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AN ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS
OFFICER TACKLES A MANAGEMENT
JOB: A FOLLOW-UP OE CASE STUDY

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL AREA

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/planning workshops, leadership training, use of problem-solving groups and organizational change principles. The success of this program was judged by independent ratings by the division chief/OESO and by his immediate supervisor, supported by limited statistical data. The implementation of the OE program led to perceived improvement in performance, morale and unit image and was judged successful in the following specific areas: overall improvement of morale within the division, improvement in overall ratings, a decrease in error rates and improvement in transaction timeliness. In addition to implementation of OE methods, the success of program was attributed to the personality of the division chief/OESO in charge of the program during this period, and to his commitment to the OE program.



AN ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OFFICER
TACKLES A MANAGEMENT JOB:
A FOLLOW-UP OF CASE STUDY

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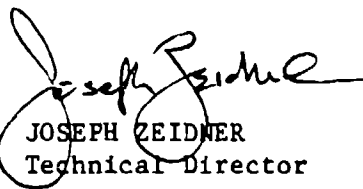
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FOREWORD

The Leadership and Management Technical Area of the Army Research Institute (ARI) is investigating the impact of the Organizational Effectiveness (OE) program of the Army. The following report documents an OE effort conducted at a Personnel and Pay Services Division (PPSD) between February, 1979 and May, 1980. It is a follow-up to an earlier report. The report presents information pertaining to the effects of the OE program on the division's effectiveness and on employee attitudes. It documents long-term developments concerning the implementation of various OE methods which were judged successful in the areas of performance, morale and unit image.

This report was prepared under Army Project 2Q162722A792, Techniques for Organizational Effectiveness, and was sponsored by the US Army Research Institute.


JOSEPH ZEIDNER
Technical Director

AN ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OFFICER TACKLES A MANAGEMENT
JOB: A FOLLOW UP OE CASE STUDY

ABSTRACT

This report follows an earlier report documenting an OE effort conducted at a Personnel and Pay Services Division (PPSD) between July, 1978 and February, 1979. It describes events related to the OE effort which occurred at PPCD between February, 1979 and May, 1980. It presents information pertaining to the effects of the OE program on the division's effectiveness and on employee attitudes, and documents long-term developments concerning the implementation of various OE methods including transition and action-planning workshops, leadership training, use of problem-solving groups and organizational change principles. The success of this program was judged by independent ratings by the division chief/OESO and by his immediate supervisor, supported by limited statistical data. The implementation of the OE program led to perceived improvement in performance, morale and unit image and was judged successful in the following specific areas: overall improvement of morale within the division, improvement in overall efficiency and mission effectiveness, improvement in overall ratings, a decrease in error rates and improvement in transaction timeliness. In addition to implementation of OE methods, the success of the program was attributed to the personality of the division chief/OESO in charge of the program during this period, and to his commitment to the OE program.

AN OESO AS MANAGER

PURPOSE

This report is a follow-up to an earlier report¹ documenting an OE effort conducted at the Personnel and Pay Services Division (PPSD) at Fort Smithfield, Ind., between July 1978 and February 1979. The OE effort described in the original report consisted of a series of actions aimed at improvement of the division's overall effectiveness. As such, the effort constituted a comprehensive program of activities rather than a single OE intervention. Significantly, the program was initiated by a former OESO, MAJ Stephen Johnson,² upon assumption of his duties as chief of PPCD.

The purpose of the present report is to describe events related to the OE effort which have occurred at PPCD since publication of the original case report. In addition, the report will present information pertaining to effects of the OE program on the division's effectiveness and employee attitudes. As such, the report documents long-term developments surrounding the use of a wide array of OE methods (e.g., transition and action-planning workshops, leadership training, use of problem-solving groups, organizational change principles). In addition, because these activities were initiated by a former OESO in a management position, the report provides insights into what might occur increasingly in the future as officers complete their tours as OESOs and return to management jobs.

PPCD BACKGROUND

The PPCD at Fort Smithfield is the only combined pay and personnel services office in the Army. The division was formed along with several other combined pay and personnel offices at other posts in 1975 as part of the Army's COPPER (Consolidation of Pay and Personnel) experiment. The COPPER study was discontinued in 1978, apparently due to difficulties encountered in merging pay and personnel operations. As a result, the experimental units were segregated into separate pay and personnel offices. However, the PPCD at Fort Smithfield was allowed to continue operating as an informal experiment in merging pay and personnel operations.

As of July 1978, PPCD was operating with a complement of just over 200 personnel (60% of whom were civilian employees). This complement was scheduled to be reduced by approximately 12% over the coming months. Because of the many training activities conducted at Fort Smithfield, PPCD

¹Kenneth R. Brousseau and Stanley R. Weingart. An Organizational Case Study: An Organizational Effectiveness Officer Tackles a Management Job, TM-6183/006/00, System Development Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif., 1979.

²Fictitious names are used for all personnel and locations mentioned in this report.

must in-and-out process a large number of personnel each month, creating a heavy workload and an exceptionally strong need for speedy and efficient service.

The division consists of five major branches. Customer Services Branch (CSB) deals with in/out processing of personnel and pay records, computes pay and deals with customer inquiries. Personnel Management Branch (PMB) handles personnel reclassifications, reassignments, personnel testing, and evaluation reports. Personnel Actions Branch (PAB) deals with separations, transfers, disciplinary boards, special awards, and congressional inquiries concerning Fort Smithfield personnel. Systems Quality Interface Branch (SQIB) inputs data into the two Army-wide automated data systems, JUMPS (for finance data) and SIDPERS (for personnel data). Document Control and Records Branch (DCRB) is responsible for maintaining the physical copies of the pay and personnel records of personnel at Fort Smithfield.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS CASE HISTORY

The previous case report dealt with events which occurred between July 1978 (the time of MAJ Johnson's arrival at the division), and February 1979. The following section briefly reviews problems which existed at PPSD, as perceived by MAJ Johnson and other PPSD personnel interviewed by the case-writer during a site visit at Fort Smithfield in September 1978. Actions initiated to deal with these problems between July 1978 and February 1979 are reviewed also. For more detailed information concerning this period, the reader is referred to the original case report.

Poor Image on Post

The most apparent problem facing the division during summer 1978 was a poor reputation among Fort Smithfield personnel. Prior to taking over his position as division chief, MAJ Johnson (who formerly had been teaching OE principles at Fort Smithfield) had heard of complaints about the quality of PPSD's services. According to rumors circulating on the post, PPSD "wasn't very helpful to the customer."

PPSD employees who were interviewed shared the strong impression that the division suffered from a poor image among Fort Smithfield personnel. However, the poor reputation was attributed by different employees to different factors. Some felt that frequent changes in operations experienced during the recently ended COPPER study had hampered effectiveness; others attributed performance problems to certain attitudes among personnel in various branches of the division which hampered coordination; and others believed that the poor image stemmed in large part from high expectations among post personnel about the type and speed of service PPSD could provide. The general feeling among PPSD personnel about the division's image was communicated clearly when one person commented, "It's hard to feel good when you work for an organization that catches a lot of flack."

Turbulence

Because of the experimental nature of the COPPER study, frequent changes in operating procedures, job descriptions, and personnel assignments within PPSD had been experienced during the previous 3 years. As one employee put it, "My desk should have been on rollers. I never knew what to expect when I came to work in the morning." Many felt that changes were introduced prematurely and then abandoned without having allowed sufficient time to determine the viability of the changes. Overall, PPSD employees (especially civilians) appeared wary of further changes.

Civilian-Military Tensions

Relations between military and civilian employees of PPSD appeared strained, although not openly hostile. Civilian employees tended to view their military counterparts, and especially young military supervisors, as "restless and inexperienced." Military supervisors were seen as inclined to introduce "new" procedures which had already been tried and rejected. On the other hand, military personnel viewed civilians as "set in their ways."

Adding to the tension were the different sets of rules and regulations for civilian employees versus those which applied to Army personnel. For instance, civilians were not allowed time off without taking personal leave; however, it was possible for military personnel to attend to personal business during duty hours without using leave time. Moreover, military personnel frequently were required to serve on special work details (e.g., honor guard, burial details). Civilians tended to resent the additional workload they felt obligated to assume when military personnel were called away from their jobs at PPSD.

In addition, military supervisors complained that rigid work rules allowed little flexibility in managing civilian employees. Several supervisors also admitted that they were unsure about how to supervise their subordinates--particularly civilian workers.

Role Ambiguity

Because of the changes introduced during the COPPER study and the novelty of a combined pay and personnel division, many PPSD employees appeared uncertain about the nature and scope of their own and others' jobs. Individuals with backgrounds in personnel lacked knowledge of finance procedures, whereas individuals with backgrounds in finance were unfamiliar with the technicalities and requirements of personnel functions. In some cases, however, individuals with training and experience in personnel only, or finance only, were performing jobs which bridged both pay and personnel functions. Because of some inherent differences between the nature of finance and personnel functions, this often created confusion and, in some cases, feelings of resentment.

According to MAJ Johnson, feelings of uncertainty about roles and responsibilities were common among senior NCOs and branch chiefs, as well as lower level personnel. In part, he attributed these feelings to past management practices in the division, where branch chiefs and senior NCOs were often by-passed by top management in decisions about policies and day-to-day technical operations. As a result, he had taken steps to clarify roles and expectations among his management and supervisory personnel. When interviewed in September, 2 months after MAJ Johnson's arrival, most supervisory and management personnel appeared to believe they would be granted more independence in managing their branches, and expected to assume more responsibility under MAJ Johnson's leadership than they had in the past. However, several expressed a wait-and-see attitude about how much latitude they would be allowed and about MAJ Johnson's management style and his use of OE techniques, in particular.

Coordination Difficulties

Among the problems mentioned by PPSD employees, perhaps the most severe revolved around a lack of effective coordination among the various branches. As noted earlier, some individuals felt that parochial attitudes within branches created resistance to cooperation. Several people commented that, in the past, managers of different branches hardly knew each other and seldom spoke to one another. In some cases, personnel assigned to one branch reportedly were only vaguely aware of the functions of one or more of the other branches in the division, even though frequent exchange of information was needed to accomplish tasks in a timely and effective manner.

According to one individual with many years' experience in personnel work, functions in the personnel area which formerly had been performed by one individual had been broken up into separate tasks and assigned to different persons in different branches. No one person was responsible for a particular personnel or pay record. Even in the Documents Control and Records Branch where the pay and personnel files were physically maintained, work on records was assigned to whomever was available at a particular time. Although this was traditionally the way in which work is assigned in Army finance offices, it was a departure from the more "organic" procedures typical of Army Personnel offices (MILPOS). Consequently, it was claimed that "the personal had been taken out of personnel," and that the fragmentation of tasks had created problems in coordinating the flow of work.

THE INITIAL OE EFFORT

Soon after becoming chief of PPSD MAJ Johnson initiated a program of OE activities intended to enhance overall effectiveness of PPSD's operations. Most of the actions taken early in the program were intended to bring about improvements in management skills and employee attitudes. Others were aimed at improving specific facets of the division's technical operations. In some cases, the actions constituted standard OE activities; in other cases, the procedures for introducing and implementing activities (rather than the particular contents of activities) drew heavily upon OE principles.

Setting Expectations

The first formal OE activity undertaken by MAJ Johnson involved a transition workshop conducted about 10 days after he became PPSD chief. The workshop was facilitated by two of his former OESO colleagues at Fort Harrison and was intended to acquaint PPSD branch chiefs and NCO supervisors with MAJ Johnson's management style--particularly his intention to expect them to run their own branches without his being involved in the day-to-day technical details of their operations. Interviews conducted by the case-writer with the branch chiefs and supervisors indicated that this message had been understood and received well by the individuals who had participated in the transition workshop, although several seemed less than fully convinced that what they had heard during the session would become reality.

Another early move initiated by MAJ Johnson was to declare a moratorium on further changes in civilians' job assignments until the specific duties associated with all jobs in the division were documented and formalized as official job descriptions. The past changes had left many of the civilian employees with jobs that bore little resemblance to the job descriptions and titles they were paid to perform. Over the course of the next several months, new job descriptions were written to reflect actual job duties. To verify the accuracy of the descriptions MAJ Johnson placed a request with the civilian personnel office to conduct audits of all jobs. This was scheduled to take place within the first few months of 1979.

Because of the recent reduction in PPSD's manpower authorization, there had been fears of layoffs among the civilian employees. However, by encouraging employees to voluntarily transfer to jobs in different branches of the division, the reduction in manpower was accomplished through normal attrition with a loss of only three civilian employees. By sheltering employees from loss of jobs and by stabilizing job assignments, MAJ Johnson hoped to decrease employees' feelings of insecurity and dispel perceptions of PPSD as a chaotic and frustrating place to work.

To reduce tensions between civilian and military employees, MAJ Johnson made clear his intention to treat civilians and military employees equally within the constraints imposed by different regulations and work rules for civilians and military personnel. For example, soon after his arrival at PPSD, he decided against a request by enlisted personnel to participate in a bowling league on the post during duty hours. Calling the entire division together, MAJ Johnson announced his decision, pointing out that in addition to hampering mission accomplishment the bowling league would have inequitably favored military employees, since civilians could not participate without using personal leave time.

Management Development Workshop

In September 1979, approximately 2 months after arriving at PPSD, MAJ Johnson scheduled a leadership and management training workshop. The workshop was held on a Saturday at a local hotel and was taught by the two OESOs who had facilitated the transition workshop. The leadership workshop was attended by the division's operations officer, the sergeant major, MAJ Johnson, and the five branch chiefs along with their senior NCOs.

According to MAJ Johnson and the two OESOs, it was designed to introduce the division's management and senior supervisory personnel to sound leadership principles, to provide an opportunity for the participants to gain insights into their own management styles, and to stimulate interaction among the senior members of the different branches of the division. Accordingly, the OESOs discussed historical views of leadership, introduced the Hershey and Blanchard Situational Leadership model, and guided the group in a couple of simulation exercises intended to illustrate leadership principles. Later, workshop participants received feedback on their leadership styles as assessed by a brief leadership questionnaire. Toward the end of the day, the group was split into two halves for a "fishbowl" exercise in which MAJ Johnson and MSG Phillips (the division's sergeant major) received feedback on their leadership styles as perceived by the branch managers and supervisors. This exercise evolved into a general discussion of organizational problems--especially concerning communications among the branches and need to establish decision-making methods which would coordinate information from all branches. All appeared to agree that such methods were needed because of the high interdependence among the branches where even seemingly minor decisions require cooperation and exchange of information between several branches. Just prior to the conclusion of the workshop the group reached a consensus that regularly scheduled "executive management" meetings (for information gathering and sharing among branch managers and supervisors, CPT Boyd, and MAJ Johnson) would assist in inter-branch coordination and decision making.

Another significant outcome of the leadership workshop was the recognition by MAJ Johnson of CPT Boyd's strong dissatisfaction with the lack of definition of his role as operations officer. According to CPT Boyd, branch managers communicated directly with the division chief more often than with the operations officer. As a result, he felt placed in an ambiguous and confusing situation in which no one was sure about the duties, responsibilities, or authority of the operations officer. Both MAJ Johnson and CPT Boyd considered it important that the ambiguity surrounding the operations officer's role, and CPT Boyd's dissatisfaction with the situation, had come to light. Both agreed that the situation should be rectified.

Image Improvement

During fall 1978, MAJ Johnson began taking steps to improve the image of PPSD on the post. One of his first actions was to dispatch PPSD personnel to battalion headquarters offices each payday to deal with soldiers' problems and questions about pay. This, he felt, would open direct feedback channels with customers and would show PPSD's interest in providing good service by going directly to the soldier instead of waiting for customers to come to PPSD's offices with inquiries and complaints. In addition, he launched a series of advertisements in the post newspaper designed to promote awareness of the ways in which the division could provide helpful services and to remind personnel of circumstances where they should notify PPSD of changes in their personnel or pay status. MAJ Johnson also wished to dispel the impression that important decisions about post personnel assignments were made behind closed doors in "smoke-filled rooms." Accordingly, he established the practice of consulting units on the post before reaching decisions about transfers and reassignments.

MAJ Johnson believed that improvements in PPSD's image on the post or any other indication of improved performance would help raise morale in the division. Consequently, in December he called the division together to describe the indications of more effective performance he had seen in the past few months. Among these indications were a Certificate of Achievement for the division awarded by the Department of the Army for exceptional performance during the month of October, and an announcement that, of all units in the Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), PPSD had achieved the lowest error rate (99% error free) for data input in the SIDPERS data system during November. MAJ Johnson also had received some feedback from battalion commanders that PPSD appeared increasingly interested in being helpful to its customers. In addition, two of PPSD's civilian employees had been named outstanding employee of the quarter by the U.S. Army Administration Center at Fort Smithfield for the past two quarters. Similarly, two of the division's military employees had recently received Fort Smithfield Soldier of the Month awards. In each instance, the entire division had been called together to see the employees receive their awards. This, he felt, was needed to provide recognition for achievement, stimulate pride, and inspire motivation to perform effectively on the parts of all employees.

Work Standards and Methods Documentation

Another area on which MAJ Johnson focused his efforts during fall 1978 revolved around the documentation of the division's workload and the procedures which were employed to carry out the work. There were several reasons why he believed this documentation to be important. First, he felt that the documentation of procedures and establishment of formal work standards would help define job duties and responsibilities. This would enable job titles and job descriptions to be matched appropriately, as required by civil service requirements and union contract. Second, it would provide "hard data" indicating the division's workload and thereby support his requests for additional personnel. Third, the documentation would establish a record of the procedures and operating methods that are unique to a combined pay and personnel division. At the time, the COPPER "users manual" had not been updated to reflect the current methods and procedures of the PPSD. MAJ Johnson felt that documentation of current procedures--many of which had been implemented to remedy problems which existed when the COPPER study ended--would greatly assist his successors in managing the organization and would provide useful reference material for any future Army effort to merge personnel and finance functions.

To accomplish the documentation, MAJ Johnson required each branch and section of the division to keep careful records of the work they performed. These records would be used later by a team of management analysts MAJ Johnson had requested to visit PPSD (during spring 1979) to establish work standards. In addition, MAJ Johnson instructed CPT Boyd to direct the division's own quality assurance team in producing a series of reports outlining deficiencies in current procedures and recommending changes to improve operations. One of the first results of this effort was a new PPSD handbook, published in December 1978, with CPT Boyd's assistance, outlining current operating procedures in use at PPSD.

Leadership Training

During late fall 1978, MAJ Johnson continued his efforts to improve the effectiveness of leadership practices throughout the division. The earlier August workshop had been designed for branch managers and senior NCOs. However, he also believed that management practices at lower levels needed improvement. This view was also expressed by several branch managers in interviews with the casewriter. Consequently, MAJ Johnson began sending first-line supervisors to leadership and management courses offered on the post. Two supervisors were sent in December and several more were sent in January and February 1979. In addition, MAJ Johnson planned to initiate some in-house leadership training by several OESOs from the OE Training Center at Fort Ord during spring 1979.

Executive Management Meeting

Although it had been decided during the August workshop to begin regularly scheduled information sharing and problem solving meetings with the division's top management, MAJ Johnson said that numerous distractions prevented these meetings from being held during the fall. The first Executive Management meeting was held during an afternoon in early February 1979 and was attended by MAJ Johnson, CPT Boyd, MSG Phillips, the five branch chiefs, and most of the senior NCO branch supervisors. According to MAJ Johnson the most significant outcome of the meeting was a decision to establish an in-house technical training program for PPSD personnel.

Early Reactions of PPSD Personnel

As described in the original case report, initial reactions of PPSD personnel to the OE activities and other actions begun by MAJ Johnson were positive, although cautious. Most of these reactions were assessed in interviews conducted by the casewriter in September 1978, just prior to the management development workshop. The interviews were conducted with the branch managers, senior NCO supervisors, several first-line supervisors, and a couple of nonsupervisory employees. At that time, several of these people had had little direct exposure to the OE effort at PPSD and little contact with MAJ Johnson. Not surprisingly, they seemed unsure what to expect for the future--although they all appeared to believe that improvement in operations and management practices was possible, if not probable.

Most notably, all of those interviewed expressed a positive attitude toward MAJ Johnson's management style. He was seen as more willing than past division chiefs to support the division's interests in decisions made by the command hierarchy on the post. As mentioned earlier, the branch managers felt they would be granted more discretion in managing their branches than they had in the past (although several were unsure how much discretion they would be allowed). In addition, all of those interviewed (regardless of level in the organization) described MAJ Johnson as "willing to listen." MAJ Johnson's willingness to consider the views of subordinates clearly was seen as a favorable contrast to past practices in the division, and had taken several employees by surprise.

Most of the employees claimed to have detected some improvement in the division's operations since MAJ Johnson's arrival, particularly in terms of inter-branch cooperation and communication. Several attributed the changes to the July transition workshop, which had "started people talking to each other." Another cited the decreased turbulence in the division (e.g., the freeze in civilian job changes) which was seen as having decreased confusion and as having helped to clarify roles and responsibilities. Attitudes toward OE activities varied substantially. As noted earlier, several persons claimed that the transition workshop had already produced positive results. Several others, however, expressed skepticism about the value of OE methods in general. In particular, the up-coming management development workshop for branch managers and supervisors was viewed by a couple of individuals as likely to be a waste of time and was looked upon with some resentment because it was scheduled to be held on a Saturday.

Following the workshop, however, the casewriter noted that all participants appeared to have viewed the experience positively. For at least one individual--CPT Boyd--the workshop experience appeared markedly to have reversed earlier skepticism about OE. Interviewed over 4 months later, shortly after he had left PPSD for a new assignment, CPT Boyd commented that the September workshop had altered his views about the value of OE methods. In his words,

I think the workshop showed that OE works. It's effective. The workshop started the kind of interaction between people we needed. I definitely plan to use similar techniques in my next duty assignment.

CPT Boyd went on to say that, prior to his departure, he and MAJ Johnson had established an extremely good working relationship. In CPT Boyd's view, "Major Johnson is the best boss I've ever had." Most admirable, he said, was MAJ Johnson's orderly way of dealing with problems. CPT Boyd's opinion was that MAJ Johnson's only fault was a tendency not to intervene soon enough when others (including CPT Boyd) appeared to be lagging behind in their work.

MAJ Johnson's Early Assessment

In a conversation with the casewriter in early February 1979, MAJ Johnson expressed his views on the effects of the actions he had taken since arriving at PPSD. He pointed out that, at times during the past several months, it had seemed as though little progress had been achieved. However, in evaluating progress toward each of his objectives, he felt that significant improvements had been realized, although the effects of some of the actions he had taken were subtle and difficult to assess.

Among the positive results that he felt had taken place were improved attitudes and morale among PPSD personnel--especially among civilians. The stability in job assignments (and the way in which personnel reductions had been handled) had given employees confidence that when arriving at work in the morning "they know their desks would be where they left them the night before."

MAJ Johnson also pointed out that, according to fellow officers and others on the post, PPSD's image as providing helpful services was beginning to improve, indicating that his campaign to eliminate the division's poor reputation was starting to pay off. Through his own efforts and the post grapevine, he believed the changes in the division's image were getting through to PPSD personnel and were helping to eliminate the division's employees' feelings of inferiority. He pointed out that when he had called the division together to describe the improvements he had seen, everyone "had seemed pleased to get some positive feedback for a change."

MAJ Johnson appeared less pleased with improvements in communications between branches and felt that progress in this area particularly had suffered from distractions of day-to-day operations and several periods of unusually heavy work. Nevertheless, he believed the division had handled itself very well during these periods, citing the Certificate of Achievement the division had received from the Department of the Army for the division's performance during one of the more difficult periods.

Evidence that operations were improving was also reflected in the extremely high "acceptability rate" (i.e., low error rate) of data entered into the SIDPERS data system compared to that achieved by other TRADOC units. The special recognition for individual achievement (e.g., Employee of the Quarter and Soldier of the Month awards) received by several PPSD employees indicated effective performance at the individual level and also served to enhance pride among PPSD personnel.

In addition, MAJ Johnson felt that employees' views of how decisions are made in the division were beginning to change for the better. As evidence, he mentioned an increase in the number of suggestions for improved operating methods he was beginning to receive from lower level personnel. He said that several of these suggestions had led directly to changes which had improved the division's SIDPERS acceptability rate. The number and quality of suggestions, MAJ Johnson believed, indicated that employees in the organization are "really beginning to believe they will be heard and listened to instead of being force-fed from the top down."

Despite these improvements, MAJ Johnson believed there to be considerable room for improvement in the division's operations. In December, an inspection by a Quality Assistance team from the Army Finance and Accounting Center had resulted in "needs improvement" ratings for several facets of PPSD's handling of pay records and transactions. In particular, the inspection team was critical of the speed and efficiency of the travel section of the Customer Services branch and of the control of pay records by the Documents Control and Records Branch. MAJ Johnson concluded that improvements he had noted in other areas would require application of a variety of OE principles and techniques during the coming year.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: FEBRUARY-DECEMBER 1979

The following section describes events which took place at PPSD within the period February 1979 through December 1979. Some of the developments that are described represent direct extensions of the OE activities

discussed in the previous section; others reflect movement of the OE program into areas which were not addressed during the preceding summer and fall.

Definition of the Operations Officer Role

In February, CPT Hanson³ joined PPSD as operations officer to replace CPT Boyd who had been reassigned to another post the previous month. Despite CPT Boyd's and MAJ Johnson's mutual perception that they had formed an extremely effective working relationship, the problem of ambiguity in the operations officer's role had not yet been resolved to either's full satisfaction.

Because this was an issue that had created considerable frustration and dissatisfaction for CPT Boyd (as had come to light during the September management development workshop), MAJ Johnson wanted to avoid a situation which would create similar difficulties for CPT Hanson. Accordingly, he had wanted to arrive at a clear definition of the operations officer's role during the first Executive Management meeting held in early February. However, at the conclusion of that meeting he still felt that the role lacked adequate definition. Consequently, he decided that the issue would best be resolved through a role clarification session focusing exclusively on the definition of the scope of activities, responsibilities, and authority of the operations officer.

The role clarification workshop took place in March, about 1 month after CPT Hanson had arrived at PPSD. According to MAJ Johnson,

I didn't give CPT Hanson much to do the first month or so that he was here. I told him that I wanted him to get a feel for the organization before I started giving him tasks. Then, after about a month, we sat down and negotiated the role of the operations officer. We broke it out into two major categories: the philosophical role and the technical role.

The session was facilitated by two OESO interns who had recently arrived from the OE Training Center at Fort Ord for the field project portion of their training. The result of the session was a written contract describing the operations officer role. As MAJ Johnson described it:

Basically, under the philosophical role, I asked him to take on an adversary role; I wanted him to challenge me on whatever decisions that I made. I wanted him to be my PR man in the finance community. Under the technical role, he basically was to be the main negotiator, with approval authority, for changes in the organization. We captured all of that on paper and I think it added a lot to his effectiveness.

³ CPT Hanson joined PPSD as a lieutenant and was promoted to captain during 1979.

Later, during an interview with the casewriter, CPT Hanson described his job as operations officer. Asked whether his role was well defined, he said,

It's a hard role to define. We had an OE session last March where we tried to define the role. We came out of it with a sheet of definitions. It wasn't a strict description, but it indicated the areas which were my responsibilities. It was a fun session.

When asked whether his job conforms well with the written description, he mentioned that he had lost his sheet, but that the role clarification session had enabled him and MAJ Johnson to "come to grips with what we are doing." Then he went on to give some examples of the philosophical and technical features of his job. Asked whether he would like his role to be even more clearly defined he replied,

No. I like the freedom. I like being able to say, "What area needs work?" and then go out and do something about it. Some of the fun things that I've done have started with my saying, "I see an area that I think would be interesting to look at and try to help." Then I made some decisions about those areas, wrote up papers on them, and gave them to Major Johnson. Those things are fun to do.

Leadership Training

The OESO interns who had facilitated the role clarification workshop were scheduled to spend the month of March at PPSD. Instead of conducting a standard OE intervention, MAJ Johnson asked them to present a series of leadership workshops for first-line supervisors.

The workshops borrowed heavily from LMDC--Leadership and Management Development Courses--standard OE packages. They also included some issues that I wanted them to focus on when working with the first-line supervisors. They ran the same three-day workshop for three different groups of supervisors. I think they were quite effective.

MAJ Johnson also mentioned that, because the two interns had spent 3 days with each group, they were able to provide him with insights into the issues that were in the minds of the supervisors. "In essence," he said, "they carried out a kind of informal survey."

PPSD Image Building

Also in March, MAJ Johnson initiated another action in this campaign to build a more favorable image of the division on the post. This step involved ordering "PPSD matchbooks" which were distributed on the post. Each matchbook was printed with the inscription, "Personnel and Pay Services Division--We're here to serve you." Also printed on the cover were the division's post location and phone numbers for pay and personnel

inquiries. The matchbooks were placed strategically around the post at locations such as the Army Emergency Relief Office, the Red Cross office, the PX, and the bank.

MAJ Johnson believed that the matchbooks indicated to others the division's willingness to be of help to the soldier and he felt that they had been a "big hit internally at PPSD." MAJ Johnson and SGM Phillips had personally paid for the matchbooks out of their own pockets and had ordered a new supply later in the year.

PERMAST Inspection and Follow-Up Visit

March 1979 was also scheduled as the date for PPSD's annual inspection of its personnel operations by a personnel management and assistance team (PERMAST) from TRADOC headquarters. According to MAJ Johnson, the results of the inspection were very encouraging. The inspection team noted marked improvement (compared to the previous year) in all areas except in personnel records maintenance.

One of the team members had been part of the inspection team last year and was overwhelmed with the changes he saw in the organization. He said, "You know, I see people smiling at their desks. There is a neatness and professionalism that just wasn't here last year."

MAJ Johnson was particularly pleased when, during their outbriefing to the post's commanding general, another team member said that, if his son was in the Army, he'd want him to be serviced by PPSD at Fort Smithfield.

That was a total turnaround from the way the division had been seen in the past. Anyway, I was so impressed with the quality of the team and the way they were able to help us with technical matters that I wrote a letter to the commanding general at TRADOC inviting the team back to work on some things they had been unable to finish. Apparently, it was the first time they had ever received a complimentary letter and an invitation for another visit after an inspection.

Acting on MAJ Johnson's invitation the PERMAS team returned to PPSD in May 1979. During the course of their visit, the team made several recommendations for procedures to improve personnel operations. The recommendations subsequently were adopted and, according to MAJ Johnson, have resulted in greater effectiveness and more efficient use of information within the division.

Weekly Training Sessions

As mentioned previously, one of the most important outcomes of the first Executive Management meeting held in February was a recommendation to establish a job skills training program for all PPSD personnel. During the following month, MAJ Johnson worked out a general plan for a training

program and obtained authority from his superiors to set aside a specified time each week during which the training would be conducted.

The formal plan called for weekly training sessions to be held between 0800 and 1000 each Thursday morning. Each branch was to post its own training schedule and conduct its own training. The training could focus on anything from technical details of specific actions to human relations training. During these Thursday morning sessions, the division's doors were to remain closed and the phones placed on hold for the full 2 hours. MAJ Johnson emphasized this point when he announced the training program to the division.

I told them that no section was to open its doors before 1000. I said, "I don't care if your training takes only 30 minutes as long as it's good training. But if the training takes only 30 minutes don't open your doors early. Use the time to catch up. Otherwise, our public will become confused if we say that we will be closed but, in fact, we are open one week and closed the next."

The program officially commenced on March 8, 1979. According to MAJ Johnson, most of the training was technical--MOS and job-related. Some of the training sessions were very detailed. The program also included considerable cross-training, some of which crossed section and branch lines.

People wanted to know what the guys down the hall do. So they'd go down and say "This is what we do. Now let's hear what you do." A lot of that occurred within branches. Sections within branches didn't know what the other sections were doing.

MAJ Johnson mentioned that he recently had taught one of the sessions himself for one of the branches. He said that the people had wanted to know what his job entailed.

I spent about two hours on what I do, how I see my job, how I see their jobs, and how they all interrelate. They didn't really know whom I work for, what the authority structure is, or how the post is organized. So I spent some time educating them on those things. They had a lot of questions. It was a good session.

In MAJ Johnson's assessment, the training program had begun well and had made some important contributions to the division in terms of improved understanding of operations, improved job skills, and superior accuracy. However, when interviewed in December 1979, he indicated that there had been significant declines in the quality of the training and in the favorableness of employees' attitudes toward the program.

It started out like a ball of fire. Everyone loved it--greatest thing that ever happened. Then, like all good things, it began to go down hill. It was brought up as an issue in one of our OE sessions in August. After that, we tried to revitalize it, but now it's beginning to suffer again.

The complaints raised in the August OE session indicated that, although training was widely viewed as needed, many people felt that a great deal of time was being wasted on irrelevant topics and that the supervisors' conduct of the training was haphazard. Acting on employee complaints about the relevance of the training and on suggestions that they had offered during the OE session, a worker within each branch was appointed training coordinator. Formerly, responsibility for coordination of training programs had fallen exclusively on a senior NCO within each branch. Nevertheless, it was MAJ Johnson's perception that, despite a brief improvement in attitudes toward the training, employees once again were feeling considerable dissatisfaction with the program. As he put it, "It's one of those things where, if I don't take a personal interest in it and go out to inspect the training, it will go down hill again. It's an easy thing to put off."

Planning and Implementation of Change in Records Maintenance

One of the areas in which PPSD had received low marks from both finance and personnel inspection teams was records maintenance and control. The branch primarily responsible for these functions was the Documents Control and Records Branch (DCRB). All records were physically located within DCRB when they were not being processed within one of the other branches. DCRB was responsible for tracking and controlling the movement of records throughout the division. Reflecting the joint pay and personnel responsibilities of the division, all finance documents and personnel documents for each soldier were stored together within one file. This, of course, differed from the usual practice on Army posts where pay records and personnel records were located in separate offices.

The consolidation of pay and personnel records at PPSD had produced several complications in records control and processing. First, no one person had responsibility for controlling a particular set of records; work was assigned to individuals based on their availability. As mentioned earlier, this differed from traditional work procedures in Army personnel offices (but not in finance offices). Second, when a clerk in one of the branches needed to update a portion of an individual's personnel record, the entire file containing pay and personnel records would be tied up until the transaction had been completed. Reportedly, this had produced numerous delays. Third, because clerks in DCRB had backgrounds in either finance or personnel, but not both, they often were unfamiliar with portions of the files they were required to maintain and control.

Sensitive to these problems, MAJ Johnson decided in early 1979 that changes in DCRB operations were needed. When the DCRB branch chief, SFC Maxwell, suggested that pay records be separated from 201 (personnel) records, MAJ Johnson initiated a process intended to assure thorough planning and orderly execution of the separation of records. Reflecting on the change in records processing and maintenance, MAJ Johnson commented,

The change-over was one of the most successful undertakings I've experienced in my Army career. I attribute most of the success to our use of ideas for introducing change in organizations

published in an article by CPT Pete Luciano (an Army OESO) which were based on the Kast and Rosenzweig model of organizational change.⁴

Prior to planning the details of the change, MAJ Johnson introduced SFC Maxwell and the other DCRB supervisors to the change model. In so doing, he emphasized the point that in bringing about changes within a subsystem (e.g., DCRB) of a larger system (e.g., PPSD), "ripple effects" resulting from the change could be expected to spread throughout the other subsystems (i.e., other branches). Next, he met with all of the rank and file employees from DCRB to explain the change model. He also drew upon concepts from the OMR (Outcomes Methods and Resources) change model to show how objectives must be evaluated (and perhaps altered) in terms of available methods and resources.

Then I let them have at it. They designed the whole thing--everything that it would take to run a successful office with separation of 201 and finance records--floor plan, document flow and organization. I set no date for implementing the change because I felt that would be an artificial constraint which would limit our thinking. And I insisted that before we moved one record we would: (A) have approval of the union, which was necessary under the contract, (B) have a complete floor plan showing where every desk and file cabinet would be located and (C) rewrite the entire Chapter 10 of the COPPER Users' Manual, now known as PPSD Users' Manual, to document every action and show document flow with a flow chart.

Also prior to implementing the change, the new design was evaluated at an Executive Management meeting to determine how it would affect the operations of other branches. Some minor alterations of the design were suggested at the meeting; then, the planned changes were presented to the PERMAS team for their evaluation when they made their return visit to PPSD. Following this, the reorganization of DCRB was implemented in May.

The change took place without one bit of turbulence, without one problem. It was done, and done effectively, in two days.

According to MAJ Johnson, the reorganization resulted in some dramatic improvements. In their briefing with the Chief of Staff at Fort Smithfield following their inspection in December 1979, the Quality Assistance team from the Army Finance and Accounting Center contrasted PPSD's performance in processing finance records with what they had observed during their inspection in December 1978. In their assessment the team stated that the DCRB reorganization had improved timeliness of records processing, produced

⁴ See Peter Luciano, "A Systems View of Organizations: Dynamics of Organizational Change," in Eighth Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators, pp. 140-144 (La Jolla: University Associates, 1979); and Fremont Kast and James Rosenzweig, Contingency Views of Organizations and Management (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1973).

a smoother flow of records, reduced errors, and, generally, had improved support to the soldier.

As an example of improved operations resulting primarily from the change, MAJ Johnson cited the greatly reduced time required to file monthly Leave and Earning Statements (LES). Prior to the change, LES filing regularly consumed 3 working days. Even though LES filing only required making some simple changes in individuals' finance records, because personnel records and finance records were filed together, no processing of personnel records could take place until the LES filing was completed.

For the personnel guys that was dead time. However, the first month after we broke out the finance records from the 201 records, we reduced the LES filing time to a day and a half just by virtue of the fact that the clerks didn't have to skip over all those personnel records. Then CPT Hanson, the Operations Officer, came up with a fantastic idea. He said, "You know, we're only using fifteen of our clerks for LES filing. Why not use all of the finance clerks and give them each one drawer to do. The job will be done in a couple of hours and then they'll be back at their desks."

CPT Hanson's idea to use all finance clerks for LES filing was implemented the next month. According to MAJ Johnson, LES filing that month consumed only 3 hours from start to finish, down from 3 full working days just 2 months earlier.

And the people loved it. Before, there had always been a lot of griping about who was going to get stuck with LES filing. Then stuff would pile up on their desks during the three days they were doing the filing. They were very unhappy. Now, they know that they don't have to go down there and spend three days doing the same boring, repetitive tasks.

As MAJ Johnson pointed out, he had had almost no hand in the technicalities of the DCRB reorganization, focusing instead on management of the change process. "The people did it," he said, "and it's working very well." Then he went on to cite an incident which he felt captured the way in which the DCRB reorganization was viewed by those who had been involved with the change. The incident occurred when MAJ Holt (then the Director of Personnel and Community Activities) was conducting an exit interview with an E-4 from DCRB who was due to be separated from the Army. MAJ Holt was curious about the DCRB reorganization and had questioned the soldier about the change. Apparently, the soldier described the reorganization in detail. When MAJ Holt told him, "You seem to know a lot about it," the soldier replied, "You bet. We're the guys who designed the whole thing."

The OE "Sensing" Session

According to MAJ Johnson, summer 1979 brought with it the feeling that he was losing touch with the organization. As he pointed out, there had been a lot of changes in the organization--particularly some key personnel

changes--since he had arrived at PPSD the preceding year. As the feeling grew stronger, he formulated plans for an activity to place him back in touch with what PPSD employees at all levels were thinking and feeling.

The plan called for a 2-day session to be conducted with the assistance of two OESOs from the post at a local hotel. The session was held during the first week in August 1979. During the morning of the first day, 20 workers from the various branches were split into 2 groups; 1 group of 10 met with each OESO. They were then asked to voice their views on the positive and negative aspects of PPSD. Next, during the afternoon, the rank and file employees returned to the post and all of the first-line supervisors arrived at the hotel. They also were asked to express their views on the division. The comments from both the morning and afternoon groups were recorded on large sheets of newsprint by the OESOs.

On the morning of the second day, MAJ Johnson, along with the branch chiefs, the sergeant major, and the operations officer, arrived at the hotel to review all of the comments recorded from the previous day's activities. According to MAJ Johnson, their objectives were to break the comments down into categories or "trends" and then to identify those problem areas on which remedial action could be taken most rapidly and effectively. Other problem areas would be noted and reserved for action in the future. All of the findings from the sessions, the trends, and the "raw" comments, were to be distributed to all employees in the division.

The problem areas which emerged from the comments fell roughly into seven categories. The first of these focused on the training program as mentioned previously. There were a number of complaints that the training program did not adhere to a schedule, did not cover significant topics, and that the training tended to be repetitive.

Another problem area, which came as a surprise to MAJ Johnson, concerned complaints by employees about the first-line supervisors. The comments indicated that employees were dissatisfied with the absence of guidance and feedback from supervisors. Some supervisors were seen as exerting too much authority while others were seen as failing to exercise any authority. The workers had also claimed that supervisors demonstrated little concern for their subordinates or for the quality of their performance. Some supervisors were viewed as lacking technical expertise and as lacking knowledge of civilian work regulations.

As MAJ Johnson indicated, these comments were particularly disturbing because the supervisors apparently felt that they were performing well.

The first-line supervisors saw themselves as doing a good job and they had kind of patted themselves on the back with their comments. But the workers saw the first-line supervisors as the biggest stumbling block in the organization.

Because of the disparities between the views of the lower level employees and those of the supervisors, MAJ Johnson decided that the first-line supervisors should be briefed on the trends before the comments from the sessions were released to the rest of the employees.

SFC Weston, one of the OESOs who had facilitated the sessions, called the first-lines together and said, "Here's what your people are saying about you." Some people were very shocked; and there was some hostility. There were a lot of comments like, "I don't know what you're talking about." At the end of that meeting SFC Weston told them that he would make himself available if any of the supervisors wanted assistance in acting upon the issues that had been raised.

MAJ Johnson went on to say that he wasn't convinced that the supervisors had believed the feedback. To his knowledge, none of the supervisors had approached SFC Weston for the assistance he had offered. "If they had believed it," he said, "I think that at least one of them would have stepped forward and said, 'I'm interested enough in the data to get with my people and work on it.'" He acknowledged that the feedback may have influenced the supervisor's behavior on a daily basis, but added that he could not say with certainty if this was the case. He stated also that he did not want to involve himself personally in correcting supervisory practices at the first-line level within the branches.

Another issue which generated numerous complaints revolved around the Physical Training (PT) program for military personnel. Most of the comments about this issue originated with junior enlisted personnel who complained that they were required to attend PT three times per week at 0700, but that senior NCOs and officers (including MAJ Johnson) attended PT only sporadically.

They were saying, "Hey, if I have to be there, so should the bosses," and "Why do I get in trouble when I miss PT, but the officers and NCOs don't?" So, that was something we put at the top of our list that we could correct right away.

A fourth issue that emerged from the comments--particularly those of the first-line supervisors--concerned favoritism on the part of MAJ Johnson. The complaints accused MAJ Johnson of favoring a particular branch chief by "letting him get away with things that he wouldn't let anyone else get away with." According to MAJ Johnson, as soon as the issue was raised the other branch chiefs (except, of course, the favored individual) agreed and said, "That's right, you are playing favorites." As MAJ Johnson recalls,

I immediately became very defensive. My first reaction was to deny it. But as I thought about it, I realized they were right. That was a very accurate perception throughout the entire organization. Then I said, "You know, you're absolutely right. I have been treating him like a favorite, because the guy's always right, he does his job well, every paper he does for me is researched thoroughly--more so than anyone else's."

Wow! Talk about energy! It was a rocky, rocky session--probably the rockiest we've had.

According to MAJ Johnson, the discussion of the favoritism issue continued for a couple of hours, during which time he continued to be defensive.

Finally, SFC Weston called him out of the room and said, "Look at your behavior. You're violating all of the things that OE talks about." After reflecting for a few minutes, MAJ Johnson said that he began to realize that SFC Weston was correct.

I had been violating OE principles. I had become very, very defensive--it was a sensitive issue. I think that we finally worked it all out. But it was really a rocky, rocky session--a real tough one.

Another cluster of comments was categorized under the general heading, "Communications." These comments dealt with decisionmaking, listening, communications up and down the hierarchy and across branch lines, and recognition for accomplishment. Apparently, many employees felt as though they were excluded by their supervisors from decision-making processes and that their suggestions were not taken seriously. Again, most of these comments concerned communications between rank and file employees and first-line supervisors. The workers also complained that they seldom received any recognition or "pats on the back" from their bosses. According to MAJ Johnson, the workers essentially were saying that they wanted to be "told by their immediate bosses that they were doing good jobs."

Another issue which was reflected in some of the comments was the perception that MAJ Johnson was more concerned with "looking good on statistics" than in providing service to the customer.

I'm constantly harping about the JUMPS reject rate, the SIDPERS acceptability rate, and late pay change rates. And, I do look at those things, because this is one of the few ways that I get an indication of how well we're providing our services. But they thought there was an over-emphasis on statistics.

Another small cluster of comments revolved around morale-building activities. A number of employees had commented favorably about morale and there were some positive references to a division picnic which had been held earlier in the summer. However, some of the employees complained that there had been a "head count" at the picnic to make certain everyone was there. "I was shocked," said MAJ Johnson, "I hadn't seen any of that going on." Other employees, on the other hand, felt that there should be more social functions to build morale in the division.

On the positive side, there were numerous comments indicating employees' satisfaction with the amount of freedom they were allowed in their jobs. Some stated that they were able to work at their own pace without close supervision. A flexible work hours program was also viewed positively and NCOs claimed they were allowed more responsibility than they would have had at other posts.

Several comments expressed satisfaction with communications, indicating that downward communications were good (but not perfect). The "open door" policy within the command structure was also cited as a positive factor. A large majority of the supervisors' positive comments focused directly on MAJ Johnson. According to these comments, MAJ Johnson was seen

as a person who "cares about people" and who "cares about the quality of the work." In particular, he was described as "listening" and allowing subordinates to take action, as promoting communication and coordination, and as supporting the division's interests on the post.

I was feeling pretty good when I saw all of those positive comments about me. But, let me tell you, the branch chiefs were furious. None of the positive comments were about the branch chiefs. Here they were, busting their butts with their branches, and they didn't get one positive comment.

The reactions of the branch chiefs caused MAJ Johnson to wonder whether, in his efforts to establish rapport with employees (he knew every PPSD employee by his or her first name) and improve the organization, he had been by-passing the branch chiefs.

There was a lot of jealousy. One branch chief said, "You stop and talk to people while I'm doing my job at my desk. You put the work down on me like you're supposed to, but that gives you the time to go out and look good. I'm doing a darn good job, too; but you're getting all the glory." Well, there was another blow up in that session, too.

After all of the comments from the OE session had been reviewed, they were typed up and distributed to the entire organization as had been previously agreed. There were also several actions taken shortly after the session to address some of the issues which had been raised. As mentioned earlier, based on employees' suggestions offered during the OE session, an employee from each branch was appointed training coordinator to gather employees' suggestions for training topics.

In recognition of the complaints regarding the physical training program, MAJ Johnson and all of the officers and NCOs immediately began attending PT training regularly with the rest of the military personnel. "I think we turned that one around," he commented. "That was easy."

Believing that he had been "by-passing a very important element in the organization," MAJ Johnson said that he had reduced the time he spent stopping by employees' desks to talk with them. In addition, he said that he stopped "pushing" statistics as much as he had in the past.

But, basically, I told the branch chiefs and the supervisors, "These are issues in your branches and sections. The list of comments is a document to work from. I'll use it from my level, but let's push it down in the organization."

When interviewed in December, MAJ Johnson was unsure how much action had been taken within the branches to deal with the issues raised in the August OE session. He said that he recently told his branch chiefs to get out their lists because he wanted to review the issues during the next Executive Management meeting to determine if any improvements had been made. He also mentioned that he kept the list on his desk so that he could occasionally refer to it. He had observed that several branch chiefs had followed suit.

Executive Management Meetings

As mentioned previously, the first executive management meeting had been held in early February 1978. Thereafter, the meetings were held off-site every 6 to 8 weeks with MAJ Johnson, the operations officer, the sergeant major, and branch chiefs attending.

Essentially, we held the meetings whenever we felt the urge or need to have one. When we hold the meetings we go off to someplace like the Officers Club and spend the entire afternoon with no agenda--just cover any subject that comes up. They were very free-flowing and we got a lot of personal issues out on the table.

When asked about the effectiveness of the meetings, MAJ Johnson commented that the earlier meetings had seemed more effective and well-liked than those that had been held more recently.

What has happened is that, as the cast of characters has changed, they are looking at the meetings as structured business meetings rather than the free-flowing type of thing we had in the past. I purposely did not publish agendas because I wanted them to be free-flowing. But the vote out of the last session was that we would publish an agenda and stick to it, leaving time at the end of the meeting for people to grind axes, gripe, and dump and so forth.

PERCEPTIONS OF PPSD EMPLOYEES

Employees interviewed by the casewriter during a 2-day site visit in December 1979 were asked to express their views on developments which had occurred at PPSD during the preceding 18 months. Those interviewed included all of the branch chiefs, most of the NCOs in charge of the branches (including one who had recently been discharged from the Army), several first-line supervisors and lower level employees, SGM Phillips, SFC Weston (one of the OESOs who facilitated the August OE session), and LTC Harrington (the new Director of Personnel and Community Activities). Although all were assured anonymity in their comments, unless they specifically agreed otherwise, most indicated their willingness to be quoted.

Perceived Changes

A number of the employees who were interviewed had been interviewed previously for the original case report and a number had been with PPSD for 3 or more years. These individuals were asked to comment on any major changes they had observed in the division during the past 16 to 18 months. Views on changes in the organization and its operations varied somewhat from person to person. However, most indicated that the organization was operating more effectively than it had in the past; several stated that PPSD was operating more effectively than it had at any point in its past history. Only one of the 11 did not volunteer a comment about improved

performance; this person, when asked, claimed that the organization was highly effective now and that this had consistently been true of the organization throughout its history.

Most frequently mentioned as areas of improvement were coordination and communication, which had resulted in faster and more accurate processing of records. This, in turn, had resulted in improved service--particularly speedier service--to the soldier customer. The single action most frequently cited as most responsible for the superior records processing was the separation of finance from personnel records in DCRB. However, more frequent meetings among managers and supervisors were mentioned also as having contributed to better communication and coordination.

When asked about important changes, several employees stated that morale among PPSP employees had improved significantly (although opinions regarding morale differed considerably, as discussed below). Several others said that "fewer changes" in procedures and job assignments represented major improvements over the chaotic conditions existing at PPSP during the COPPER study. One employee added that people in the organization had become more willing to accept change.

When asked to account for the improvements which were mentioned, the majority of those interviewed attributed the changes either directly or indirectly to MAJ Johnson's behavior and policies. Reflecting similar views expressed by others, one individual said that because of MAJ Johnson,

The human element has received more attention. This element has not only been added to the caretaking of employees, but also to the caretaking of soldier customers. By virtue of having concern for employees and developing procedures and policies to provide better service to the customer, PPSP has gained the reputation of being a good division. PPSP is now seen as having integrity.

Desirability and Efficacy of the PPSP Concept

When previously interviewed, most employees expressed favorable views toward the concept of a combined pay and personnel division, such as PPSP; however, the feasibility of operating a combined division was viewed less favorably. Factors mentioned as obstacles to effective functioning of a PPSP included the specialized training and experience of employees in either finance or in personnel (but not both), difficulties in dealing with two separate Army-wide data systems (which operate under the assumption of separate pay and personnel operations), and (particularly among the personnel specialists interviewed) the impersonality and fragmentation of personnel services brought about by the imposition of finance type controls and procedures on personnel functions.

When interviewed for the present report, PPSP employees expressed some of the same views about the problems involved in operating a division such as PPSP. In particular, employees expressed concern that, because the rest of the Army operates separate pay and personnel offices, experience and

skills gained at PPSD would not be transferable or beneficial to performance at future duty stations. The problems involved in coordinating with the Army-wide data bases were also mentioned as difficulties. Both of these issues refer to problems arising from the fact the Fort Smithfield's PPSD is the only combined pay and personnel office in the Army.

In contrast to the views expressed during the previous interviews, however, the personnel specialists appeared more satisfied with the way in which personnel operations were conducted in the division. Several commented that the separation of pay and personnel records and the new procedures associated with the change had reduced the fragmentation and impersonality of some personnel tasks (especially in DCRB). They also indicated that although they were still subject to some of the control procedures borrowed from traditional finance operations, the controls were now seen as "making sense."

Of those interviewed, only one expressed the view that PPSD would be better off if separate pay and personnel offices were re-established. And, several said that "co-location" of pay and personnel is superior to "combined" functioning, and that the separation of pay and personnel records, in effect, had moved PPSD from a combined office to a co-located pay and personnel office.

Coordination

As mentioned earlier, improved coordination--particularly between branches--was one of the areas of improvement cited most often during the interviews. Several employees complained of problems they experienced in coordinating their activities with a particular branch or section, and most indicated that interbranch coordination and communication was still not "ideal." Some said that coordination remained the biggest challenge for PPSD. For the most part, however, the view was expressed that people in the organization were more willing to coordinate and cooperate than they had been in the past. According to one branch chief,

Coordination was a big problem in the past. And, at times, it still is--primarily because supervisors change and people don't consider the impact of their decisions on other branches. There is still very little communication at the worker level. But, people do communicate back and forth on the supervisory level... on the supervisory level, there is generally good communication. I wouldn't have said that eighteen months ago.

Another employee who had recently joined PPSD commented,

I think we're a pretty close group. I understand from people who have been around here for a long time that it hasn't always been like this--the branches were independent of each other. I see us as all working together.

In addition to the change in records flow and maintenance brought about by the DCRB reorganization, the practice of holding occasional executive management meetings was seen as one of the factors directly responsible

for improved coordination among branches. (Only one individual criticized the executive management meetings for not having proceeded according to a pre-established agenda.) As one person commented, "The management meetings were really good because of the opportunities to air problems that you wouldn't ordinarily have time for during an ordinary work day, or that you'd push aside because someone else wasn't available." Another individual commented,

Ordinarily, when you bring up a problem with someone, one-on-one, it only gets cursory attention. But when the same problem is brought up at a management meeting with all the other managers present, everyone will know about it and remember that it has previously been discussed. Then something will be done about it.

Similar views were expressed by others. It was also mentioned that the meetings allowed the various branches to weigh the pros and cons of any proposed changes in procedures before they are implemented. As one individual pointed out, this is beneficial because,

You don't want to have to scrap a change two or three weeks after implementing it. That's what creates constant change for the branches. It's better to sit down and plan now. That's what we did. Major Johnson brought in future ideas and threw them out for discussion.

One of the people who had participated in the management meetings also emphasized their educational value.

I can't say enough about them. They were really great. I wish we had had time for more of them. They were very educational for everyone. If you are really interested you could learn a lot just by listening at the meetings--even people who are reserved and don't participate actively.

DCRB Reorganization

The reorganization of DCRB, leading to the separation of finance and personnel records, appeared to have been seen as a significant event by those who were interviewed. With only two exceptions, the reorganization was mentioned spontaneously during the interviews as an example of a factor which had improved the efficiency of records processing, or to illustrate how important decisions are made at PPSD.

Although all viewed the separation of records in DCRB as beneficial, those who had been involved directly in planning and implementing the change were especially enthusiastic about the reorganization. As one employee put it,

The change has made a terrific difference. We are able to get the work out a lot faster. Before, finance records and 201s (personnel records) had to go out together for processing. A

lot of times the records would go through the finance section when there wasn't much to be done to the 201 records. This would slow down the finance section. And, the 201 side of the house is able to give better service to the soldier because the records are right there by their desks.

Prior to the change all records were filed "A to Z," which meant that a particular record would be handled by whomever among the DCRB clerks happened to be available at the moment. This, apparently, is the usual procedure for records handling in finance offices. However, as mentioned previously, it differed from usual practices in personnel offices where each clerk typically is responsible for a particular set of records. As part of the DCRB reorganization, procedures were introduced to bring records distribution in the personnel section of DCPB more into line with traditional personnel office practices. One of the DCRB supervisors described the new system:

There are eight personnel clerks in DCRB. Each clerk is responsible for a portion of the alphabet. One is responsible for all records, A through B, another has C through D, and so on. Therefore, any personnel documents that come into DCRB automatically go to a particular clerk. So now, the clerk has a little pride sitting right next to his desk in his cabinet. He knows that whatever is done to his records was done by him. If something was done wrong it was done by him. Clerks are much happier now. Before, when the records came in they were thrown on a big table and when someone was caught up they would grab a record from the pile. Nobody really cared when they did a job poorly. It was just sent back to the files and no one was the wiser; mistakes couldn't be traced back to anyone.

Asked where the suggestion for the reorganization of the records had originated, the DCRB employees indicated that the original idea was the product of a number of people who had worked in DCRB. As one put it,

The idea didn't come from one person. There had been the general notion in DCRB for some time that the records should be separated, but we had not been allowed to change things. At least, Major Johnson listened to us.

According to SFC Maxwell, DCRB branch chief, problems with records processing in DCRB and elsewhere in FPSD had existed for a long time.

Before Major Johnson arrived, records processing was ridiculous. I saw cases where it took over a month to process a document when it should only have taken a couple of days. When Major Johnson arrived, he started looking at documents flow and the operations in DCRB. My initial impression was that he was picking on me. He chewed me out a few times--said we had a sloppy shop. Then one day he got on me for something--and that did it. I had had it then. I looked at all the problems we had and talked to some of my people. Then, I went to Major Johnson with the suggestion.

The DCRB employees reported that, when presented with the suggestion for the reorganization, MAJ Johnson was unwilling to approve the change without thorough consideration of its pros and cons. According to one of the supervisors,

At the very beginning, Major Johnson said, "Well, it sounds like it might work. Go out to the rest of the DCRB people and see if you can sell it to them." So we got everybody together in a conference room and Major Johnson came in. He really tested the people. He asked them if they wanted the change. If they said that they wanted it, he said, "Why? Be specific!" If they said that they didn't want it, he said, "Why not? Be specific." He was really testing both sides of the issue--to the point where I was getting discouraged. I thought that maybe he was trying to talk them out of it. But now, I'm glad that he made them commit themselves, because it wouldn't have worked if they hadn't wanted it.

Prior to implementing the change, MAJ Johnson required that the chapter of the PPSD Users Manual pertaining to DCRB be revised to reflect the new procedures. The new regulations were drafted by the DCRB branch chief and supervisors, with inputs from others in DCRB and other PPSD branches. The process of planning the changes, writing the new regulations, and drawing flow charts took 3 months. Reflecting on the process of planning the reorganization, one of the DCRB supervisors commented,

It took quite a while to re-write the regulations. That was the first time I'd had any experience at that level. It was quite a treat to be able to do that...usually the higher echelons write all the regulations. This was one of the problems with COPPER. The people who do the work were never involved in writing the procedures. And they're the ones you need to go to. They're the ones who know what it takes to get the job done. It was a good experience for me, and it worked out well.

As already mentioned, the DCRB reorganization was claimed to have speeded up substantially the processing of records. The DCRB employees stated (as had MAJ Johnson) that the change had contributed to the reduction of monthly Leave and Earning Statement (LES) filing time from 3 or 4 days to a couple of hours. This, in turn, had reduced the disruptions to records processing in the other branches which typically occurred during LES filing. As a consequence, it was claimed, there are fewer delays, fewer misdirected records, fewer errors, and improved service to the soldier.

It was claimed also that morale had improved as a result of the change--especially among clerks in DCRB. According to SFC Maxwell, the improved morale largely resulted from the fact that individuals were no longer being forced to be "superclerks," where persons with training and experience in finance only were expected to be knowledgeable in personnel, and vice versa. And, as mentioned earlier, personnel clerks who were now assigned responsibility for particular files were able to take greater pride and interest in their work. Summing up what seemed to be the sentiment of many

of those interviewed, one DCRB supervisor said, "I can't go on enough about it--especially from management's view. It was a super change."

Attitudes Toward Training Program

When asked about the Thursday morning training sessions, most of those interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of the program. This was true even though most supported the need for training. However, it was claimed that although the training program had begun well and had generated some useful learning, the usefulness and general quality of the program fell off substantially after 2 or 3 months.

Various reasons were given for the program's decline. Several blamed the program's problems on the caliber of instruction provided by the supervisors in the branches. The instruction had begun to suffer, they said, when after several months less time was spent in preparation for training sessions. One branch chief was particularly critical of first-line supervisors' qualifications for teaching technical material pertaining to their specialties.

I find that my first-line supervisors are not familiar enough with the material to handle questions that come up when they're teaching. If they are asked a question, they aren't readily able to interpret and respond without having to go do the research on it and delay the response to it.... I don't know why this is, except lack of experience with the material. Probably the only way they're going to learn is to get up there and get shot down a few times. Then they learn that they have to be more prepared.

Another person commented that some of the people who were responsible for conducting the training weren't "teaching oriented." Apparently, some of those who were expected to conduct the training were very nervous about speaking to groups of people. An example was cited of one woman whose "outstanding" performance evaluation was "torn up" when she refused to teach one of the training sessions.

The program was also faulted for being too repetitive or insufficiently innovative. According to one of the lower level employees,

The training was a good idea at first. But now it goes beyond what's needed. It's boring to sit there and learn unnecessary details about jobs that don't relate to your area.

Another employee expressed a similar view, saying that the training was good at first, but had "seen its day" because of the unnecessary details it involved. Several others criticized the training program for being too rigid or for being conducted according to a schedule that was too inflexible.

The comments of those interviewed also indicated that the quality of the training was seen as varying considerably from branch to branch. According to CPT Hanson, the operations officer, the training in several of the branches had been very "weak and non-productive," whereas in others

it had been very effective--particularly in enhancing understanding of the functions of different branches.

One of the first-line supervisors expressed his views on why he believed the training to be more effective in his section than in others.

I've used the training program as it was intended to be used. I've been given two hours every week to instruct my people in how to perform their jobs. That's a beautiful opportunity. Doing it through OJT (on-the-job training) day in and day out just doesn't make it. There are some parts of the job that you don't learn through OJT because you don't see them very often. But you should still know them--they're still part of the knowledge you should have for the job. Plus, it helps to keep my professional knowledge up by teaching the material. I have very formal instruction. I use handouts and I use the chalkboard--I'm very prepared. Some of the other sections aren't using the program as it was intended. They call it OJT, which means just using the two hours to do their jobs.

Several of the people interviewed mentioned that the training program had been the target of a number of complaints expressed during the August OE session. They said that, following the August session, more "emphasis" had been placed on the program which had resulted in a brief improvement in the training. Most agreed, however, that employees within the organization were once again feeling either dissatisfied or apathetic about the program.

Perceptions of PPSD's Image

The majority of PPSD employees who were interviewed said that the division's image on the post had improved substantially during the past year and a half. One person stated that within that time period, PPSD's image had "improved by 200 per cent." Some of the indicators of an improved image that were mentioned were fewer complaints from customers, more frequent comments from customers about the helpful attitudes of PPSD employees when dealing with inquiries, and fewer jokes circulating on post about PPSD's latest "goof-up."

Several reasons were cited for the improvement in PPSD's reputation. Several employees attributed the change to MAJ Johnson's efforts to deal first hand with other units on the post in an effort to find new ways to improve service to the customer. In particular, the open-information policy MAJ Johnson had established for making personnel assignments (versus the old, "smokey-room" or "closed door" practice of making decisions about post personnel) was mentioned as having contributed to a more favorable impression of PPSD. Another mentioned the weekly ads MAJ Johnson had begun to run in the post newspaper to publicize the services PPSD offers. Most mentioned the speedier service in processing records as having enhanced the reputation of the division. In addition, several others indicated that PPSD had initiated new policies which demonstrate its service orientation by going directly to the soldier. According to one branch chief,

I know that we have gained a better image with most of the battalion commanders. Part of that is because we've changed our modus operandi by going forth to offer assistance rather than waiting for them to come to us to ask for it. One thing that we implemented last year was going down to second battalion on pay day to resolve inquiries. That has reduced inquiries from in excess of 200 per pay day to less than 10. So we're talking about a significant reduction--reduced waiting time, reduced needlessly expended effort, and a great dollar savings in manpower by not having 200 people sitting around for 3 to 4 hours each pay day.

The view was also expressed that PPSD's image had changed for the better in part because of MAJ Johnson's treatment of PPSD personnel. As one person stated it,

He (Major Johnson) comes around and gives people encouragement, saying, "You're doing a fine job and we sure appreciate you." That kind of thing helps people with their self-image. That image, I think, goes out to the customers and a lot of satisfaction results from it.

Several persons indicated that, although the reputation of PPSD had improved, there were certain factors that would always create image problems for the division. According to one individual, "There is no service operation that is going to have a good image with all of the people." Echoing similar thoughts, another said that the division's image would always be limited because it "cannot give everyone everything they want." It was also claimed that, because PPSD is located in the same building as the world-wide finance center for the Army, "some people think we have to do things better than everywhere else."

Morale of PPSD Personnel

Opinion was divided among those interviewed concerning the current level of morale in the division. A majority indicated that morale had improved considerably during the past 18 months. However, several others said that morale was "not great," or that it was good in their sections but not in others. "It's hard to tell about morale," said one employee, "You hear so many different things. For some people, it will never be good." The most negative view on morale came from one person who said, "I think the general morale is probably rotten. All you have to do is listen to hear about the poor morale." From this employee's perspective, "PPSD is a dead-end street for civilians," and this was the factor most responsible for the low morale. Dissatisfaction with poor advancement opportunities was also mentioned by another civilian employee. The problem, it was claimed, was that most higher level positions in PPSD were reserved for military personnel. Civilians who wished to advance beyond the jobs available in the division would have to seek new jobs outside the organization. However, because of their specialized backgrounds in PPSD, those who wished to remain at Fort Smithfield or within the federal civil service system in the area would find it difficult to locate good jobs for which they were qualified.

Another employee said that morale had improved in the division after MAJ Johnson's arrival, but that within the past few months it had begun to decline (although it hadn't reached its previous low level). The main reason for the decline, it was claimed, was MAJ Johnson's increasing tendency to "blame people too hastily" for problems.

Those who believed morale to be high in some branches and low in others attributed the morale problems where they existed to a variety of factors. These included personality conflicts among some of the personnel, supervisors who didn't care about their subordinates, or the inability of a supervisor to respond to subordinates' needs because of a lack of support from his or her own boss.

As indicated above, however, most of those interviewed expressed positive views about the state of morale in the division. Several said that improvements in morale had been very substantial during the past 18 months. "People are proud to be a part of PPSD," one person commented, "I wouldn't have said that two years ago." Another person said that 2 years earlier, employees in his branch "were like robots performing their tasks" and would do "nothing more than required," but that this situation had changed dramatically.

Among the factors mentioned as responsible for improved morale were some that have already been discussed: the improved image of the division on the post, the DCRB reorganization, less chaos in the division, fewer random changes in job assignments, and MAJ Johnson's style of management. Most frequently mentioned were MAJ Johnson's efforts to provide recognition for achievement and to reward a job well done through direct contact with employees and expressions of personal thanks. The awards ceremonies were cited often as particularly demonstrative of MAJ Johnson's efforts to reward accomplishment, instill pride in the division, and to motivate others to improve their performance. Other factors which were claimed to have benefitted morale included social functions such as the division picnic which had been held during the previous summer. "There was a tremendous turnout for the picnic--everyone got involved in the activities," commented one person who added, "Back in '77 we had a picnic, but no one got involved; everyone left after 2 hours."

Civilian-Military Relations

Most of the people who were interviewed said that differences between the regulations governing civilian employees and those governing military personnel continued to create tension and conflict. Most also added that steps had been taken to minimize these tensions, primarily through attempts to treat all PPSD employees alike within the bounds permitted by the different sets of regulations and by considering both military and civilian employees when making decisions. One person said that civilians were increasingly involved in making decisions about civilian employees. Several individuals also mentioned the Employee of the Month awards ceremonies as examples of attempts to eliminate civilians' perceptions of being "second class citizens" in the division.

Several of the persons interviewed claimed that these efforts had resulted in noticeably improved civilian-military relations. In particular, it was claimed that civilians now recognize that they can air their grievances within PPSD without first going to the union or to the Civilian Personnel Office.

Only one person said that relationships between civilian and military employees were openly hostile. Others said that at the worker level civilian-military relations were generally good throughout the division. Commenting on the nature of civilian-military tensions at PPSD, one person said,

The real breakdown occurs at the first-line supervisor level. Military supervisors aren't knowledgeable about civilian regulations--and they admit it. This is one of the civilians' gripes.... The same thing happens when a civilian supervises military people--the military people say that the civilians don't understand military regulations. But, between workers, there's no animosity simply because of being civilian or military.

Comments of several others also indicated that most of the tensions between civilian and military personnel occurred at the first-line supervisor level. As one individual explained, "A civilian with many years experience often might be supervised by a younger military supervisor who is less knowledgeable."

Asked whether the training that first-line supervisors had received through the Leadership and Management Development Courses (which most of the supervisors had attended) had helped to ease these problems, one person said that the training had improved supervisors' understanding of leadership and group dynamics but had not contributed to better understanding of differences between civilian and military regulations.

As reported earlier, the perception of limited advancement opportunities for civilians appeared to create dissatisfaction on the parts of some civilian employees and the feeling that civilians were treated less favorably than military personnel. Although some of the restrictions on civilian mobility were seen as the result of policies beyond the immediate control of PPSD, one person claimed that frustration with this issue was exacerbated by hiring civilians from outside the division to fill positions for which civilians already employed by PPSD were qualified. This person claimed that hiring from the outside had been the usual practice throughout the division's history and that, with some exceptions, it had been continued under MAJ Johnson.

Views on Effectiveness of OE Methods

Most of the persons who were interviewed expressed positive views on the effectiveness of OE techniques as they had been applied at PPSD. Several of the lower level employees indicated that their direct experience with OE methods was limited to the August OE session (see above). Their comments (as well as those of the more senior employees) indicated that

the August session was seen as having been an effective or "constructive" experience, primarily because it had allowed employees an opportunity to express their feelings or to "blow off steam." The session was also seen as having served a useful purpose in providing management with information about employees' concerns. However, the general consensus seemed to be that little action had been taken to respond to the issues that were surfaced during the session. This view is reflected in the comments of one of the higher ranking employees, who said,

There was greater emphasis on training for a month...then it slid back. That, I think, is a real failing of that type of thing. The good that came out of it was the people expressing themselves--and I think that was well worth it. But I'm not sure that as managers we were able to use that information. I'm not sure that I trust that.

Another person said that the employees had approached the August session with very high expectations. "It's hard to let them (the employees) know not to expect everything," he said. "I think their expectations got in the way."

Although the employees expressed positive views of OE methods in general, few elaborated beyond saying that OE had been "useful" and/or "enjoyable." One individual, however, commented that he had gained a lot of valuable knowledge from his contact with OE methods at PPSD.

OE was a rude awakening for me about some of the things I was doing as a supervisor. We're still sending supervisors to LMDC. It's good for young supervisors. It teaches them how to manage their folks and how to make decisions.

As already indicated earlier, the LMDC training for supervisors was seen by others, also, as having been useful by providing supervisors with insights into important leadership principles and group dynamics.

Expanding on his observation that the OE activities conducted with managers (e.g., the transition workshop, the management development workshop, management meetings) had "helped a great deal," another individual commented,

I have personal likes and dislikes. There are some people I just don't care for. I can OE with them all day every day and that's not going to make me like them. But maybe I can understand them better after seeing them in operation in that kind of environment.

Employees' Views of MAJ Johnson

During the interviews, many comments were volunteered about MAJ Johnson's behavior and capabilities as a manager. In addition to the volunteered comments, the employees were asked to identify MAJ Johnson's strengths and weaknesses. Overall, the views expressed during the interviews portrayed MAJ Johnson as a highly responsive and thoughtful

individual who, as division chief, was directly or indirectly responsible for many of the positive changes which had taken place at PPSD during his tenure.

Nevertheless, several individuals were critical of certain aspects of MAJ Johnson's behavior and managerial style. Several of those interviewed said that MAJ Johnson occasionally bypassed branch chiefs and supervisors by discussing actions directly with the clerks who were handling them. One of these individuals indicated that MAJ Johnson seemed to be branch chief as well as division chief. "He gets involved in every single action right down to the private level," he said, adding that MAJ Johnson seemed very much to enjoy the type of work the branch performed.

Several comments referred to a tendency on MAJ Johnson's part to respond over-emotionally to indications of success or failure in the division. According to one employee,

He's very emotional. He gets excited by anything that's done well in PPSD--whether the information comes from a general or a private. But, then he lets one wrong thing destroy him.

Reflecting a different perception (and evaluation) of MAJ Johnson's emotional character, another employee said, "Something has to be wrong with someone who's so happy all the time."

Two persons described MAJ Johnson as being too hasty in his criticism of employees. One said that MAJ Johnson had several times told him, "I'm mad at you," and then walked off without saying why. The other said that MAJ Johnson increasingly was "too quick on the draw," criticizing employees without later apologizing if he discovered that the criticisms were unwarranted.

Two other persons described MAJ Johnson as too extreme in his efforts to be responsive and fair to employees. One said, "He sometimes goes too far trying to be responsive to people." Several employees mentioned MAJ Johnson's "favoritism" toward one of the branch chiefs and referred to the incident when the favoritism issue had been discussed during the August workshop. One said that he "appreciated MAJ Johnson's openness on things like that," but another said that he "just couldn't believe it," when MAJ Johnson had said that he had a lot of respect for the purportedly favored branch chief.

Other criticisms expressed during the interviews appeared to be idiosyncratic to the individuals who expressed them. For example, one employee criticized MAJ Johnson for giving in to pressure from others on the post. From this employee's view MAJ Johnson too often said, "Yes, we'll do it," instead of supporting the division. Yet, others interviewed expressed a much different view. "Major Johnson backs us up. With the others we never knew whether we'd be backed up or not." Another said, "When I make a decision I know I'll get the necessary backing. That's been MAJ Johnson's style for the last eighteen months."

In their positive comments, the employees emphasized the climate of trust MAJ Johnson had established with his employees. "I trust him a great

deal," said one of the employees interviewed, who added "I trust him with my career." Several others indicated why MAJ Johnson was seen as someone to be trusted. According to one,

His managers aren't afraid to tell him things he might not want to hear. They know they're not going to get axed. He may get mad, but he doesn't hold things against you after he cools down.

This view was also expressed by another employee who said,

I can go to him with anything I want to say. I'm not scared that he'll yell at me. He'll listen to you.

As these comments indicate, MAJ Johnson's willingness to listen to his employees' views was perceived as an important positive feature of his behavior. In the words of one of the NCO supervisors, "Major Johnson has a way of conveying that he's the chief, but at the same time saying, 'Here's someone you can talk to.'" And, as pointed out by another employee, MAJ Johnson was seen as not only willing to listen, but also as willing to share information with his subordinates.

He listens. He has an open-door policy. It's not uncommon for him to stop by your desk. We know more about what's going on--and that's important because people fear what they don't know.

In the eyes of those interviewed, MAJ Johnson's method of decision-making was seen as another positive characteristic of his management style. According to one supervisor,

With Major Johnson, if you come up with ideas, they are discussed thoroughly. Before, ideas would be suggested today and put into effect yesterday. Now we sit down and discuss ideas and put them into effect if they seem good. Of course, Major Johnson has the final say...he's not a quick decision-maker. He thinks things over and he may not always go the way you want him to go. But at least you know where he stands. If we go to him with an issue, we get an answer.

Others expressed similar views, but in different words. Several emphasized that although he "gets input from everyone" before reaching decisions, MAJ Johnson was seen as "no pushover." This view was expressed clearly by one supervisor who said,

He's no pushover for anything. You have to know what you're doing to talk to him. If I have a problem he wants all the facts about it.

As already mentioned earlier, MAJ Johnson's efforts to acknowledge and reward employees' accomplishments were cited frequently as largely responsible for improvements in performance and morale. The comments of several individuals indicated the personal importance that many employees

appeared to attach to recognition they received from MAJ Johnson for good performance. This importance was expressed particularly clearly in the words of one employee whose work had previously been criticized by MAJ Johnson:

Last month Major Johnson came up to me and said, "I think you're doing a fantastic job. I've seen a great improvement." After the criticism, that felt good. I felt great.

LTC HARRINGTON'S VIEWS

MAJ Johnson's immediate superior, LTC James Harrington, assumed the position of post DPCA upon the departure of his predecessor, MAJ Holt, in early August 1979. During the interview, the casewriter asked him to describe his initial perception of PPSD and his current views of the effectiveness of the division, and to comment on MAJ Johnson's capabilities as a manager.

Prior to his arrival at Fort Smithfield and his assignment as DPCA, LTC Harrington was not aware that the post still had a PPSD instead of separate pay and personnel offices. He indicated that, although he had read about, and had been briefed about, the COPPER study, he had not participated in the experiment. Nevertheless, recalling his early days in the Army when all pay and personnel offices had been combined within a single office, he described himself as a believer in the COPPER concept.

LTC Harrington reported that his first contact with PPSD impressed him with the magnitude of the division and its activities.

I guess my initial impression of PPSD was "Wow!" Just walking through the place, the large space that it occupies and the vast number of people it employs sort of overwhelmed me. But, initially, I didn't have any feel for how effective or ineffective the division was.

Although, at first, LTC Harrington did not have a clear impression of PPSD's effectiveness, he pointed out that during the months since August he had come to see the division as highly effective.

I consider myself a professional personnel officer. PPSD, in my professional opinion, is one of the best operations in terms of support and responsiveness that I've ever seen. When you have the number of people assigned to PPSD supporting the number of people we have here at Fort Smithfield--including the students who are in and out--the potential for error is tremendous. But I believe that PPSD is accomplishing its mission and accomplishing it very well.

One problem area which LTC Harrington mentioned involved the operations of a particular section in one of the branches where delays on actions were frequent. The problem, he said, had been discussed and studied at length. His conclusion was that the delays resulted from there being too few authorized personnel in the section for the required workload. To help

rectify the situation, a new automated filing system was being installed. When fully implemented, he believed that the new system would substantially reduce the number of man hours required for filing.

LTC Harrington also commented that, aside from a few minor problems that could normally be expected in an operation the size of PPSD, he had detected no other chronic problems of significant magnitude. In part, he attributed this to the high quality of personnel assigned to PPSD. "We're lucky," he said, "in that, for the most part, the officer and key NCO positions are filled with some of the best qualified people available."

Asked to comment on the level of morale at PPSD, LTC Harrington replied that he perceived morale to be "better than you would normally find." Among the factors he believed to be responsible for the high morale were the monthly award ceremonies.

Major Johnson has a monthly award ceremony. Everybody attends and the person who receives the award gets recognized in front of all his fellow workers. Major Johnson has it set up so that there are pictures taken and appropriate comments are always made to recognize this particular person's accomplishments and achievements. I think this is one of the primary things that has raised morale.

Another factor which LTC Harrington cited as having enhanced morale has been the practice of "giving workers and first-line supervisors more say in the decision-making process." As an example, LTC Harrington mentioned the decision process which led to the reorganization of DCRB. By involving employees in the decision process, LTC Harrington observed, "the worker gains a much better feeling of being part of the organization." As a result of these factors, LTC Harrington stated his view that people at PPSD had become more self-confident and service-oriented.

LTC Harrington said that PPSD's image on the post was good and that the favorable image resulted from several changes in the division's operations and policies introduced by MAJ Johnson. One of these was the new practice of disbursing pay at battalion headquarters instead of at PPSD.

We began taking two teams over to the battalions. Before, we used to pay until 1300 or 1400 and all the troops had to come over here to get paid. We'd have a couple of hundred here at a time. The new system worked super well.

Major Johnson came to me after that and said, "Hey, I was really impressed. The troop brigade commander and the battalion commanders were all satisfied, but I want to try to break it even further and pay by company instead of battalion. I'll send a two-man team to each of the companies." We tried that last month and it worked even better. So, this is a tangible thing for the troops. If the soldier had to stand in line four hours before and now only waits for twenty minutes, he can see the difference.

LTC Harrington also believed that changes in personnel assignments procedures had improved the division's image. His understanding was that, in the past, the individual who was to be reassigned was often the last one to find this out and often first learned of a reassignment through the grapevine. He said that he had detected that some of the "old timers" on the post seemed to suspect that assignments decisions still were made in this way. However, it was his view that personnel assignment decisions are now made more openly.

We now have a procedure--which was in effect when I arrived--where assignment decisions about officers and NCOs are above board, open, even put in writing, and when possible are discussed openly before being made final. I think this has done a lot to restore the faith in PPSD.

In commenting on MAJ Johnson's capabilities as a manager, LTC Harrington indicated that he was very favorably impressed with MAJ Johnson's handling of PPSD. He pointed out he had first met MAJ Johnson when they were both assigned to another post. At the time he had developed respect for MAJ Johnson, but because "Major Johnson had no other relationship with me than that of a staff officer serving various commanders," he had not had the opportunity to observe MAJ Johnson's performance as a manager. However, since becoming DPCA at Fort Smithfield, he had formed some clear impressions of MAJ Johnson's capabilities.

I think he is one of the finest managers in the Army. He's competent, he's professionally sound and he knows how to handle and deal with people...his particular forte lies in his organization ability--he's analytical. He gets enough input through direct observation, records, and reports to identify trends or problems that are starting. And then, he is able to remedy those areas before they become major problems.

If he has a weakness, it lies in his idealistic views about treating everybody equally.... He wants to be, he tries to be, fair beyond the scope that is practical.

MAJOR JOHNSON'S ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

MAJ Johnson was reassigned to another post in May 1980. The case-writer contacted MAJ Johnson on several occasions just prior to, and following, his departure from PPSD to obtain his views on progress made toward improving the operations of PPSD during his 22 month tenure as division chief.

In MAJ Johnson's estimation his efforts had achieved successful results in several respects. He believed that morale had improved substantially within the division (although he perceived it to be higher in some branches than in others) and that the division had shed its image as a service organization unwilling and unable to provide good service to its customers.

In addition, MAJ Johnson believed that the overall efficiency and mission effectiveness of PPSD had improved during his tenure. This perception was based upon his own direct observations, reports from customers, the results of several formal inspections, and statistical records showing error rates in certain areas of the division's operations.

As mentioned earlier, the results of a March 1979 PERMAST (Personnel Management Assistance Team) inspection noted marked improvements in all areas of PPSD's operations (except records maintenance) over the previous year. According to MAJ Johnson, another PERMAST inspection in April 1980 resulted in satisfactory ratings in all areas and noted marked improvements in records maintenance (presumably as a result of the DCRB reorganization).

An inspection in December 1978 by a Quality Assistance team from the U.S. Army Finance and Accounting Center (USAFAC) resulted in a "fail" rating for the travel section of the Customer Services Branch (CSB) and a "needs improvement" rating for DCRB. However, when the team inspected PPSD's finance operations a year later in December 1979, the division received a satisfactory rating overall. In the inspection report, the reorganization of DCRB was cited as a major improvement in records maintenance. Although problems were noted in the CSB travel section, MAJ Johnson said this was the first time in the division's history that PPSD had passed an inspection by a USAFAC Quality Assistance team.

In January 1980, a comprehensive inspection of the division, covering everything from the physical plant to technical personnel procedures, was conducted by the Fort Smithfield Inspector General. According to MAJ Johnson this was the most extensive inspection carried out at PPSD during his tenure. The division received "satisfactory" ratings in all areas with special commendations for the division's handling of officer promotions, officer evaluation reports, and enlisted personnel management. In addition, the inspection report commended MAJ Johnson for the division's improvement of service to the soldier.

In April 1980, the TRADOC Inspector General carried out an inspection at PPSD. This was the first TRADOC IG inspection during MAJ Johnson's tenure. According to MAJ Johnson, the inspection resulted in satisfactory ratings overall, with several minor criticisms noted. Once again, the division received a commendatory rating for its handling of officer evaluation reports. MAJ Johnson said that the Army had altered procedures for officer evaluation reports in October 1979. This change had required the division to file "close out" reports for all officers stationed at Fort Smithfield by the end of October. The division filed 390 reports on time with zero errors.

The table shown on the next page presents data on error rates and timeliness of personnel transactions at PPSD from August 1975 through April 1980. As the entries show, error rates declined and timeliness improved between 1977 and 1978 and continued to improve through April 1980.

In discussing developments at PPSD with MAJ Johnson during his tenure, the casewriter mentioned that, during the interviews with PPSD personnel, most employees had said that the use of OE techniques had been beneficial for the division, but few had elaborated on the nature of these benefits

PPSD Error Rates and Transaction Timeliness,
August 1975 - April 1980

	1975 (Aug.-Dec.)	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980 (Jan.-Apr.)
JUMPS reject rate ¹	8.0%	4.2%	4.1%	2.9%	2.4%	1.4%
SIDPERS acceptability ²	88.3%	96.1%	96.1%	98.2%	98.2%	98.3%
SIDPERS timeliness (days) ³	NA	NA	12.5	11.9	11.7	9.5

¹ Percent of entries into Army-wide finance data system rejected due to errors.

² Percent of acceptable (error-free) entries into Army-wide personnel data system.

³ Average time (in days) for personnel transactions. Data not available for 1975 and 1976.

or the OE methods or activities from which they resulted. On the other hand, those interviewed had been very specific about how particular aspects of MAJ Johnson's behavior had resulted in specific improvements in the division's performance, morale, and image on the post. With this in mind, the casewriter asked MAJ Johnson to comment on the extent to which he perceived improvements at PPSD to have resulted from "the force of his personality," and his behavior as Steve Johnson, versus his use of specific OE methods. MAJ Johnson replied,

I don't see my personal behavior as a manager as different from OE. The most critical thing I've done as an OESO and, more recently, as a manager has been to model the behavior that an OESO would desire of a client.

What I did at PPSD was not just to act as Steve Johnson would. I consciously used principles I learned in my OESO training. For example, listening to people--without necessarily agreeing with them--was not something I always knew how to do. I learned that in OE training. Another example of my use of OE techniques--which might not have been seen as OE by the people at PPSD--was the way I handled the reorganization of DCRB. That was a direct lift from Pete Luciano's article on organizational change and the Kast and Rosenzweig Systems model that is taught at the OE Training Center. My entire approach to organizational change was influenced by my OE training. Before, if someone suggested a change that sounded good, I would have said, "Great! Let's do it." And if a little change seemed good, I would have thought that more change must be even better.

One of my OESO colleagues once told me that he had never met anyone who so clearly lived and breathed what he preached. That's just part of being an OESO. The strongest, most important part of being a good OESO is to model OE principles.

Prior to his departure from PPSD, MAJ Johnson met with MAJ Walter Stone, who was to succeed him as division chief. In addition to briefing him on the past history of the division and its present operations, MAJ Johnson described the OE effort at PPSD and introduced MAJ Stone to several key OE principles (e.g., Hershey and Blanchard's situational leadership principles). He also described the transition model and suggested that MAJ Stone hold a transition workshop to facilitate his entry into the organization. Agreeing to this suggestion, on 30 April, MAJ Stone attended a transition workshop with MAJ Johnson, the PPSD branch chiefs, and the NCO supervisors. Commenting on the workshop, MAJ Johnson said,

I attended the first half of the workshop and then turned things over to Major Stone. I think that having held the workshop will help him step into his role and I felt it was a good way of "passing the baton" to my successor.

On 1 May a change of command ceremony was held at PPSD during which MAJ Johnson formally turned over the division to MAJ Stone's leadership.