders trust their teams, empower them and respect their limits.”

“Leadership is about being more human, less about group and level.”

“Energetic, charismatic, action-oriented, driven, strong and passionate leadership is the key.”

“Life experiences are as valuable as diplomas.”

“We need more servant and self-empowered leaders and people with a natural inclination to share information, collaborate, network, and produce high quality deliverables.”

“Creativity, openness, resilience.”

“Understanding, patience, acceptance, flexibility.”

“Emotional intelligence, including emotional maturity and empathy.”

“Transparency and authenticity”

“We need visionaries (people who are thinking 10, 20,50 years ahead and therefore are questioning the projects our Branch and Department are working on.”



The role of the change leader of the future

1. **Convening:** creating spaces where people want to come together to learn and share
2. **Combining:** ensuring sufficient diversity without losing focus and creating bridges between different worlds
3. **Capability-building:** championing change methods and processes and helping people translate their ideas into practical actions that add value
4. **Coaching:** providing support and mentoring to help guide and steer change leaders and ideas
5. **Co-ordinating** and **connecting:** enabling networking and links inside the community and beyond to external partners
6. **Community-building:** creating a supportive peer group and a context which enables co-operation and sharing



 @HelenBevan A year of Twitter slides

Source: adapted from John Bessant

Top Competencies and Qualities Required in our Workforce



- Creativity, teamwork, curiosity, critical thinking
- Risk-takers and holistic thinkers
- Great mix of technical and people skills in teams, ideally multi-generational and multi-disciplinary, with diverse backgrounds, communications styles, experiences and knowledge
- Knowledge of new technologies and tools
- Transparency, openness, collaboration, self-actualization, empathy, inclusivity
- Positive attitude but doesn't minimize problems, challenges, or the people experiencing them
- Well-developed emotional intelligence and emotional maturity
- Not afraid of conflict and comfortable resolving it
- Empathetic, patient and kind
- Comfortable saying "no" as necessary in order to preserve team wellness/ life work balance, manageable work flow and can speak "truth to power"
- Committed to walk-the-talk and does so

Moving Forward and Next Steps



Moving Forward and Next Steps



Adjust Wellness Programming

- Broaden scope of 2022-2023 Mental Health Action Plan to provide more options and choices
- Consider tailoring coaching services to match identified challenges and growth opportunities
- Develop and promote monthly calendar of wellness activities
- Include broader diversity and inclusion component into wellness programming

Moving Forward and Next Steps



Refine and adopt more people-centric management approaches

- Make room for more conversations, safe spaces for values-based discussions, and strategic planning.
- Develop clear directive/guidelines on when and how to say no to last-minute projects.
- Define what people-centric means with examples to ensure clear understanding, continued support, and organizational authenticity.
- Encourage emotional intelligence training and education for everyone regardless of rank.
- Provide additional recognition options, especially for people who are embracing PACB's vision, values and work towards a positive, caring culture.
- Adjust Family Hour to profile our senior management, share lived experiences and personal or professional leadership journey, and give all employees access to our leaders.
- Hire for diversity in teams, in all of its forms. Offering flexibility in schedule and work location according to position-based operations will help ECCC maintain its position of employer of choice; offering remote jobs will help get a more diverse and representative workforce.
- Offer better accommodation and work-life balance – “no meetings before 9:00 nor after 4:00” type of arrangement. Capitalize on availabilities of services across the country and leverage regional expertise for career progression and learning opportunities.
- Remote vs Virtual - change the way we talk about the terms and not separating remote worker and in-person worker. A remote worker is just as valuable and valued as a hybrid worker.
- Avoid use of “return to workplace” as many people aren't returning as they are new; consider a term like “transitioning our work model” or “transitioning to hybrid.”
- Senior management should encourage employees to block some time on their calendars for wellness and learning activities and model desired behaviours.
- We should continue to innovate with technologies that can help reduce workload and streamline processes (e.g. less emails).
- Values need to become our biggest assets – work-life balance, healthy workplaces, innovation, creativity.

Moving Forward and Next Steps



Identify Branch representatives to champion initiatives

- Identify champions to lead specific people management initiatives
- Consider creating a PACB free agent program
- Build tiger teams to look at new approaches, strategies, and mechanisms to further drill down on some of the themes identified: strategic onboarding, innovative staffing approaches, workload management strategies, concrete actions to remove barriers and avoid micro-aggressions, how to support new employees to network with people in their specific locations, how to ensure better fit of employees to projects, more effective use of technology and information management, e-mail reduction strategies, ethical use of data, addressing security and privacy concerns, etc.