

## **2003 SACUBO Best Practices**

### **HR Key Reps Approach to Problem Resolution**

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## **Abstract**

*Data quality and interdepartmental communications are the most critical and vulnerable parts of any Human Resources (HR) records process. You can easily tell if a transaction has been entered into the HR system, but it is not readily evident if the information is accurate. The HR Key Rep Organization (Key Reps) began as the result of trying to improve data quality and the circular flow of information between Human Resources and the departments across campus. Key Reps are "Problem Resolution" employees who are empowered to review, analyze, and make appropriate changes to processes within their department relative to HR paperwork. The target is any paperwork or information that flows from their department to Human Resources. As liaisons between HR and departments on campus, they update their departments on policy and procedural changes, and they are invited to share their departmental methods with the group. Participants find this communication and training method helpful when solving problems or learning how to avoid problems in the future.*

## **Description of Institution**

The University of Memphis is a comprehensive urban university committed to excellence in undergraduate, graduate, and professional education; the discovery and dissemination of knowledge; service to the metropolitan community, state, and nation; and the preparation of a diverse student population for successful careers and meaningful participation in a global society. The University offers 15 bachelor's degrees in more than 50 majors and 70 concentrations, master's degrees in 46 subjects and doctoral degrees in 21 disciplines, in addition to the Juris Doctor (law) and a specialist degree in education. The U of M campus is located on 1,160 acres with 201 buildings at more than four sites. The university enrolls more than 20,000 students each semester, and employs more than 2,500 faculty and staff.

Human Resources is responsible for the administration of compensation, benefits, records, employee relations, employment, training and development, and employee safety programs for staff and faculty at the University.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Data quality and interdepartmental communications are the most critical and vulnerable parts of any Human Resources (HR) records processes. You can easily tell if a transaction has been entered into the system, but it is not readily evident if the information is accurate. The

University of Memphis instituted the HR Key Rep Organization (Key Reps) as a result of trying to improve data quality and the circular flow of information between Human Resources and the departments across campus.

## **Design**

After the goal to improve data quality was established, the Manager of Employee Records compiled a roster of staff members responsible for completing HR documents for their respective University departments. Next, a system review was performed to determine the individual processes that were being followed at that time. Quickly it became evident that both better communication and process training were needed. If we were going to make the changes we planned, and do it effectively, we identified these needs: (a) a general overhaul of the existing forms used to process information, (b) a certain amount of employee empowerment, and (c) a sense of accountability. Out of this process study, the HR Key Rep Organization was created.

The initiative required no additional personnel, capital equipment purchases, or electronic system solutions. Funds to re-design forms and print handout materials for meetings as well as a great deal of creativity were the basic resource requirements. The Manager of Employee Records served as the coordinator of the group, which comprises individuals from every department on campus who are responsible for performing HR tasks—advertising requests, appointment/re-appointment forms, data change forms, I-9 certification, separation and clearance forms, etc.

Finally, Key Reps were designated as "Problem Resolution" employees, and we empowered them to review, analyze, and make necessary and appropriate changes to processes within their department relative to HR paperwork such as time sheets, employment contracts, I-9s, extra compensation, budget revisions and termination forms. The original target was, and continues to be, any paperwork or information that flows from their department to ours.

## **Implementation**

The Key Rep concept was formally introduced at an inaugural meeting held by the Manager of Employee Records, and the group's foundation is The University of Memphis HR motto: *Cooperative Learning Improves Productivity (CLIP)*. Following this initial meeting, Key Reps continue to attend monthly information and training sessions about current processes for completing paperwork for Human Resources as well as new projects when they are launched. We have designated more than 150 employees as Key Reps on our campus, and an average of approximately 50 reps attend each meeting.

To maintain an accurate roster for departmental representation, Employee Records Office sends out annually a *Records' Census* to collect department contact information. A copy of the census form is attached.

In addition to the monthly meetings, the Employee Records office distributes a newsletter that contains timely information and reminders that are important to meeting deadlines, correctly completing seasonal tasks, and keeping the Key Reps generally informed of their roles and responsibilities. A copy of the newsletter, *CLIP in Action*, can be accessed at <http://bf.memphis.edu/hr/records/newsletter.php>.

## **Benefits**

As liaisons between HR and departments on campus, the Key Reps update their department chair and other staff members when HR policy and procedural changes are planned and/or have been made. This collaborative learning style is designed to increase staff productivity as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of the paperwork flow to Human Resources. Key Reps are invited to share their departmental methods within the group, and best practices on campus are identified through this collaboration. Participants find this

communication and training method helpful when problem solving or learning how to avoid problems in the future.

Some areas at the University experience a high rate of turnover, and a suspected cause is lack of training on processes. The Key Rep Group and the collaborative efforts among them have helped to augment the job training needed in most departments who process HR paperwork. The Key Reps concept also encourages empowerment, thus employees feel they are part of the overall team when they work together and share ideas. It appears that benefits of the Key Rep concept have been improved employee retention, better communication, and overall process improvement.

### **Retrospect**

The HR Key Reps Organization at The University of Memphis continues to grow and evolve as new and different training and communications opportunities are identified. At nearly every meeting, a question is raised that suggests a topic for a future agenda at a Key Reps meeting. Speakers from several departments other than Human Resources are now invited to present information and answer questions about unique transactions, e.g., employees hired on grants and contracts. This cross-representation has not only strengthened the Key Reps Organization, but has also improved the communication links between Human Resources and other departments on campus. Our only regret in instituting a Key Reps Organization in Human Resources is that we did not do it sooner.

ATTACHMENT

### ***Records' Census 2002***

### ***Department Contact Update***

In an effort to improve the quality of data and serve your department more efficiently, please complete the following information and return to Human Resources, Records, Jones Hall Room

108. You may respond by e-mail or mail updated information. If you have any questions please call 678-2888 or your Employee Records Assistant.

**Timekeeping**

Timekeeping Location (Numeric) \_\_\_\_\_ Department Name \_\_\_\_\_

Timekeeper's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Timekeeper's e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**C**

**Contracts: Who completes the paperwork for:**

**Temporary Appointments Job Codes P, N, R, and S (Regular Graduate Assistants)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**Regular Appointments: Job Codes A, B, C, D, F, G, H, J, K, L, M**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**Whom would you consider sending to a Department Reps Meeting?**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**Who is your SIRS (Student Information Reading System) Rep?**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_