FACT SHEET

2018 Research Symposium

& STIC Annual Meeting

VTrans Employee Retention & Knowledge Management Study

RESEARCH PROJECT TITLE
VTrans Employee Retention & Knowledge Management Study

STUDY TIMELINE
October 2016 – September 2018

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This fact sheet was prepared for the 2018 VTrans Research and Innovation Symposium & STIC Annual Meeting held at the State House in Montpelier, VT, on **September 12, 2018** from **8:00 am– 1:00 pm**.

Fact sheets can be found for additional projects featured at the 2018 Symposium at
http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/research/2018symposium

Additional information about the **VTrans Research Program** can be found at
http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/research

Additional information about the **VTrans STIC Program** can be found at http://vtrans.vermont.gov/boards-councils/stic

Significance of the Problem

Employee retention is a critical issue for organizations of all types, and public sector agencies such as VTrans are no exception. Recruitment, training and orientation of new employees are costly. Work disruption and loss of organizational memory when personnel leave also impact organizational performance. In this two-year project we studied employee retention (or turnover) in the Agency and the status of knowledge management (KM), including knowledge capture and sharing. Next, we piloted possible steps to address identified issues.

Methodology

Project methodology included:
Organizational Assessment
- Turnover data analysis – FY 2016
- Foundational focus groups (TAC members; MOB supervisors; MOB employees,' Rail, IT & Lab supervisors) n= 32 participants
- Employee focus groups by Age and Years of Service (Age 19 to 25, 26 to 35 years; Years of Service: less than 2 years, 2 to 5 years, 6 to 8 years) n= 25 participants
- KM Litmus test, managers, n= 45 respondents
- KM Assessment Survey (Tech Services, Structures, selected DMV individuals), n= 61 respondents

Scan of other State DOTs and Knowledge Management (KM) practices
- Informational interviews to gather data from six other State DOTs
- Annotated bibliography compiled concerning KM literature

Pilot Project
- Exit questionnaire designed and piloted with 49 voluntarily separated employees from July – December 2017. n=27 respondents
- KM tool and process for capturing tacit knowledge developed and tested with 8 employees from Structures and TSMO units.

Findings

The VTrans Employee Exit Questionnaire and Focus Groups found that employees are attracted to employment at VTrans because of benefits, job security, time off and advancement potential. VTrans employees most often leave the Agency due to issues with quality of supervision or organizational culture. Pay was not necessarily a key reason for leaving.

The KM pilot developed a form and process to capture and share tacit knowledge, a place for storing that knowledge and a system for searching documents produced. However, feedback from pilot participants indicated that while helpful, the piloted approach did not address the root problem of too many documents in too many places.
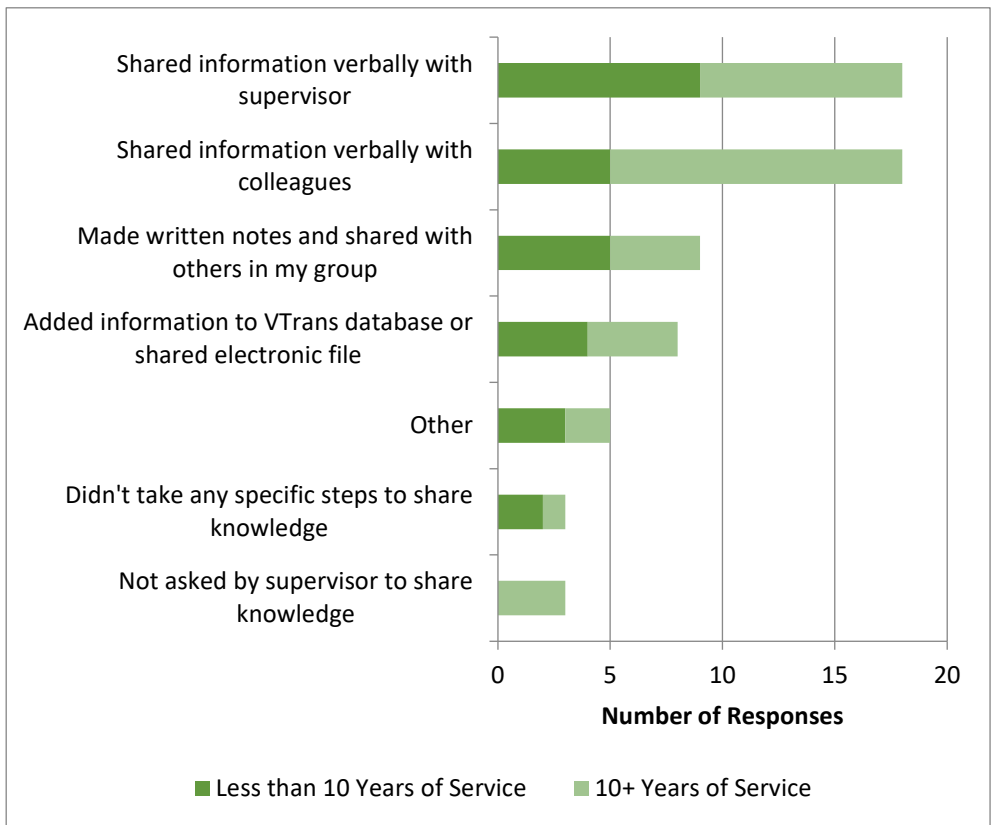
Figure 1. VTrans Knowledge Sharing Practices (from Exit Questionnaire, n=27)

Potential Impacts and VTrans Benefits

This study produced an exit questionnaire, based on the focus group research and best practices in gathering information from exiting employees. The exit questionnaire is ready to be put into place with all employees who leave VTrans employment. The form and methodology, along with de-identified results, have been transmitted to the TAC and will be useful in building a longitudinal dataset that can be used to determine possible impacts of recruitment, supervision and other organizational practices.

The knowledge capture tool and process is a good first step in helping organize some of VTrans' tacit knowledge. These products are also ready for use by VTrans units. However, there is broad scale acknowledgement that too many documents are in SharePoint and the challenge is being able to find them. KM at VTrans would benefit from leadership from the top and dedicated staff resources to help with organization of documents and other KM activities. Options include linking KM development to expanded mentoring opportunities and the development of Communities of Practice that document and share tacit knowledge in a variety of areas.