

ORGANIZATIONAL **CULTURE PROJECT**

Final Report



May 2000
Office of Workforce Analysis
Office of Human Resources

Routing and Transmittal Slip

Date

June 13,
2000

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Remarks:

Attached is a copy of the final report of the findings from the Organizational Culture Study. I thought you would like to know that these are the "unadulterated" findings--that is, I omitted nothing nor was I asked to. The full report is also on OWA's web site at <http://eis.ba.ssa.gov/owa/>.

The report includes recommendations about how we might want to address some of the more pressing issues identified during the study. To start, the Commissioner has asked Goal Group 4 (see page 31) to begin work on a vision of the desired SSA culture and to provide guidance to an intercomponent workgroup we will later convene. The workgroup's charter will be to develop a change strategy to steer the Agency toward that desired culture. You will be hearing more about formation of the workgroup shortly. Who knows? Maybe you aren't finished with this yet! Thanks for all your hard work on the project. We couldn't have done it without you.

Give me or Charlie Burdette (52969) a call if you have any questions.

<p>From: <i>Doris</i> Doris Crafton, Office of Workforce Analysis, OHR</p>	<p>Room No – Bldg 4-S-17 Operations Phone No. 58171</p>
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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE PROJECT

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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE PROJECT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

May 2000

BACKGROUND

The Organizational Culture Project originated with the Agency Strategic Plan which includes the objective *to promote an Agency culture that successfully incorporates our values*. Those values are in the current Agency Strategic Plan. A good definition of organizational culture is: "The shared practices and values of the group" or, more simply put, *"it's the way we do things around here."* Shortly after publication of the Agency Strategic Plan, the Office of Workforce Analysis (OWA) in the Office of Human Resources (OHR) was assigned the lead for developing a plan to achieve the culture objective, to include *baselining* the current culture and conducting a *gap analysis* between the current and the desired culture. There are a number of reasons why it is important to know the culture: for example, ignoring the culture can derail new ideas since new ideas may require ways of working or behaving that are not like "the way we do things around here."

The attached report documents fully the findings from all stages of the project, including results from secondary research, employee interviews, benchmarking, and a survey. This summary highlights the most significant findings from the survey.

METHODOLOGY

To find out what values and workplace issues are important, teams of SSA employees conducted individual and group interviews with more than 1000 employees and managers. The interviews took place in six regions and all headquarters components. We used the information from these interviews to design a survey that covers topics related to workplace practices, values and work climate. We asked employees to react to 67 statements on these survey topics in two ways—to what extent the practice now exists in their workplace and how important the practice is to them. The difference between the two answers will help identify how much of a gap there is between what the culture is and what employees would like it to be. The survey also included questions on demographics, such as the respondent's component, age, gender, grade level, bargaining unit membership, and so on. A copy of the survey is attached at tab C of the full report.

We sent the survey to 13,600 SSA employees during the Summer of 1999; altogether, we received 6,605 completed surveys. We also received written comments from 574

3. Largest/smallest gaps: The appraisal system resulted in the largest gap (1.72) between the average answers to the current situation and importance. Fifty percent think the system is inadequate now, but 85% think it is important to have a good appraisal system.

The smallest gap (0.21) appeared in "I am able to explain SSA's mission." Seventy-three percent are able to explain the mission *now* and 81% think this is *important*.

4. Values: The values rated highest in the workplace *currently* are "to discharge faithfully our role as guardians of the public trust," "to act with integrity," and "to act with this thought in mind: to millions of people we ARE the government." Sixty-three percent of employees agreed or strongly agreed with the first statement in the *current situation* column: 62% believe we act with integrity in the workplace *now*, and, 58% agreed we are *currently* the government to millions. The average answers for these three values were 3.7, 3.5, and 3.6, respectively.¹

The values rated lowest in *importance* are "to value diversity" and "to act with this thought in mind: to millions of people we ARE the government." Seventy-eight percent agreed valuing diversity is important while 51% said we value diversity *now*. Seventy-nine percent think being the government to millions is *important*. This was the second lowest rated value in *importance* (4.2). Since it was rated 3.6 in the workplace *currently*, there is not a large gap (0.6) between where we are and where employees would like to be.

5. Senior Staff survey results: There are some notable differences in the results of the Senior Staff survey as compared to employees. For example, Senior Staff responses were more positive than the rest of SSA on almost every item on the survey, both for the *current situation* and the *importance*. The biggest difference for the *current situation* was in "For employee opinions to count." Eighty-seven percent of the Senior Staff agree or strongly agree that employee opinions *now* count; only 37% of employees would agree. The biggest difference in *importance* was in "I share common values with my coworkers—ninety-one percent of the Senior Staff think it is *important* to share common values with coworkers; 72% of employees agree.

There were areas of agreement between employees and the Senior Staff. One of these is that we provide accurate information about SSA programs. Another is the inadequacy of the *current* appraisal system. See tab E of the report for this and other areas of agreement between employees and the Senior Staff.

¹ In some cases, ranking of average answers and percentages do not match because of weighting.

Some may dismiss written comments because they assume only the most disgruntled employees take the time to write. However, we could not find any research to support this assumption. In fact, the issues identified in the survey comments are nearly identical to those we heard during our 1998 interviews and previous OWA studies. They are also borne out by the survey results.

CONCLUSION

A review of interview remarks, employee comments, and survey results shows some very healthy beliefs, behaviors, practices, values, and attitudes on the part of SSA employees. These areas need continued support and encouragement.

On the other hand, many problems have emerged as well. We believe we should focus on those issues that we can do something about quickly and that will have the most payoff for employees and the Agency. For example, it may be a higher priority to focus on the 58% who think we could work more efficiently and productively and the 41% who feel that work responsibilities could be shared more fairly than the 23% who do not think the work environment is attractive or professional enough. Several of the differences between Senior Staff results and the rest of SSA need similar review, as well.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

As stated in the current plan for achieving the culture objective, the next step is for the Agency to define its vision of the desired culture. We suggest addressing the questions raised in this report by referring them to the group of Executives already assigned to issues related to goal four (To be an employer that values and invests in each employee).

Once this group considers the issues, we recommend convening an Agency-level intercomponent workgroup, with Union and Management Association membership. Based on the direction provided by this group, the Workgroup would further address issues identified during the various stages of this project. The most important workgroup deliverable would be a change strategy that will help SSA employees and managers achieve the culture they want.

OWA will continue to analyze the survey results to make pertinent demographic comparisons (e.g., men and women; bargaining and non-bargaining; different age groups; varying lengths of service, and so on). We also plan to share individual component's results with them to show them how they compare to the rest of SSA.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE PROJECT

FINAL REPORT

May 2000

BACKGROUND

A. How did the Organizational Culture Project begin?

In September 1997, the Commissioner published the Agency Strategic Plan for 1997-2002. The Agency Strategic Plan included five goals—each with a number of associated objectives. Goal 4 of the Plan, often referred to as the "employee goal," is: *To be an employer that values and invests in each employee.* The Organizational Culture Project stems from the objective under goal 4 that reads *"to promote an agency culture that successfully incorporates our values."*

Shortly after publication of the Agency Strategic Plan, the Office of Workforce Analysis (OWA) in the Office of Human Resources (OHR) was assigned the lead for developing a plan to achieve the culture objective. Once developed, the plan included the following initiatives:

1. Perform a *baseline* study of the current culture (what it is now);
2. Conduct a *gap analysis* between the current culture and the desired culture (what we want it be);
3. Conduct a *benchmarking study* to see how the best organizations measure their success in this area; and,
4. Design and implement a *change strategy* to get from where we are now to the desired agency culture.

C. Why was the culture objective originally included in the Agency Strategic Plan?

During the development of the Agency Strategic Plan, a number of Senior Staff involved in the planning process understood the importance of organizational culture and the influence it has on behavior in the workplace. They also believed that a more complete understanding of the current culture would assist in implementing change in a more successful and efficient manner.

BASELINING: SECONDARY RESEARCH

A. Methodology

In their text, Corporate Cultures¹, Deal and Kennedy recommend starting a culture analysis by reading what an organization says about its culture. Thus, we started the baselining effort by conducting secondary research into written material already available to us—including former study reports, focus group reports, GAO study reports, results of various employee surveys, process review documentation, and previous Business and Strategic Plans. We also visited SSA's Internet site. These documents (and the Web site) gave us a picture of SSA's public "persona" as well as insight into what employees think and say about it.

In reviewing these documents, we attempted to answer six questions:

1. What are our strengths?
2. What opportunities for improvement are identified?
3. What themes, if any, are evident?
4. What behavior would make a difference to the desired outcomes?
5. What financial (bottom line) implications are linked to behavioral outcomes?

¹ Terrence E. Deal and Allan A. Kennedy, Corporate Cultures (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1982), 119.

BASELINING: EMPLOYEE INTERVIEWS

A. Methodology

To further educate ourselves, we hired Dr. Judd Allen from the Human Resources Institute to conduct a one-day seminar on organizational culture theory.² During the course of the seminar we reviewed the language in the Agency Strategic Plan on the culture objective and took stock of where we were. The nine values already in the Plan were developed without employee input; thus, one important piece of information that we did not have was what employees would think about them. We also decided we needed employee input on what the culture is and what employees would like it to be.

To that end, we organized interviewing teams that included representatives from almost every major SSA component³. The teams traveled to six regions⁴ and all HQ components during the summer of 1998 and interviewed close to 1000 managers and employees in 200 individual and group interviews. We discussed a variety of topics with the participants, including what they thought about the three themes that emerged from our document search and what issues are important to them. We also observed the physical space, the atmosphere of the workplace, and even how employees reacted to the interview teams.⁵

² Dr. Allen later conducted three additional seminars designed to assist the intercomponent team with other phases of the project (such as the design of interview guides and identification of survey topics).

³ OSM, OGC, OCOMM, OP, Operations, ODISP, Systems, CSI and Office of Personnel (OHR).

⁴ NY, PH, ATL, CHI, SEA, and SF.

⁵ Summaries of all 200 interviews are available from OWA; identifying information has been removed.

8. Employees supported the three themes, but were skeptical about the Agency's commitment to them, especially world-class service and supportive work environment.
9. Given urgent and legitimate circumstances (such as implementing legislation or court orders, or responding to natural disasters), SSA employees will mobilize and deliver to meet the need.
10. Many employees long for the "good old days" when they thought SSA was a good place to work.
11. Finally, managers and employees alike, especially those in FOs, believe more staff is the solution to most of their problems.

Sidebar: During the last 10 years, OWA study teams have visited many field components—FOs most often. In comparing the culture interview findings to results from three previous FO studies, we found that the basic tenets of SSA's culture (as described above) have not changed much over the years. And, although the purpose of the interviews for this project was different from the purpose of earlier studies, FO employees cited many of the same issues and problems in 1998 that they had told us about in the past. Thus, despite automation and other employee initiatives and workplace improvements that have been implemented over the years, it appears that, from the FO employee's perspective, not a lot has changed for the better.

Senior Staff Survey—We also sent the survey to all 128 members of the Senior Staff to see how their vision and opinions compared to the rest of SSA. Are there serious disconnects and are there areas of agreement?

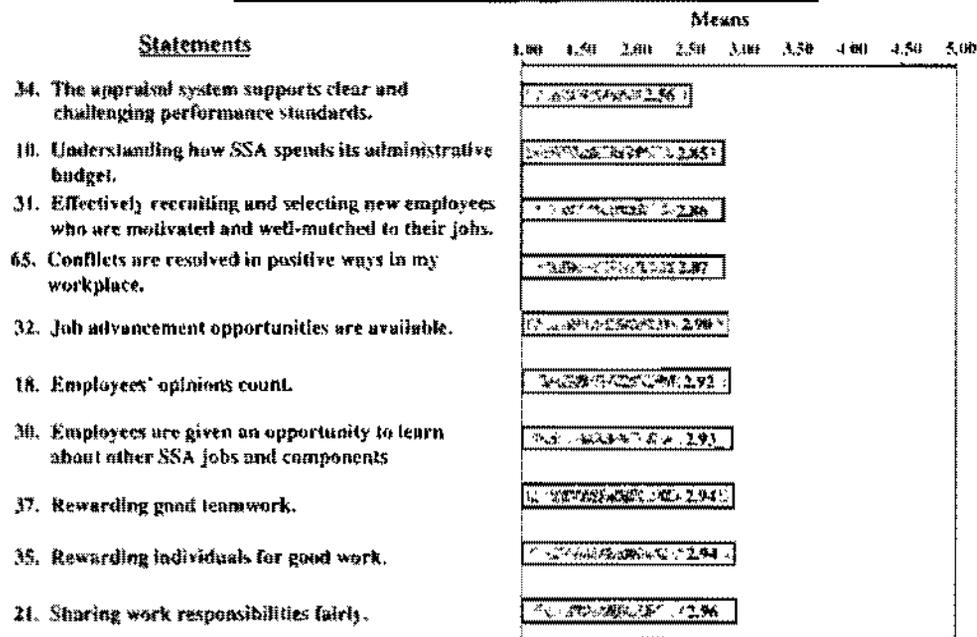
- o 65 members of the Senior Staff responded (about 51%).
- o None of them submitted comments relative to SSA's culture.

In addition, we identified *mid-level managers* from the survey demographics and compared their results to the items where employees and Senior Staff agreed or disagreed the most (that is, smallest and largest gaps).

- o 83% agreed or strongly agreed that they know what is expected of them at work— (S-58);⁷
- o 81% of the respondents believe we currently provide accurate information about the programs (S-4);
- o 82% said they understand how their work relates to the work of other units (S-57); and,
- o 81% believe their work is important to SSA's mission (S-56).

2. The two lowest rated current practices were the appraisal system (S-34) and understanding the administrative budget (S-10).

Chart 2: What Is 10 Lowest Rated



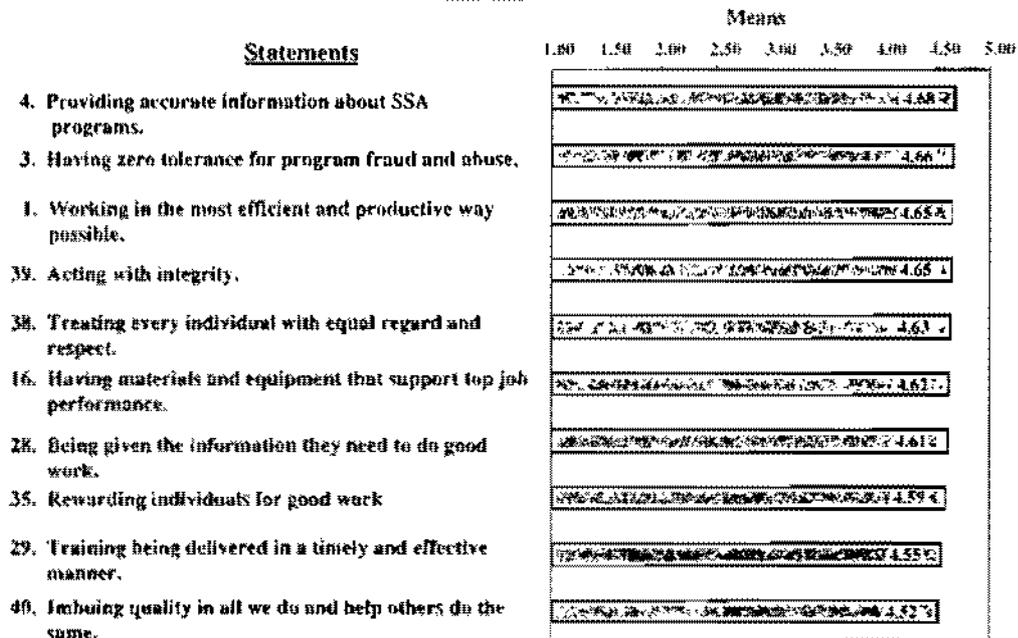
SSA Means Across Component Offices:
 (5= Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree)

The appraisal system was the *lowest* rated with an average answer of 2.56. Fifty percent of our respondents think we do not now have an appraisal system that supports clear and challenging performance standards.

⁷ In some cases, ranking of average answers and percentages do not match because of weighting.

3. Providing accurate information about the programs (S-4) and having zero tolerance for program fraud and abuse (S-3) were the two practices that were most important to employees--with average answers of 4.68 and 4.66 respectively.⁸

Chart 3: What Is Important 10 Highest Rated



SSA Means Across Component Offices:
 (5= Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree)

In both cases, about ninety-six percent of our respondents agreed or strongly agreed that these two practices are *important* to them. As noted in the first finding above, the majority thinks we are doing a good job in these areas now.⁹

Other practices employees see as important to them follow:

- o 98% say it is important to work in the most efficient and productive way possible (S-1) while 58% say we are now;

⁸ Note that we have highlighted the Agency Strategic Plan values in gold whenever they appear on any of the charts.

⁹ In some cases, ranking of average answers and percentages do not match because of weighting.

Other practices employees rated low in importance¹⁰ include understanding the administrative budget process, discussed above, and the following:

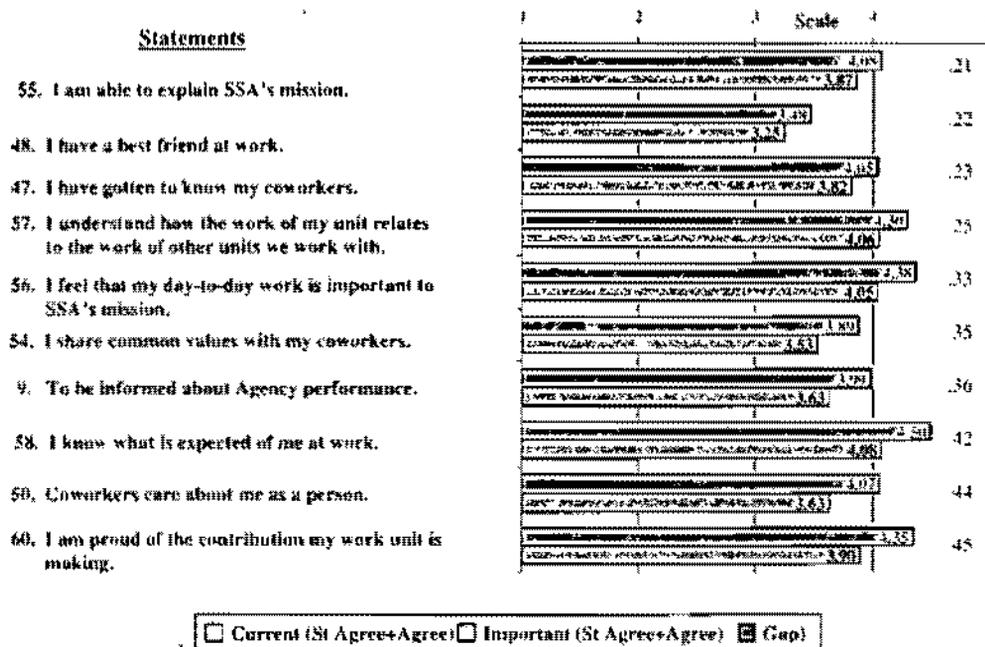
- o 59% think it is important to share SSA's strengths and success stories with customers, friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers (S-6);
- o 73% said it is important to feel comfortable telling coworkers what is on their minds (S-51); and,
- o 72% said it is important to share common values with coworkers (S-54).¹¹

¹⁰ As expected, respondents frequently selected "agree" or "strongly agree" for the importance of a workplace practice: thus, the items of least importance still had *relatively* high percentages of employees rating them as important.

¹¹ In some cases, ranking of average answers and percentages do not match because of weighting.

6. There are a number of areas of agreement on the survey where the gaps between the average answers to the *current situation* and the *importance* of a behavior or practice are very small.

Chart 6: 10 SMALLEST GAPS



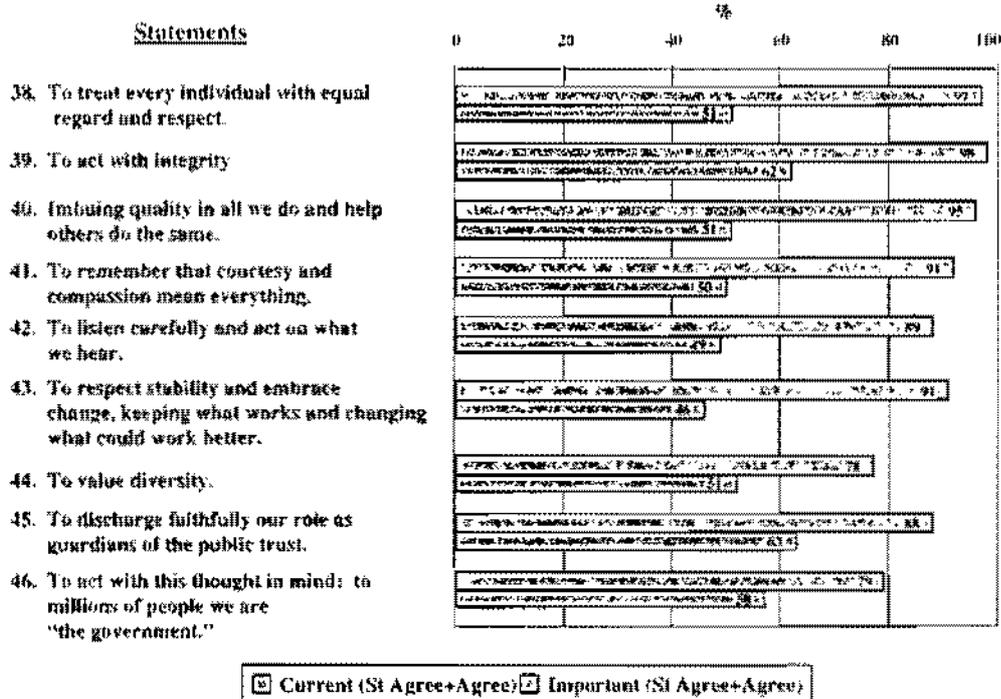
Six of the statements with the smallest gaps were also among the ten statements rated highest in the *current* situation (Chart 1, page 10). All six of these items were in the work climate section of the survey: S-47, S-55, S-56, S-57, S-58, and S-60.

Survey questions 47 through 67 asked employees to assess SSA's overall work climate. We included this section because our research into organizational culture indicates that an employee's "work climate" is important to creating a positive workplace. Employees (and employers) gain a number of benefits from a positive workplace. For example:

1. *A sense of community.* Employees get to know each other, feel like they "belong," and help one another in times of need;

7. None of the nine values in the Agency Strategic Plan appeared on the list of highest rated current practices (Chart 1, page 10) and only three (statements 38, 39, and 40) made the top ten highest rated in importance list (Chart 3, page 13).

Chart 7: Values



The two values rated highest in the workplace *currently* are "to discharge faithfully our role as guardians of the public trust" (S-45) and "to act with this thought in mind: to millions of people we ARE the government" (S-46). The average answers were 3.66 and 3.56, respectively.

- o 63% of employees agreed or strongly agreed with S-45 in the current situation column; and,
- o 58% agreed we are currently the government to millions.¹²

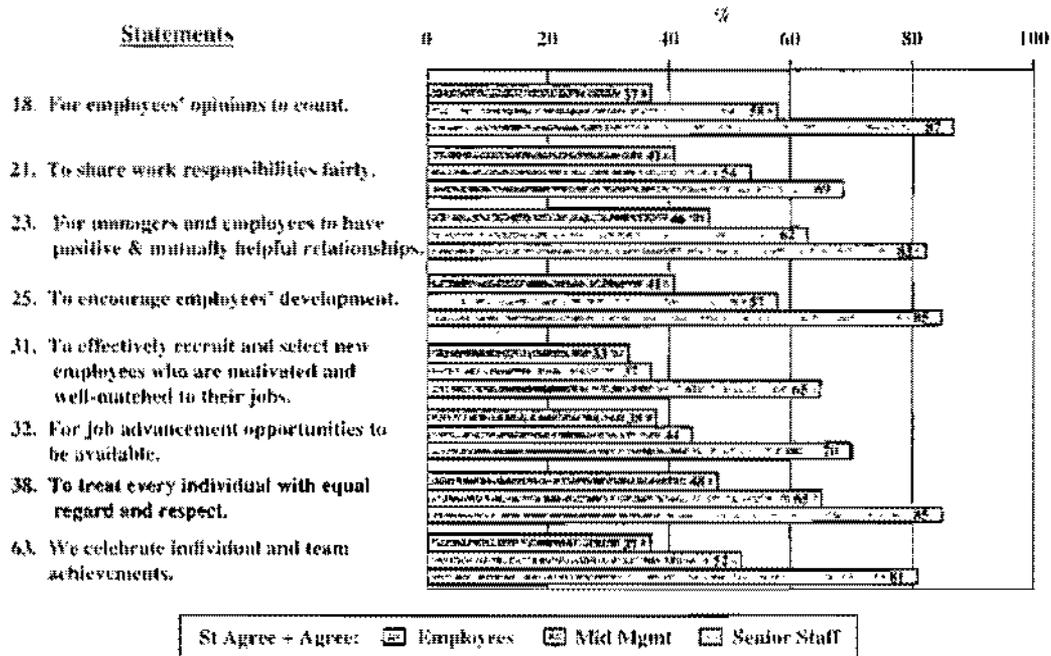
¹² In some cases, ranking of average answers and percentages do not match because of weighting.

the organizational culture experts who say, "When people in an organization disagree about the culture they actually have, it often is because the culture looks and feels different from the perspective of different parts of the organization... people at the top of the organization [often] misread the thoughts and feelings of those lower in the hierarchy and...believe that people are happier about the state of affairs than is really the case."¹⁵

The current situation:

Chart 8: Employees / Mid Management / Senior Staff

Biggest Differences: What Is



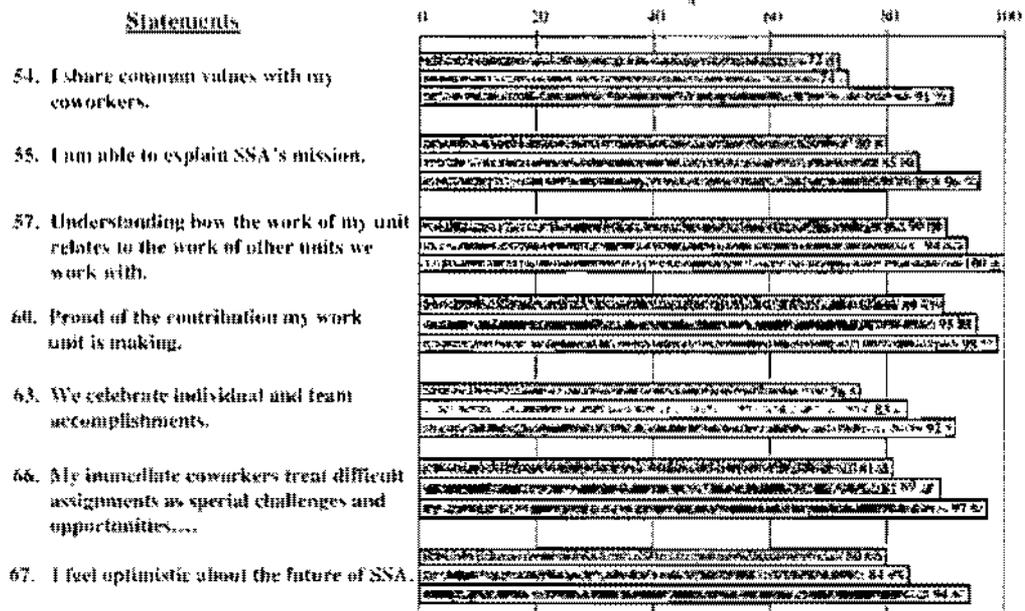
- o 87% of the Senior Staff agree or strongly agree that employee opinions *now* count (S-18); only 37% of employees would agree; mid-level managers came in at 58%.

¹⁵ Roger Harrison and Herb Stokes, Diagnosing Organizational Culture (San Francisco: Pfeiffer/Jossey-Bass Inc., 1992), 15.

What is important:

Chart 9: Employees / Mid Management / Senior Staff

Biggest Differences: What Is Important



SI Agree + Agree: Employees Mid Mgmt Senior Staff

- o 91% of the Senior Staff think it is important to share common values with coworkers (S-54); 72% of employees agree followed closely by 74% of mid-level managers.
- o 96% of the Senior Staff agree it is important to be able to explain SSA's mission (S-55); 80% of employees and 85% of mid-level managers agree.
- o 100% of the Senior Staff agree or strongly agree that it is important to them that they understand how the work of their unit relates to the work of other units they work with (S-57); 90% of employees and 94% of mid-level managers say this is important.

In discussing the results of the Senior Staff Survey, questions have been raised about the perspective of the Senior Staff—that is, were they thinking of their immediate office or SSA as a whole when responding?

7. Work environment—comments focused on things like poor air quality, unstable temperatures, lack of free parking, and insufficient or run-down space.
6. The awards program—many of those who commented voted to give decisionmaking on awards back to management. Some feel the process is now a popularity contest.
5. Staffing—everyone needs more. One manager commented that she had not hired a new employee in her office since 1991.
4. Quality and Service tied for #4—nearly all employees who commented felt there is far more emphasis on doing the work quickly than on doing the work right. Many commented that the loser here is the public.
3. Career/promotion opportunities—most comments centered around the real lack of promotional opportunities and the fact that employees are often at the same grade level for years.
2. Morale—many commented that it's the worst they've seen it in years.
1. And the number one most frequently cited problem by those who commented was **Management**—far and away managers got the most criticism. The comments described managers who verbally abuse employees, managers who display blatant favoritism, managers who are "goldbricks," and managers who refuse to address poor performers.

Employees' responses on the survey may shed some light on this last finding. For example:

- o As already noted, only 37% of respondents think it is normal practice in their office currently for employee opinions to count (S-18);
- o Only 51% of our employees are comfortable now telling their supervisor/manager what's on their minds (S-52);

B. Findings

1. Six out of 11 benchmarking partners identified a business reason for undertaking a culture change effort, such as loss of market share for private sector companies.
2. All respondents performed some form of organizational assessment before, during, or after implementing their culture change initiative (the tools varied from the Baldrige self-assessment criteria to OPM's Organization Assessment survey, to employee surveys, town-hall meetings, and focus groups).
3. Eight of 11 benchmarking partners used at least one external consultant in their culture change effort.
4. All benchmarking contacts indicated that upper management supported the culture change efforts in their organization.
5. Seven of 11 benchmarking partners had data on the length of time required to perform their initial assessment. Timeframes ranged from 10 weeks to 15 months.
6. Seven of 11 benchmarking partners had a target culture identified as their goal. These included: achieving the Baldrige model; becoming "a compelling place to work, shop and invest"; creating a high performance culture; and, cultivating a culture that values trust and openness.
7. Six of the 11 had significant employee involvement in determining the new organizational culture.
8. Ten of the organizations promoted and supported their desired cultures, using a variety of approaches such as: training; spinning off non-core businesses; reducing policy and procedures; changing management practices; delegating authority to the lowest possible levels; and, adding more family friendly programs.

Gallup, when you measure the strength of the workplace around these themes, you should not rest until employees select "5" (strongly agree) on all items on your survey.

- o Further, Gallup places responsibility for getting that "5" on management and *immediate* management, at that—meaning the person who defines and pervades your work environment.
- o Gallup also says that employees do not leave *companies*, they leave *managers*. SSA employees' comments about management and the differences between the Senior Staff's and employees' perspectives make this a point worth considering. This is especially important in light of our need to hire and retain qualified people in response to the growing retirement wave.

We believe we should focus on those issues that we can do something about quickly and that will have the most payoff for employees and the Agency. For example, it may be a higher priority to focus on the 58% who think we could work more efficiently and productively and the 41% who feel that work responsibilities could be shared more fairly than the 23% who do not think the work environment is attractive or professional enough. Several of the differences between Senior Staff results and the rest of SSA need similar review, as well.

On the other hand, a review of interview remarks, employee comments, and survey results shows some very healthy beliefs, behaviors, practices, values, and attitudes on the part of SSA employees. These areas need continued support and encouragement.

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS?

A. Desired Culture

As stated in the current plan for achieving the culture objective, successful completion of the gap analysis relies on the Agency's defining its vision of the desired culture. This might include consideration of the following questions:

3. rewards and recognition—to reinforce the desired behavior on the part of managers and employees.

Can we commit to using these tools?

We suggest addressing the questions raised in this report by first referring them to the group of executives already familiar with issues related to goal four (To be an employer that values and invests in each employee).

B. Intercomponent Workgroup

Once this group considers the questions above, we recommend convening an Agency-level intercomponent workgroup, with Union and Management Association membership. Based on the direction provided by this group, the Workgroup would further address issues identified during the various stages of this project. The most important workgroup deliverable would be a change strategy that will help SSA employees and managers achieve the culture they want.

Sidebar: There is no "one-size-fits-all" change strategy. This assessment of SSA's current culture is only a beginning—one way it can be used is to get employees talking and sharing their insights about the culture—why we are the way we are, what do we like about being this way, and what would we like to change? As long as we can agree on where it is we want to go, we can figure out ways to get there. Or, as Harrison and Stokes described it, "From that base of agreement about the desired ends, it often is possible to resolve differences about the means."²¹

C. Analysis and Review

OWA will continue to analyze the survey results to make pertinent demographic comparisons (e.g., men and women; bargaining and non-bargaining; different age groups; varying lengths of service, and so on).

We also plan to share individual component's results with them to show them how they compare to the rest of SSA. Where needed, we will assist components with

²¹ Harrison, Diagnosing Organizational Culture, 24.

AFTERWORD: IS IT POSSIBLE TO CATEGORIZE SSA'S CURRENT CULTURE?

A review of the highest rated practices (Chart 1, page 10) in our workplace now shows that SSA employees clearly support two of the three themes discussed earlier—building public confidence in Social Security and providing world-class service. For example: we have zero tolerance for program fraud and abuse; we know what is expected of us at work; we provide accurate information about SSA programs; we know SSA's mission and can explain it; and, we treat customer satisfaction as a top priority.

Support for these themes carries through to what employees think is important as well. Providing accurate information about our programs, zero tolerance, and working in the most efficient and productive way possible are the top three on the importance list (Chart 3, page 13).

Most employees' concerns, however, centered around providing a supportive work environment. Virtually all of the practices on the lowest rated list (Chart 2, page 11) relate to this theme. Supportive work environment issues also accounted for most of the items on the top ten gaps list (Chart 5, page 15). Yet most employees we interviewed commented that it is the most important of the three themes since it underpins all we do.

On the other hand, while we could argue that much of what is on the highest importance list would enhance the work environment, only one item stands out as particularly employee-centered and that is rewarding individuals for good work. It appears, then, that employees say a supportive work environment is important, but in reality rate other practices higher. Note that survey respondents who said they were *not* members of the management team outnumbered management team respondents by six to one.

To help us better understand the findings from this study, we searched the literature for documented cultures that, at least in general, typify SSA. We found that there are as many descriptions, or models, of culture types as there are experts who write about them. However, most of these experts agree that organizations have some combination of cultures, with one being predominant.

they believe we provide accurate information about the programs and have zero tolerance for program fraud and abuse—these were rated as the top two in importance as well.

From survey comments—many employees objected to what they perceived as too much emphasis on quantity as opposed to quality—at customer expense.

On the other hand, "the weakness of Role-oriented organizations is in the very impersonality that is their strength. They operate on the assumption that people are not to be trusted, so they do not give individual autonomy or discretion to members at lower levels. Employees often get *little or no feedback*. The system is designed to control people and to prevent them from committing selfish or stupid acts. It also keeps people from being innovative and from doing the right thing when the right thing is outside the rules."²⁶

From the interviews—"to get ahead, you have to keep your mouth shut"; communication is poor in many offices; some would advise new employees not to try anything innovative; quantity is more important than quality.

From the surveys—employees say their opinions don't count; half of our employees don't care about having a best friend at work; more than one-third of the respondents believe their managers do not treat employees with respect.

From survey comments—"management from top to bottom treats us like children"; "...employees are not made to feel that they are trusted and valued;"

Harrison's and Stoke's most telling comment about Role cultures is "...they tend to squeeze the spirit out of working life..."²⁷

From the interviews—"morale is lower than it's ever been"; many employees said they can't wait to "get out" (retire); the work environment in a number of offices was characterized as hostile and untrusting—"pure poison" said an interviewer about one office; interviewers talked to a number of distraught employees who cried during the interviews.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 24.

A

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

1. WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE?

Edgar Schein is recognized as one of the pioneers in the field of organizational culture. His definition of the term is one of the best we found. Organizational culture for Schein is "...a pattern of basic assumptions--invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration--that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems."

A little simpler definition is that *organizational culture is the shared practices and values of a group.*

Even simpler, and more informal, is this definition--"it's the way we do things around here!"

2. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE?

Schein says, "My own experience and many of the recent writings in the field of organization theory, strategy, and organization development all suggest that an examination of cultural issues at the organizational level is absolutely essential to a basic understanding of what goes on in organizations, how to run them, and how to improve them." Private industry has learned, often the hard way, that people make businesses work. In fact, companies have found that they can devise new strategies that make good business sense but they cannot implement them because they require new assumptions, values or ways of working that are too far out of line with the old "way we do things around here."

3. WHAT ARE THE COMMON ELEMENTS THAT DEFINE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE?

We found a variety of answers to this question in our research and concluded that the authors of the book Corporate Cultures (Deal and Kennedy) explained it the best. They said the following elements make up a strong culture:

- o *Business Environment*--to succeed, each organization must carry out certain kinds of activities very well. For example, a company that depends on sales to succeed may develop a "work hard/play hard" culture that keeps its sales force motivated. An organization that is into research and development may encourage and support an environment of risk-taking.
- o *Values*--these are the basic concepts and beliefs of an organization. They form the heart of the culture and

- o Test how the company greets strangers--what is the reception area like? What is the receptionist's attitude? Do employees wear badges?
- o Interview company people--ask about the history, how success is defined, the kinds of people employed, what an average day is like, etc.
- o Observe how people spend their time--comparisons between what people say and do is a good measure of cultural cohesion.
- o Understand career path progression of employees--who gets ahead? What does an employee have to do to get promoted?
- o How long do people stay in jobs--particularly middle-management jobs?
- o Review the content of what is being discussed at meetings and written in memos.
- o Pay particular attention to the anecdotes and stories that pass through the cultural network.

Schein tells us that organizational culture can be analyzed at three levels: 1. visible artifacts; 2. espoused values, rules, and behavioral norms; and 3. tacit, basic underlying assumptions. He goes on to say that "...only a joint effort between an insider and an outsider can decipher the essential assumptions and their patterns of interrelationships."

5. TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE LARGE ORGANIZATIONS DOCUMENTED THEIR CULTURES?

The International Benchmarking Clearinghouse (IBC) conducted a literature search for us to determine the answer to this and other questions on organizational culture. IBC sent us a binder full of research--mostly articles from management journals, abstracts of articles, and material gathered from searching the Internet. The research that IBC provided was on topic and informative, but did not directly answer this question. What we did learn from the material was that many companies have and promote a particular organizational culture to the extent that both employees and customers know what it is.

Over and over, the literature mentioned companies with widespread name recognition--Southwest Airlines (wild and wooly culture), Harley-Davidson (relationship-based culture), Eastman Chemical Co. (emphasizes honesty, integrity, and trust because "our employees create quality"), Home Depot (values employees who value customers), McDonald's (100 percent customer satisfaction), Monsanto (team-oriented culture), Hewlett-Packard (the "HP Way"--a management

B

THE SSA ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE PROJECT
SOURCE DOCUMENT REVIEWS TO BASELINE SSA'S ORGANIZATIONAL
CULTURE AND DEVELOP CORE CULTURAL THEMES

A. BACKGROUND

The process of culture analysis requires the integration of numerous data-gathering and analytical techniques. One of these is to read what the organization says about itself. An inventory and content analysis of written documents can help identify what an organization believes it is about, or what it would like the world to believe it is about. Another technique is to read what those outside of the formal organization believe the organization is about, or what they think it should be about.

To these ends, SSA's Organizational Culture Project team reviewed existing internal and external source materials to baseline the existing culture and to identify core themes. The team reviewed 29 sources, including official documents, study and survey reports and inter/intranet sites, to identify dimensions and elements of the existing culture and to analyze the cultural themes that are expressed in those sources. A list of the sources is attached. The findings from these reviews resulted in the development of three core cultural themes that seem to embrace the numerous cultural elements and themes in the source documents: Build Confidence in Social Security; Create a Supportive Work Environment; and Provide World-Class Customer Service.

B. METHODOLOGY

To reduce the large volume of material to a manageable and, from an organizational culture perspective, meaningful set of information, the team asked a set of questions about each document. The questions were designed to assist the team in identifying potential cultural themes for the agency. The questions and some of the more typical responses are shown in Part C, below. The team as a group eventually categorized the numerous themes identified into the three core cultural themes listed in Part A, above.

C. QUESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING CORE THEMES

The following questions were suggested by the team's facilitator, Dr. Judd Allen, of the Human Resources Institute, Inc. Team members reviewed each document answering the questions from the perspective of that document. Following each question, we have listed some typical responses whether from official agency documents, focus groups, surveys or studies.

1. *What are our strengths?*

The retiree focus groups addressed feelings of loyalty betrayed, poor morale, stress, confusion as to the agency's purpose and direction, and awards/promotions not based on merit.

AARP Bulletin suggests that more effort is needed to resolve the solvency issue.

The 1996 GAO Report recommends that SSA do more to combat SSI Program fraud and that the agency address the issue of its maturing workforce.

The 1997 GAO Report says that SSA must do more to inform the public debate on financing and make necessary technology enhancements and workforce decisions to meet increasing workloads with decreasing resources.

Commissioner's Press Releases: Strengthen the retirement system and educate Americans about social security.

3. *What themes, if any, are evident?*

Business Plan: World-class service; supportive work environment, rebuild confidence in the program, customer focus, and fraud reduction.

Internet/Intranet: Customer focus and fraud reduction.

Retirees: Agency changed for the worse; merit not recognized; promotions and awards given for the wrong reasons; red tape.

MOEP: Service to the public; intercomponent relations; staffing.

Internal Communications Focus Groups: Teamwork, component interactions.

4. *What normative behavior would make a difference in the outcomes studied?*

Intranet: Information sharing and inter- and intracomponent cooperation.

Retired Employees: Reward good work; establish real teamwork; increase alternative work schedule and family-friendly initiatives, such as work at home; ensure that new managers from outside SSA understand the agency's customers, work processes and work loads.

MOEP: Listen to employees and improve cooperation between components.

5. *What financial (bottom line) implications are linked to behavioral outcomes?*

Business Plan: General guidelines.

C



June 1999

To: SSA Employees

From: Paul D. Barnes, Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources

You have been randomly selected from a list of all SSA employees to complete the enclosed survey. The purpose of the survey is to learn employee views on the overall SSA workplace culture (our shared values, practices, and work climate). The survey is designed so that you can tell us what you think the culture is now and what you would like it to be.

The impetus for the organizational culture project came out of the Agency Strategic Plan, released by the Commissioner in September 1997. One of the Plan's objectives is "to promote an agency culture that successfully incorporates our values." Although the Plan includes nine values, we believed it was important to get employee feedback on what SSA's values and culture ought to be. To that end, teams made up of employees from many SSA components conducted nearly 1000 interviews in headquarters and the field. The purpose of the interviews was to gather qualitative data about what employees think is important in their worklife. We used the information from those interviews to develop the survey.

Please complete the survey as soon as you receive it. It will take you approximately 30 minutes to complete. You will be given time to complete it at your workstation. All responses will be confidential because a group independent of SSA called the International Benchmarking Clearinghouse is helping us administer the survey and compile your answers. Once the results of the survey are tabulated, we will be able to determine the gap between what the culture is and what employees would like it to be. This information will help us to develop a change strategy that, once implemented, will make SSA a better place to work.

After you have completed the survey, please mail it in the envelope provided. If the envelope is missing or damaged, mail the completed survey to:

International Benchmarking Clearinghouse
10559 Jefferson Boulevard
Culver City, CA 90232-9919


Paul D. Barnes

PLEASE DO NOT STAPLE THE SURVEY FORMS. Thank you for your participation.

SSA Culture Survey

This survey contains 67 statements that will help determine the current and desired SSA culture. In "The current situation" column, fill in the oval that represents your level of agreement that the behavior or practice is currently normal (usual, typical) in your office. In the next column, fill in the oval that indicates your level of agreement as to how important the behavior or practice is to you. Please use a blue or black pen to fill in the ovals.

A. Workplace Behaviors and Practices

There are no right or wrong answers. Using the following scale, please select the answer that most closely reflects your opinion. Please note that choice #3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree) should also be used to indicate "not applicable" or "don't know".

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

As I see it, it is normal practice in my office...

The current situation

This workplace practice is important to me

	<u>The current situation</u>					<u>This workplace practice is important to me</u>				
1. To work in the most efficient and productive way possible.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. To be proud of working for SSA.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. To have zero tolerance for program fraud and abuse.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4. To provide accurate information about SSA programs.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. To clarify misconceptions about SSA among customers, friends, family, neighbors and coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. To share SSA's strengths and success stories with customers, friends, family, neighbors and coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7. To stay informed about political and public relations issues facing SSA (such as solvency).	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8. To work in a professional and attractive environment.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
9. To be informed about Agency performance.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
10. To understand how SSA spends its administrative budget.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
11. To treat customer satisfaction as a top priority.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
12. To use customer feedback to improve skills and work processes.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
13. To be given opportunities to regularly update skills and knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
14. To attempt to complete service at the point of first contact, when appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
15. To set performance goals (both quality and quantity) with the customer in mind.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
16. For employees to have materials and equipment that support top job performance.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
17. To provide for employee well-being (such as family friendly programs, wellness programs, convenient and affordable parking, and proper ergonomics).	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
18. For employees' opinions to count.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
19. To have a partnership between employees, union and management.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
20. To regularly give and get constructive feedback on performance/progress.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
21. To share work responsibilities fairly.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
22. To have fun (such as sharing stories and celebrating accomplishments).	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

C. Work Climate

The following statements concern the overall work climate in your office or work unit. Please assess what the climate is now and what you would like it to be.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

	The current situation					This workplace practice is important to me				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
47. I have gotten to know my coworkers (more than just knowing what jobs they do).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
48. I have a best friend at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
49. I feel as if I belong.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
50. Coworkers care about me as a person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
51. I feel comfortable telling my coworkers what is on my mind.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
52. I feel comfortable telling my supervisor/manager what is on my mind.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
53. My supervisor/manager treats employees with respect.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
54. I share common values with my coworkers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
55. I am able to explain SSA's mission.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
56. I feel that my day-to-day work is important to SSA's mission.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
57. I understand how the work of my unit relates to the work of other units we work with.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
58. I know what is expected of me at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
59. At work, I get to do what I do best every day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
60. I am proud of the contribution my work unit is making.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
61. My contribution to my work unit is recognized.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
62. My coworkers are committed to doing quality work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
63. We celebrate individual and team achievements.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
64. I feel that my supervisor supports me in getting the job done.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
65. In my workplace, conflicts are resolved in positive ways.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
66. My immediate coworkers treat difficult assignments as special challenges and opportunities, not as problems (i.e., they have a "can do" attitude).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
67. I feel optimistic about the future of SSA.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					

D. Demographics

Please take a few minutes to complete the demographic information below. *Please read the footnotes first to ensure you select the correct answer.* Fill in the ovals using blue or black ink only.

1. Which SSA component do you work in? (*select only one*)

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> OC | <input type="radio"/> ODCO ¹ | <input type="radio"/> OCO ² | <input type="radio"/> ODCDISP ³ |
| <input type="radio"/> OHA ⁴ | <input type="radio"/> ODCHR | <input type="radio"/> ODCP | <input type="radio"/> OIG |
| <input type="radio"/> ODCS | <input type="radio"/> ODCCOMM | <input type="radio"/> OGC | <input type="radio"/> OACT |
| <input type="radio"/> ODCEAM | <input type="radio"/> ODCLCA | | |

D

Organizational Culture Survey Results

Statements	Current						Importance					
	% of Respondents Selecting					Avg Ans	% of Respondents Selecting					Avg Ans
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	
1. To work in the most efficient and productive way possible.	7.6%	21.7%	12.2%	40.0%	18.4%	3.40	0.6%	0.3%	1.6%	28.7%	68.8%	4.65
2. To be proud of working for SSA.	4.8%	16.0%	24.4%	37.2%	17.7%	3.47	0.6%	1.1%	9.9%	41.3%	47.2%	4.33
3. To have zero tolerance for program fraud and abuse.	2.6%	6.5%	9.6%	32.9%	48.5%	4.18	0.4%	0.5%	3.7%	23.8%	71.6%	4.66
4. To provide accurate information about SSA programs.	1.7%	6.6%	10.9%	45.3%	35.6%	4.06	0.2%	0.2%	3.0%	24.5%	72.1%	4.68
5. To clarify misconceptions about SSA among customers, friends, family, neighbors and coworkers.	1.6%	6.5%	23.3%	44.8%	23.8%	3.83	0.5%	1.5%	10.9%	39.6%	47.5%	4.32
6. To share SSA's strengths and success stories with customers, friends, family, neighbors and coworkers.	4.8%	15.7%	40.9%	28.6%	9.8%	3.23	2.5%	6.0%	32.0%	38.8%	20.6%	3.69
7. To stay informed about political and public relations issues facing SSA (such as solvency).	3.9%	14.3%	27.7%	40.9%	13.3%	3.45	1.1%	3.2%	18.8%	48.4%	28.5%	4.00
8. To work in a professional and attractive environment.	7.9%	14.8%	12.8%	42.1%	22.3%	3.58	0.4%	0.8%	4.2%	40.4%	54.1%	4.47
9. To be informed about Agency performance.	3.2%	10.4%	22.4%	48.3%	15.6%	3.63	1.0%	2.9%	18.0%	52.1%	26.0%	3.99
10. To understand how SSA spends its administrative budget.	12.8%	23.5%	36.1%	21.0%	6.6%	2.85	2.4%	7.6%	35.0%	37.9%	17.1%	3.60
11. To treat customer satisfaction as a top priority.	3.3%	9.6%	12.4%	42.3%	32.3%	3.91	0.5%	1.3%	5.4%	34.9%	57.8%	4.48
12. To use customer feedback to improve skills and work processes.	6.4%	16.8%	27.3%	35.7%	13.8%	3.34	1.0%	3.7%	17.4%	46.9%	31.1%	4.03
13. To be given opportunities to regularly update skills and knowledge.	10.4%	20.2%	16.7%	37.2%	15.5%	3.27	0.4%	0.8%	4.5%	37.6%	57.0%	4.50
14. To attempt to complete service at the point of first contact when appropriate.	4.9%	12.4%	19.9%	40.8%	22.1%	3.63	0.5%	1.4%	9.7%	37.7%	50.7%	4.37
15. To set performance goals (both quality and quantity) with the customer in mind.	9.4%	17.4%	21.5%	36.1%	15.6%	3.31	1.1%	2.8%	11.4%	43.5%	41.4%	4.22
16. For employees to have materials and equipment that support top job performance.	8.6%	17.7%	13.0%	38.8%	22.0%	3.48	0.3%	0.5%	2.0%	31.5%	65.8%	4.62
17. To provide for employee well-being (such as family friendly programs, wellness programs, convenient and affordable parking, and proper ergonomics).	10.2%	15.4%	15.5%	38.7%	20.2%	3.43	0.5%	1.0%	6.3%	35.5%	56.7%	4.47
18. For employees' opinions to count.	18.7%	23.2%	18.0%	27.3%	12.8%	2.92	0.6%	0.7%	4.4%	37.2%	57.1%	4.49
19. To have a partnership between employees, union and management.	13.1%	17.9%	26.5%	31.3%	11.2%	3.10	3.0%	4.1%	16.9%	38.8%	37.3%	4.03
20. To regularly give and get constructive feedback on performance/progress.	11.9%	21.6%	19.5%	35.6%	11.4%	3.13	0.5%	1.3%	9.0%	46.4%	42.8%	4.30
21. To share work responsibilities fairly.	18.3%	23.5%	15.4%	29.8%	13.0%	2.96	0.5%	1.0%	4.3%	38.8%	55.3%	4.47

(5 = Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree)

Organizational Culture Survey Results

48. I have a best friend at work.	10.5%	18.7%	25.1%	26.4%	19.3%	3.25	6.0%	11.2%	33.3%	28.0%	21.5%	3.48
49. I feel as if I belong.	6.8%	9.9%	18.8%	43.9%	20.6%	3.62	1.0%	2.1%	13.3%	46.4%	37.2%	4.17
50. Coworkers care about me as a person.	5.0%	8.1%	23.2%	46.2%	17.5%	3.63	1.0%	2.0%	15.9%	50.7%	30.4%	4.07
51. I feel comfortable telling my coworkers what is on my mind.	6.8%	16.4%	21.5%	41.1%	14.1%	3.39	2.1%	4.9%	20.4%	48.9%	23.6%	3.87
52. I feel comfortable telling my supervisor/manager what is on my mind.	14.4%	17.1%	17.4%	35.5%	15.7%	3.21	2.0%	3.1%	12.5%	47.3%	35.1%	4.10
53. My supervisor/manager treats employees with respect.	10.2%	11.8%	15.3%	39.1%	23.7%	3.54	0.6%	0.8%	4.8%	39.4%	54.4%	4.46
54. I share common values with my coworkers.	3.5%	9.4%	28.6%	47.2%	11.3%	3.53	1.1%	2.7%	23.9%	51.2%	21.1%	3.89
55. I am able to explain SSA's mission.	2.2%	5.8%	18.6%	49.4%	23.9%	3.87	1.0%	2.4%	15.9%	48.6%	32.1%	4.06
56. I feel that my day-to-day work is important to SSA's mission.	2.2%	5.0%	11.4%	48.1%	33.3%	4.05	0.5%	0.8%	6.1%	45.6%	47.1%	4.38
57. I understand how the work of my unit relates to the work of other units we work with.	1.9%	4.8%	11.7%	49.1%	32.5%	4.06	0.4%	0.9%	8.2%	49.0%	41.5%	4.30
58. I know what is expected of me at work.	2.3%	6.3%	8.1%	47.7%	35.6%	4.08	0.2%	0.4%	2.5%	43.2%	53.8%	4.50
59. At work, I get to do what I do best every day.	10.1%	20.4%	23.6%	31.3%	14.7%	3.20	0.9%	2.8%	14.7%	43.0%	38.6%	4.15
60. I am proud of the contribution my work unit is making.	2.9%	5.9%	18.0%	44.3%	28.9%	3.90	0.4%	0.8%	8.8%	43.0%	47.0%	4.35
61. My contribution to my work unit is recognized.	10.2%	16.0%	20.6%	37.2%	16.1%	3.33	1.0%	1.6%	8.6%	44.7%	44.1%	4.29
62. My coworkers are committed to doing quality work.	6.7%	16.1%	23.8%	39.7%	13.6%	3.37	0.6%	1.0%	7.2%	42.9%	48.3%	4.37
63. We celebrate individual and team achievements.	13.7%	22.4%	24.3%	29.7%	9.9%	3.00	1.4%	3.3%	18.5%	47.8%	28.9%	4.00
64. I feel that my supervisor supports me in getting the job done.	10.1%	13.4%	17.3%	39.3%	20.0%	3.46	0.7%	1.0%	6.5%	45.2%	46.5%	4.36
65. In my workplace, conflicts are resolved in positive ways.	15.5%	22.3%	29.5%	25.3%	7.3%	2.87	1.0%	1.5%	12.1%	46.8%	38.6%	4.21
66. My immediate coworkers treat difficult assignments as special challenges and opportunities, not as problems (i.e., they have a "can do" attitude).	11.1%	21.6%	26.6%	31.1%	9.6%	3.08	0.9%	1.6%	15.1%	50.1%	32.4%	4.12
67. I feel optimistic about the future of SSA.	6.7%	10.4%	27.1%	37.8%	18.0%	3.50	1.6%	2.1%	16.1%	40.8%	39.5%	4.14

(5 = Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree)

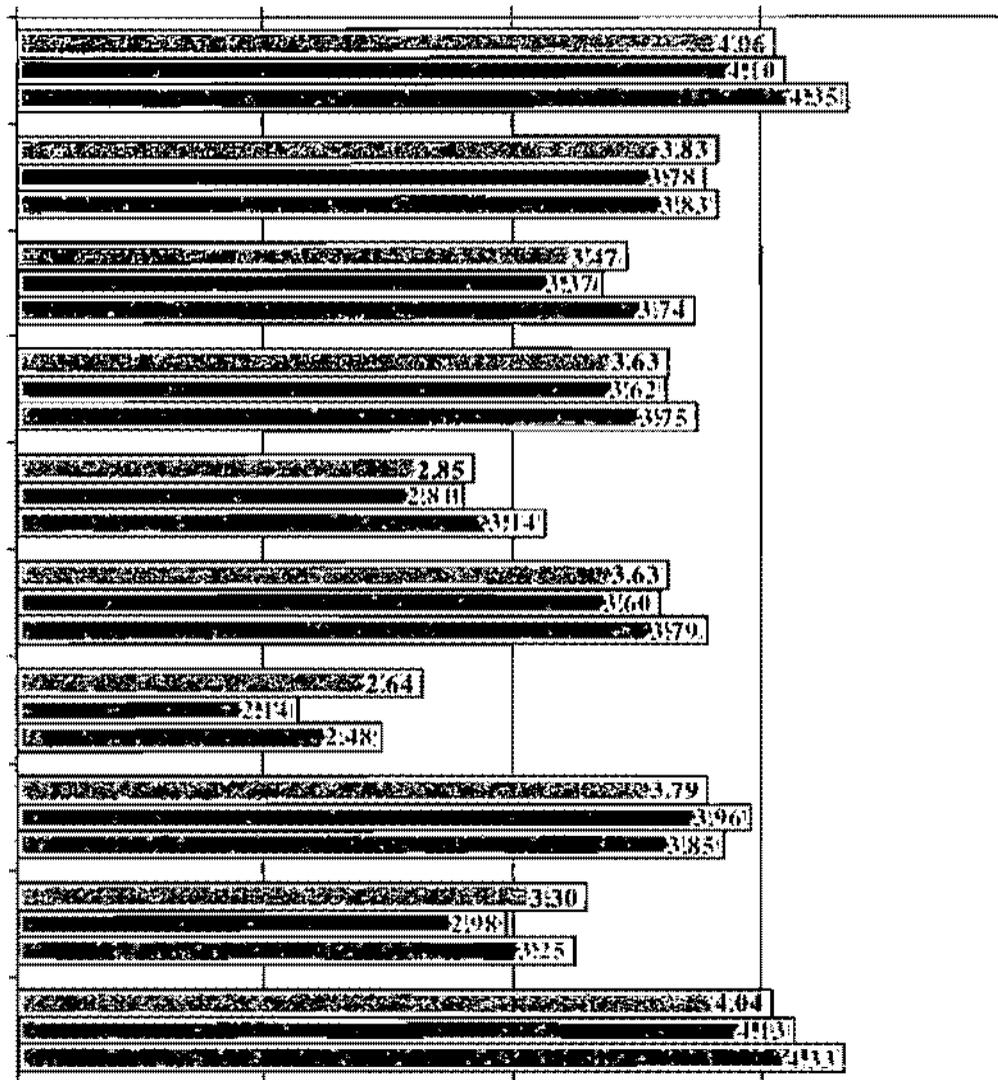
3

Employees / Mid Management / Senior Staff

Where They Agree: What is

1 2 3 Means 4 5

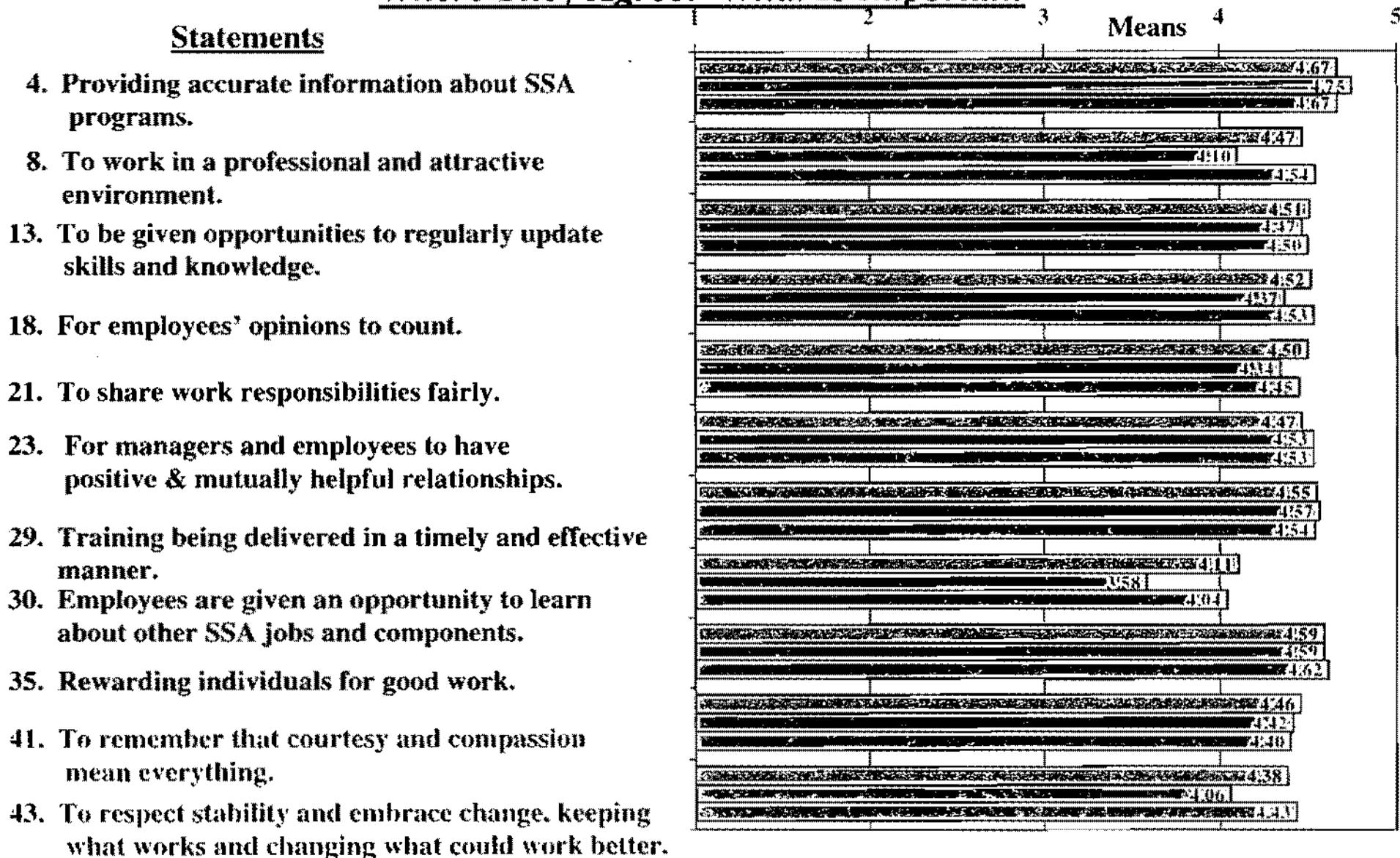
- 4. Providing accurate information about SSA programs.
- 5. Clarifying misconceptions about SSA among customers, friends, family, neighbors and coworkers.
- 7. Staying informed about political and public relations issues facing SSA (such as solvency).
- 9. Being informed about Agency performance.
- 10. Understanding how SSA spends its administrative budget.
- 14. To attempt to complete service at the point of first contact, when appropriate.
- 34. The appraisal system supports clear and challenging performance standards.
- 47. I know my coworkers (more than just knowing what jobs they do).
- 48. I have a best friend at work.
- 56. My day to day work is important to SSA's mission.



St Agree + Agree: Employees Mid Mgmt Senior Staff

Employees / Mid Management / Senior Staff

Where They Agree: What Is Important



St Agree + Agree: Employees Mid Mgmt Senior Staff

F

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF WORKFORCE ANALYSIS
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE
BENCHMARKING QUESTIONNAIRE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Your Name _____ Title _____

Company/Agency _____

Telephone# _____ Fax# _____

E-Mail Address _____ Web Page address _____

Size of your organization (i.e., number of employees) _____

Total number of facilities _____ Are your facilities nationwide _____

Worldwide _____ Other _____ ?

Please answer the following questions about your efforts to measure the culture of your organization. We will ensure confidentiality of all responses. Please contact Jaime Fisher via telephone (410-965-8135) or e-mail (Jaime.Fisher@ssa.gov) with questions or comments about this survey.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE INFORMATION

1. Why did you decide to assess your organization's culture (i.e., the impetus)?
2. When did you conduct the baseline assessment (i.e., the date)?

16. Do you engage in strategic planning activities? Yes ___ No ___

17. Do you (or have you) assess(ed) employee satisfaction? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, how and how often?

18. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate to what extent you think each of the following are characteristic of your organization:

1=Is not at all characteristic of my organization

5=Highly characteristic of my organization

- a diverse workforce
1 2 3 4 5 Don't know
- collaborative labor/management relationships
1 2 3 4 5 Don't know
- effective internal communications
1 2 3 4 5 Don't know
- high personal accountability
1 2 3 4 5 Don't know
- employee involvement
1 2 3 4 5 Don't know
- high degree of employee satisfaction
1 2 3 4 5 Don't know
- customer orientation
1 2 3 4 5 Don't know

Please provide any additional information that you think might be helpful to the Social Security Administration as we embark on assessing and changing our current culture.

G

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