

VI. MANAGING STAFF

284. Nothing is as important to a statistical agency as its staff, for the difference between a well-organized, strongly motivated and technically competent staff and one that displays these attributes only to a very modest extent is the difference between a good and credible office and one that is second-rate. Expenditure on staff accounts for a dominant fraction of the budget in a statistical agency. In a sample of offices representing a broad array of sizes and stages of development, salaries accounted for approximately 70 per cent or more of the total budget. In addition, heads of agency tended to devote more time to staff problems than to any other issue.

285. Improvements have been made in “people management” in bureaucracies in general and in statistical agencies in particular. Management of human resources is acknowledged in discussions in international venues as having been taken for granted in earlier times, and is now perceived as critical. Also addressed in such discussions are the various stages of training and the need to retain and develop staff, as well as the considerations that determine how specialized the agency staff should be.

Box 10. Staff and skills

Chapter VIII of the 1980 *Handbook*,^a makes the following observations concerning staff skills and training:

- A decisive factor in the internal capability of a statistical agency is the calibre of its staff. An agency can only function well if good people are available to make it work. Organizational arrangements may contribute to enabling good people to do their best; but it is essential to give utmost attention to building up the right kind of staff in organizing and managing a statistical agency;
- To acquire the kind of skills needed, a statistical agency must have a well-planned policy and active programme of recruitment, career development, education and training;
- In addition to the personnel unit, other units of the administrative branch should be involved in carrying out the personnel policy. The acquisition and maintenance of adequate office space and equipment can contribute not only to efficiency but also to the well-being and satisfaction of the staff. Moreover, suitable accommodation, facilitating ready communication between people working in related fields, is conducive to the integration of statistics because, in a real sense, the “successful integration of statistical end-products is contingent upon the ‘integration of the statisticians’ ”;
- After some time, when a minimum of experience has been gained, every employee should be obliged to attend an orientation course where further explanation is provided;
- Officials of the personnel unit should teach the introductory course for employees at lower levels [management should teach professionals]; the establishment of good personal relationships between this unit and the new employees is of great importance;
- The in-service education and training described above requires not only teaching but also quite extensive administrative efforts. Therefore permanent machinery should be established in the form of an

in-service training school. In a small or medium-sized agency, a part-time head of the school may be selected from among the best qualified professionals of the agency. In a large agency, a full-time head may be needed. Such machinery is necessary to ensure the proper design of courses, recruitment of teachers, selection of students, etc.

^a *Handbook of Statistical Organization: A Study in the Organization of National Statistical Services and Related Management Issues*, Studies in Methods Series F, No. 28 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.79.XVII.17).

A. Staff composition

286. As a percentage of the total staff the share of professional and technical components has increased substantially even in cases where actual numbers have dropped and relative resource endowments have not kept up with changes elsewhere in the civil service. In some statistical agencies (at least in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] member States), professionals account for one in two staff members. Statistical surveys have become more sophisticated, at least in terms of planning, and general expectations regarding the quality of the estimates produced by statistical agencies have risen. The computer and communications revolutions and the resultant gains in labour productivity have surely contributed to these trends. One of the many results of these changes is the impact on the human resource policies adopted by, or imposed on, statistical agencies. These policies, which were still in the developmental stage 20 years ago, appear to have evolved fully in many agencies and should therefore be open for study by statistical offices that are still undergoing structural changes.

287. The staff of a statistical agency is not made up solely of statisticians. However, in the case of the chief statistician, it is a common practice – although by no means a rule – to select someone with strong credentials in statistics. Regardless of the appointee's other virtues, a demonstrated mastery of statistics will tend to inspire confidence on the part of the public.

288. Owing to the range of subjects covered by a modern statistical agency, the staff tends to possess a variety of skills and academic backgrounds. Even agencies that conduct only moderately complex and specific statistical undertakings find themselves in need of a wide range of skills. Statistical operations require a mix of talent, including economists, sociologists, demographers, econometricians, model builders, geographers, anthropologists, criminologists, engineers and computer experts.

289. Some of these skills are not required for day-to-day statistical operations,⁶⁶ but they prove essential when new operations are being planned and launched. Naturally there is a certain amount of learning and technology transfer that makes the staff of statistical agencies more versatile, but in the end medium-sized and large offices will find

⁶⁶ Even so, there are well-established statistical operations that do require the almost daily intervention of very specialized knowledge. Nothing could be better established in the majority of government statistical agencies than the consumer price index. Yet maintaining detailed specifications of goods and services priced every month or every quarter in the face of technical and institutional changes demands a knowledge usually possessed by a wide variety of specialists. Thus, offices may require at least the frequent advice of civil engineers; telecommunications, radio, and television specialists; and banking and insurance operators.

that there are limits to what can be borrowed from other countries and other institutions and will therefore choose to enhance their own capabilities.

290. It is important to build a multi-talented staff with a broad range of academic skills and work experience. The factors that dictate the balance of skills required from the staff in an effective statistical agency are presented below. As in many other situations, the question arises whether certain capabilities are used so often that they should be available to the agency on a permanent basis or whether, given the expected usage, it is sufficient if they are acquired if and when their use demands it. This holds true for human resources as much as for equipment. For example, when adapting an international classification to suit national purposes, growth in demand for very specialized knowledge relating to such areas as chemicals, electronics, pharmaceuticals, computing, the audio-visual industry and financial services will be inevitable. Likewise, international trade statistics require specialized commodity knowledge as well as knowledge of national customs administration processes. These are examples of requirements that tend to be in demand when new methods are introduced or new classifications are instituted. In such cases, an agency may choose to employ the services of a specialist, through a consulting contract or some other non-permanent association.

291. The more general the capabilities sought, the easier it is to administer and maintain them. Moreover, general capabilities have a versatility that agencies, particularly the smaller ones and those that have not yet fixed a medium-term agenda, find attractive. General training can be provided formally; it creates the basis for a shared culture and predictable performance; and it can more easily be supplemented by specialized training as staff members move from one job to another.

292. Professional staff can often be divided into two categories:

- General personnel capable of performing at lower and intermediate levels of sophistication in the areas of computing, statistical design and analysis, national, public sector or enterprise accounting, and economic, social or demographic analysis;
- Specialized personnel capable of performing at a substantially higher level in an area such as non-response analysis or in a field such as analysis of geographical information, criminology, or health statistics.

293. In the event of some major undertaking, this staff structure can be augmented by the occasional purchase of services provided by consultants, national or international, who are highly specialized or concerned with matters of policy and public perception.

294. Once a determination has been made as to the size and the composition of the permanent staff and those obtained through short-term contracts, the chief statistician will

evaluate supply and demand and attempt to correct any imbalances through recruitment policies.⁶⁷

B. A human resources policy

295. Irrespective of its composition, the workforce of a statistical agency is its most precious resource, and as such it must be treasured. An effective statistical agency will manage its staff with the help of an explicit set of policies. The most important elements of a personnel (human resources) policy include the following:

- Ability to ascertain personnel needs;
- Standards and techniques for recruitment;
- Deployment of personnel;
- Introductory training;
- Monitoring equity in recruitment and in career advancement;
- Intermediate training;
- Career development and job rotation;
- Training for managerial functions;
- Staff motivation and retention.

296. These elements are listed in the approximate order in which they naturally arise. Certainly, other features could be added, but these are sufficient to support a policy with common objectives. The following is an example of a set of coherent objectives that the elements listed above are designed to help attain:

- Increase the proportions of professional staff by expanding the annual intake of young professionally qualified staff;
- Ensure that once recruited, qualified people are assigned suitable jobs and everyone is treated fairly;
- Devise a proper mixture of deterrents and incentives, to be made explicit to the staff;

⁶⁷ Some of the larger statistical agencies have an explicit personnel forecasting model, designed primarily to consider the hierarchical level of the incumbents and match it to their demographic characteristics. The model is used to forestall undesirable imbalances in the hierarchical (more than in the professional) structure.

- Administer sufficient training to staff members at key points in their careers, so as to maximize versatility and motivation;
- Ensure that key jobs are staffed and have a possible successor ready to step in to an incumbent's shoes should the need arise.

297. To facilitate a discussion of ways in which these policies can be administered, four internal institutions should be examined:

- The office of human resources;
- The personnel committee;
- The in-service training facility;
- The evaluation machinery.

298. The office of human resources and the personnel committee assess needs, recruit and deploy staff, formulate retention policies and ensure equitable treatment. The in-service training facility, as its name suggests, oversees training. Finally, the evaluation machinery fields questions regarding the adequacy of these mechanisms.

299. The 1980 *Handbook* suggests that when a statistical agency reaches a certain size, it should invest in a professional human resources office. However, experience shows that while such an office is essential in dealing with the administration of all or most human resources policies and with advising on the development of such policies and instruments, it seldom plays a decisive role in detection, evaluation or persuasion, all of which help to ensure that talented people come to work for a statistical agency, that the agency's stock of people gets renewed as often as required, and that there are incentives to retain the best employees. This finding, while seemingly critical, merely recognizes a simple fact: a professional office of human resources will primarily administer public service acts, enforced in most countries, that regulate the conditions of recruitment and employment in the public sector.

300. Cases in several countries have also shown that the most successful formula for the management of personnel issues is one in which the subject matter staff are intimately involved with such personnel processes as recruitment, training and retention. The heads of personnel units are the advisers best qualified to validate suggested personnel approaches and policies. They are also the best person to execute policies once the choices are made and the policies in question defined.

C. Recruitment

301. Often, ministries such as planning, treasury, industry, employment, agriculture and transport, agencies such as central banks and stock exchange commissions, and comptrollers' offices will draw recruits from the same pool as the statistical agency. In most countries, initial and subsequent salaries in the statistical agency are relatively low compared to the central banks. Moreover, in some developing countries this inequality

also holds between the statistical agency and other ministerial agencies. For this reason the statistical agency should develop a recruitment plan, including attractive items such as:

- Impressing upon them that professional work tends to be more rewarding in a non-political environment such as that maintained by the statistical agency;
- Appealing to the competitive instinct of recruits by promising them that merit will be used to militate against the more onerous aspects of seniority rules in their promotion prospects;
- Giving recruits intensive and marketable training of a practical nature either directly or by agreement with a teaching institution;
- Striving to send young people to acquire training abroad as soon as they prove themselves ready.

302. All this is subject to the constraint that the statistical agency should refrain from recruiting rather than deliberately recruit the mediocre. The personal involvement of the chief statistician in these matters can help transform a potentially mechanical and not very fruitful approach to young applicants into one filled with prospects and enthusiasm.

303. Young people who decide to go into public service are often drawn to the possibility of working on policy analysis. The opportunity to be in the proximity of those whom they perceive as the makers of the nation's destiny is an unrivalled attraction. However, the work of a statistical agency is less glamorous. This creates a problem for the agency. Not only does it add to the difficulty of enticing top graduates, it also makes it more likely that, if recruited and given specialized training, these graduates will move on to more prestigious centres of Government. Furthermore, once economists and social scientists start working for other government agencies, the possibility of getting the brightest back to a statistical agency is not high. For this reason, statistical agencies must accept the cost and the risk of recruiting young people with no experience, forge suitable training policies and stick to them in the knowledge that they face inevitable high rates of attrition, particularly among the non-statisticians.

304. A great number of careers are open to young people with an ability for quantitative analysis, promising greater incomes and a faster rise to higher monetary rewards than anything the chief statistician can hold out for them. It is very difficult for a statistical agency to compete with the private sector on initial or prospective salary. However, statistical agencies should be looking for those who are searching for more than salary. Those who may be more successful in the Government in general and in the statistical agency in particular would join the organization because they wish to have a job with a higher moral purpose, which is the public interest. Nevertheless, as we have mentioned previously, it is often difficult for the statistical agency to compete with other governmental agencies on the lookout for the same kinds of talents. Mitigating this situation is the fact that, for those who have graduated in mathematics with special reference to statistics, and who do not wish to teach or be an actuary but are interested in

mathematical applications to sampling, statistical design of experiments, hypothesis testing and related areas, the statistical system presents the most interesting challenges. The statistical agency should make it a priority to find professionally interesting work for such employees as soon as they join the agency. In addition, it is probably easier as a matter of practice to get young statisticians to stay with the statistical agency by broadening their interests so that they extend to economics and social organization, rather than expecting economists and sociologists to extend their stay for the sake of interesting issues in the theory of measurement.

D. The first day

305. In official texts on organization, little if anything has been said about a new employee's first day in the office. Yet the first day (or the first few days or the first week) can have a pronounced effect on the recruit's attachment, respect, and dedication to the organization. If the statistical agency is just another government agency, it will not be able to compete with more prestigious areas within Government. It will have neither the cohesive and elite forces binding foreign service officers together, nor the high-profile work that characterizes the business of analysts working on macroeconomic policy. The strengths of a statistical agency lie in its capacity to allow long-term pursuits to be entertained in an atmosphere relatively free from political turmoil and totally free, one hopes, from successful political pressures. Those strengths can be cemented in a recruit's first few days and converted into loyalty to the office.

306. An effective statistical agency will ensure that the following take place on the first day:

- The new recruit finds an agreeable place in which to sit and something definable to do;
- An accessible person is identified who will address questions and resolve doubts for the recruit;⁶⁸
- The organization conveys its willingness to consider the individual's career in addition to the immediate job;
- An explanation is given of what the individual's activities will be in the immediate and the near future, how they fit in with the organization of the office and what specific objectives they are designed to serve;
- A training plan is presented;

⁶⁸ In some agencies there are two such persons: one is an immediately defined supervisor who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the recruit's work and performance. The other, acting as a "mentor", is responsible for the recruit's adjustment to the new workplace, for the resolution of longer-term questions and doubts, and for the discussion of supplementary skills that the candidate may wish to acquire as a means of career development.

- Orientation is provided. Some offices, usually larger ones, have developed a tradition of organizing, at regular intervals (e.g., every month or every second month) an orientation day that is meant to give new recruits a quick overview of how the organization is structured and operates.

Box 11. Use of the Intranet and the first day

The first day has become an incomparably easier affair to manage with the institution of the Intranet. For example, the recruit's office is equipped with a personal computer and a modem. There he/she finds a personal greeting from the chief statistician; the text of the law that rules their agency; the structure of the organization, complete with the names and telephone numbers of key people; extracts from major publications; and, usually, a thriving exchange of messages among staff members that range from private sales of cars or audio equipment to serious discussions of methodological problems. Even if a personal computer and a modem were not available, a printed guide with the above material would still be of value.

E. Training

“The supply of professionals with the skills required in a statistical agency is as a rule scarce....Frequently the progress made by new staff members is slow because they do not know the characteristics of the agency sufficiently well....After some time, when a minimum of experience has been gained, every employee should be obliged to attend an orientation course where further explanation is provided...” In many countries, the knowledge acquired in universities, both in subject-matter fields and in statistics, is often too general and abstract to be immediately well adapted to the needs of statistical agencies....Developing countries have access to regional institutes of statistics, sponsored by several countries, which a statistical agency should take advantage of”.⁶⁹

307. Training should be regarded as an ongoing activity. In fact - without going so far as the armed forces, where a promotion to a new rank is viewed as the beginning of a training process that will lead to the next promotion - training should be a continuing activity.

308. Since the 1980 *Handbook* appeared, there is no denying that the demand for training has increased. Generally speaking, the statistical process has become increasingly complex. Traditional on-the-job training methods, while indispensable, are not the most effective way to ensure versatility of skills and standardization of methods. Furthermore, training facilities for developing countries seem to have diminished as a result of insufficient budgets and the lack of available trainers. In addition, the demand on agencies to produce accurate and timely statistics has increased. These concerns make the choice of training methods, particularly for more experienced, specialized statisticians, a crucial issue.

309. While there are different ways to provide career-long training, one way that has proved to work in many countries is to consider general-purpose training as having three distinct cycles:

⁶⁹ 1980 *Handbook*, pp. 42-43.

- The introductory cycle: this is primarily designed for newly recruited staff, and its purpose is to ensure their speedy integration into the organization, which implies both becoming familiar with the traditions of the statistical agency and being able to make a contribution in any of the domains or functions within its scope. Virtually all agencies administer such training, even if they do so in the most informal manner;⁷⁰
- The intermediate cycle: this training cycle is designed primarily for those who have worked in a statistical agency for a period of five to ten years and who have not had an opportunity to refresh their skills;
- The administrative cycle: over the course of a staff member's career, its direction eventually becomes foreseeable. Those who have the potential to fill policy-making positions within their respective agencies should be trained in the subjects that will demand their energies once they reach management levels. These subjects include financial administration and control, large project management, marketing, the institutional set-up of the Government and other features of the environment external to the statistical agency.

310. Moreover, one should make the corresponding cost part of the agency's regular budget and administer training to all targeted staff members as a matter of course. However, such training is regarded as general purpose, and it is not sufficient. It should be complemented by more narrowly defined courses to meet specific short-term needs. Many offices are not in a position to provide courses at all or at any of these levels. This is why alternatives and special arrangements are so important. In general, training can range from the very formal, given in a separate school by qualified trainers and lasting for several months, at the end of which course graduates are awarded a diploma, to an informal series of discussions with senior officers, possibly including the head of the agency.

311. For offices that are very small and newly formed, and where tradition is still being created, the alternative solution may be to benefit from what is available elsewhere: in the offices of better-endowed neighbours or in more advanced statistical agencies in which training modules for visitors from abroad are featured regularly. There are numerous variations on this practice, and the possibility of offering additional courses largely depends on the overall resources of the statistical agency as well as on the time and money it wishes to devote to initial training. Generally, the size of the agency and its endowment will determine the formality and specialization of the courses it offers.

⁷⁰ For example, in the United States Bureau of the Census, newly recruited staff were expected to attend a lengthy course, which involved taking a small-scale survey after designing it literally from scratch. The survey was conducted within the groups of recruits, with each member assuming a specialized role (computer analyst, questionnaire designer, sampling error estimator, etc.). Its primary purpose was to instil at an early stage the habit of working in multidisciplinary teams. The idea has been adopted by a number of other countries. In some countries, recruits must complete a range of compulsory courses lasting two to three months, followed by a couple of years of assignments in various parts of the agency, so that they gain a more general perspective on statistical work and the way it is handled while simultaneously contributing to it.

312. The idea of an in-service training institute is almost as old as that of creating a stand-alone statistical agency dedicated to the improvement of statistical methods and compilation and dissemination of social and economic statistics. According to chapter VIII, section F of the 1980 *Handbook*, "... in-service education and training require not only teaching but also quite extensive administrative efforts. Therefore permanent machinery should be established in the form of an in-service training school. In a small or medium-sized agency, a part-time head of the school may be selected from among the best qualified professionals of the agency. In a large agency, a full-time head may be needed. Such machinery is necessary to ensure the proper design of courses, recruitment of teachers, selection of students, etc."

313. Some countries have such a facility and run it very much in accordance with these recommendations. Other countries have a variety of different arrangements with local universities, in which they share the burden of administering at least the more formal aspects of training. Others still adopt ad hoc solutions and ensure that their junior and intermediate staff are trained abroad, preferably in neighbouring countries or else in a regional training facility.

F. Job rotation

314. An agency's "staff model" may fall anywhere between two extremes. At one end of the spectrum is the "no one moves" model. Its objective is to maximize specialized human capital by allowing staff members to learn more and more about their respective areas of responsibility (e.g., industry; health; education; retailing; balance of payments). Staff members would be expected to have a purely vertical career and would leave their areas only when called upon to discharge agency-wide responsibilities.

315. At the other extreme, the driving principle is versatility. Staff members are encouraged (or required) to acquire the widest possible experience in the shortest possible time by moving from one job to another. When this movement is directed by the office of personnel, it is likely to be in keeping with an optimal pattern so that the acquired experience would provide the most versatility.

316. It is virtually impossible to quantify the many factors that affect how an agency will balance the needs for both specialized knowledge and versatility. For example, staff morale is an important consideration, and if the idea of permanent rotation goes against habits and expectations, its introduction in an extreme form may create negative reactions that outweigh its benefits. Conversely, in a culture where the staff are used to and expect to change jobs every so many years, the absence of opportunities to try different assignments might well lead to frustration and atrophy.

317. Somewhere in between is a point of equilibrium that capitalizes on the inherent strengths of the two extremes. For example, an institution may require that at a certain level no one is allowed to remain on the same job for more than five years; if one opts to keep the same job for an indefinite period of time, it would be with the knowledge that one's chances of advancement are correspondingly reduced, even if job performance is entirely satisfactory.

G. Staff retention

“Despite the contributions of national, regional and international institutes to the trained statistical work force, critical shortages exist in developing countries. In part, this results from the fact that the demand for statistics has been increasing faster than the available resources. In a more fundamental sense, the shortages reflect the disadvantaged position of the statistical service in many developing countries with respect to pay scales and related working conditions as well as the low or moderate status of the national statistical services within the government hierarchy. Thus the most promising young people do not enter the statistical service as a first choice...”⁷¹

318. Staff retention is one of the major challenges for every office, whether large or small, well or poorly endowed. The smaller and less well endowed the office, the greater the loss sustained when a talented individual leaves. Several methods of retaining staff are worth exploring but none is foolproof. Ultimately, losses of employees to other offices and to the private sector must be included as part of the expected cost of running a statistical agency.

319. One way to deal with staff retention is simply to accept that no statistical agency can keep its most talented people forever. Accordingly, the best it can do is to procure the services of capable staff for a limited period. It is better to be explicit about this situation, for in this way there are no surprises at the end of the period for which these services are contracted. One tactic is to convince government departments that attract talented professionals with abilities in quantitative analysis that it is in their interest to place such people in the statistical agency for a while, so that they can learn all about the limitations of data and the possibilities of statistical inference. Moreover, such sharing of staff will help the statistical agency sort out its priorities, connect the agencies and create a better basis for ongoing dialogue. Since these features are always valuable, the initial stationing of people in the statistical agency or the ongoing exchange policy could become permanent features of a government-wide personnel management programme.

320. Another way to improve retention is to provide positions of increased responsibility to young and talented people as soon as they have demonstrated their capability. While some risk is involved, it is preferable to retaining staff members of mediocre talent while losing those whose talents are exceptional.

321. Another option is to form a contractual relationship with recruits that will deter them from leaving the statistical agency for frivolous reasons. For example, in offices with structured introductory training programmes, recruits could spend their first year on a particular assignment, after which they would participate in the training programme, provided they have signed up for a stay of at least three to five years in the statistical agency.

322. There are also special programmes that can be developed to ensure that qualified persons are recruited, such as the “cadet” programme of the Australian Bureau of Statistics in which the statistical office pays for the education of talented future statisticians) and internships.

⁷¹ See 1980 *Handbook*, pp. 43-44.

323. Traditionally the problem of staff retention has been the sharpest for experts in information technology (IT). As the speed of deployment of IT, so did the demand for trained personnel; however, the supply of qualified people did not increase as quickly. In such circumstances, it became virtually impossible for a government institution to compete with the private sector, the banking sector, or companies owned and operated from abroad. Government institutions were not able to offer competitive salaries, and what they could offer - job security - was not an overriding concern for the young and mobile professional with the desired skills. The standard response to this situation, which has shown no great variation in the recent past, was to recruit ever younger, less-experienced technicians and administer training. However, this policy, in addition to consuming resources, converted statistical agencies into an unrecognized training centre for the private sector. As soon as recruits were trained, some other enterprise stepped in, offering to double or triple their salaries.

324. The next chapter will consider in more detail how to manage information technology a statistical agency.

H. Options for a new chief statistician

325. No recently appointed chief statistician - with the possible exception of one in a newly created office - can make more than minor staff changes. Annual recruitment represents only a small share of the total number of employees and is unlikely to make a profound difference in the short term. Most agency heads will inherit a complete team; some will inherit a ready-made team from which the top layer has been removed, as when there is a change of government.⁷² Whether or not the existing team is ideal, it is prudent to keep it intact (to do so may also be the only option under the law) and make improvements through gradual additions as well as by taking advantage of voluntary departures and retirements.⁷³

326. Occasionally, total resources are increased appreciably because of a special project (e.g., a census or a very complex and costly survey) for which supplementary staff members must be recruited. In such cases, significant staff changes may be made; although this is not the rule, when it does happen experience shows that the risks involved in hurried recruitment outweigh the bad impression created by a sluggish response to an urgent need.

⁷² It is typical in some countries to have the top layer of management of a statistical agency tender its resignation when there is a change in Government. In some of these countries, according to its constitution, the president serves only one term. This practice might create a change in direction as often as once every four or five years. Moreover, the management being called up to tender its resignation has just mastered the mechanisms of the system, whereas its successors are unfamiliar with them. The result is that the second level of the staff, or perhaps an even lower level, must take charge of day-to-day operations.

⁷³ There is little advice that can be given to chief statisticians in a generic way on what to do with the people who are generally perceived to be a liability to the organization. Of course, if they are very disruptive there may be no choice but to engage all the means available by law, regulation and tradition to free the organization from their services. Such cases, however, tends to be the exception. More often, people are on the margin and the chief statistician receives conflicting advice about their value to the organization.

327. A chief statistician newly appointed to run an existing agency may worry about being overly dependent on the existing staff for advice and may be concerned that the staff will take advantage of the situation, perhaps to carry out a pet project, exaggerate a technical difficulty, or add to resources in a less than unbiased fashion. Accordingly, a chief statistician joining an agency may wish to bring in someone he has worked with, whose judgement he trusts and with whom he can discuss options as an alternative to his own immediate subalterns. While this practice may provide a certain cushioning, it may well have the unintended effect of widening the gap between the head of the agency and the regular staff. In fact, the greater the access and the level of the newcomer, the greater the danger of internal rivalry. One device that has been used to signal the transient nature of the appointment is to bring in the newcomers but not as part of the established hierarchy.

I. Human resources management: a package

328. So far we have described the elements of a human resources policy and the factors that affect them. However, makers of policies - chief statisticians, heads of personnel, committees on human resources - are not simply free to pick and choose those measures they believe are required to solve a current problem without concern for the coherence of the resulting set. Policies, in this domain perhaps more than in any other, must reinforce each other in order to be effective. For example, a strong impetus assigned to job rotation can only make sense if versatility is favoured over specialization and general training over on-the-job training. The list below details a possible set of measures and policies applicable to small to medium-sized offices:

- A steady influx of recruits, weighted in favour of those with post-secondary training, with an insistence on computer proficiency and an aptitude for quantitative analysis;
- As heavy an investment in the beginner's initial training as resources permit, fortified if at all possible with out-of-institution or even out-of-country training opportunities for the most talented;
- An agreement with other public sector institutions in which talented young people remain in the statistical agency for a reasonable period of time;
- Promotions based on merit as opposed to seniority, in order to minimize the loss of able staff members;
- Semi-compulsory job rotation in order to avoid excessive specialization, supported by ongoing training to ensure versatility and acquired familiarity with a variety of jobs within the statistical agency.

Conclusions

The most important asset of a statistical agency is its staff. They therefore deserve a policy especially designed to ensure the following:

- Recruitment of the most talented and promising people;
- A selection process that is as thorough and as professional as possible;
- Proper assimilation of newly recruited staff into the statistical agency;
- Satisfactory working conditions, designed to facilitate communications between newcomers and the rest of the organization;
- Personnel administration, which is a necessary activity within a statistical agency, handled in a centralized mode by professionals, albeit not exclusively;
- A special training centre, if justified by training needs, with its own staff and a dedicated (part-time or full-time) professional director;
- Human resource policies that constitute a coherent set. Small and medium-sized offices should be encouraged to choose policies that favour versatility and maximize career opportunities within the office.