

Fermilab Employee Advisory Group Meeting

November 17, 2011

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM, Comitium

AGENDA TOPICS

- Management update
- Employee reward and recognition
- EAG membership and transition

MEETING SUMMARY

1) Management Update

- The recent layoffs were covered in Fermilab Today; management cannot go into any further specifics but asked if there were any general questions. There were none.
- The federal budget is still under a continuing resolution, which expires tomorrow, the mini-buses, which were discussed at the last meeting, are making some progress but nothing has passed. There is likely to be another continuing resolution tomorrow. Pier continues to work the issues as best he can, but there are obviously much bigger issues in the budget than Fermilab.
- The Fermilab long-term plan is being finalized, and should be completed by early next week. 5,000 copies will be printed by mid December so that all employees and users may have a copy. The lab will also produce a short version for the non-scientific community, which will be printed at the same time. This version will present a shorter overview without all of the scientific details.
- Young-Kee is hosting two more staff meetings today and two tomorrow for technical and administrative staff. All staff should now have been invited to at least one opportunity, and more meetings may be scheduled next year. Young-Kee asked if anyone had not gotten notified of these meetings, and three people in PPD noted that they had not received notice.
- There is a lot of work going on at the Illinois Accelerator Research Center (IARC), and official groundbreaking will occur on 12/16.
- The upcoming workshop on the future of physics has exceeded the expected enrollment and had to stop taking enrollment. This is a good sign that interest in physics remains robust.
- Two dark ice cases have been reported so far this year--everyone needs to be aware and be safe. Slips, falls and similar activities account for many of the safety issues at the lab.
- Bruce talked with Susan Annunzio at the University of Chicago. She believes that she is not the right person to provide information to the EAG, and instead she suggested The Daniel Pink book "Drive" and short video. Bruce will be pursuing a

few more names of possible outside experts. She did note that the suggestion she made last month regarding the low survey turnout was due of her belief that it was a management-mandated survey.

2) Ongoing work on manager rewards and manager resource center

- The book “Drive” and accompanying video recommended from the University of Chicago were discussed. The viewpoint expressed in this book appears different from what the EAG has been trying to do with rewards. Research done on motivating people shows that for certain types of work with mechanical or linear functions, giving rewards for good performance can help. However, when work is more complex and more free form, rewards can be less motivating or even demotivating.
- The EAG reviewed a short Daniel Pink video about reactions to rewards and punishments from which is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6XAPnuFjJc>
- According to the video, transcendent purpose is a key aspect of personal satisfaction at work. How well do people feel a part of the purpose here? Many do feel very close to the excitement and accomplishments of the work at the lab, while others feel very frustrated within the culture here at the lab.
- One EAG member also noted lessons from the Book “Tribal Leadership” (see www.triballeadership.net). The book presents certain stages of culture starting with “life sucks”, when people are all in a bad situation. Higher levels of culture can lead to “my life sucks” while another is “I’m great but you’re not” which can cause those who work with them to feel “my life sucks”, In these types of cultures some are doing well and others are not. A next higher stage is “we’re great”, when the tribe as a whole realizes that they are much better together than individually. When people are treated well and given autonomy and empowerment, they are generally much happier and perform at a higher level. The “fix-it” mentality gets stuck on fixing problems forever until the actual culture is addressed.
- These types of themes are talked about within the safety culture as well: driving out fear and moving from a compliance approach to an ownership approach.
- The EAG wondered how much of what we are dealing with at the lab is an issue of human nature and interpersonal behaviors as opposed to specific lab management issues?
- Another important issue that was raised in the Pink video is of self-direction. A question was posed whether we are being much more prescriptive than we need to be at the lab?
- Self-direction, competency, and purpose were all themes in the video—how well do we do these here? Are we using our folks to their best abilities? The government is very much a command and control culture and the lab may not provide enough of a buffer to create the kind of empowerment culture we would like to see at the lab.
- People want to be competent, how does our culture support that? The more controlling the culture, the less people will feel empowered to get better.

Especially if they only get feedback when they do something wrong, only get attention for correction, and do not get positive feedback for innovation and creative solutions. This goes both ways from employees to managers.

- There is always a deadline, sometimes we need to just tell people how to do it and time is filled with only prescribed tasks. There are lots of examples at the lab where we do provide technicians and others the freedom to solve problems in the best way they see fit. Often however, there is just no time given to do that. It can really prevent growth and the ability to feel good about one's work.
- It is also important to recognize that not everyone will respond to these kinds of freedoms, and we have to be able to manage accordingly. Managers need to recognize that everyone is different.
- All of these things were also mentioned in the EAG employee survey: particularly freedom, mastery and needing to connect to the purpose of the lab.
- There are so many programs across the lab and they are all different so no single approach is going to work. One common theme at the lab is that people think critically about issues and want to have information to support change; they need to connect research to the need and approaches to change. Research such as mentioned in the book "Drive" could be very influential.
- While money may not matter that much in improving performance and feeling good about one's work, recognition certainly does. We need to create a deeper understanding of the behaviors and environments needed to achieve the desired results.
- We also need to make sure we are sharing the right kinds of information and getting people to pay attention to it. It is not enough to just put information out there.
- Also the direction has to come from the top, with relevant commitments, otherwise there is no motivation for change.
- We need to value management much more as an organization. Up until the last decade we have not done that. At one point you really could not even suggest that management was important at the lab, but that is now changing.
- The book, "Organizational Culture and Leadership" by Edgar Schein may also be a good resource. It defines what culture is and what it looks like. Teri Dykhuis and Jamie Blowers agreed to provide a short presentation on the main points in this book at the next meeting.
- Does the lab use all of the reward money available to us now? Yes. Do we know how it is working? The lab does not collect any feedback or conduct evaluation about the current reward system. Anecdotally, people do seem to be very pleased and excited to receive the rewards.
- The lab needs to help create the environment and the connections to the work of the lab so that everyone can view their work as meaningful and part of the larger whole regardless of their role and position.

3) Discussion surrounding EAG membership

- The EAG agreed to organize membership around three-year terms so that no more than one-third of the members rotate off at any one time.

- The EAG will conduct a poll to determine who wants to stay on the EAG and who wants to transition off. Members can choose to end their terms in March, extend for one year or extend for two years.
- Doug will create and conduct the poll.
- The EAG reviewed the distribution of EAG members vs. all lab employees. PPD might a bit over-represented, and computing under-represented but overall it appears that the EAG has a fairly even representation of divisions. The EAG may be a little heavy on managers, and light on technicians.
- There are currently 20 EAG members. Up to 24 members can be considered in order to help balance representation and make up for variance in retirement preferences of current members.

EAG Action Items:

- Teri and Jamie will provide a short presentation on the main points of the book “Organizational Culture and Leadership” at the next meeting.
- All members will review September meeting summary for Possible EAG recommendations related to WDRS initiatives.
- Doug will create a poll for EAG members to identify their desires for none, one, or two-year extensions to their terms.

Potential agenda items for November:

- Presentation on the main points of the book “Organizational Culture and Leadership
- Additional conversation on next steps for reward, recognition, management, and issues for discussion in 2012
- Develop possible recommendations related to WDRS initiatives
- Discuss terms and recruitment of new members