



Development and Results of CORA DWAN Website Survey

Soni Desai
Central Operational Research Team

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Defence R&D Canada
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Technical Note

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Author

Soni Desai

Approved for release by

Paul Massel
Team Leader, Central Operational Research Team

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Abstract

A CORA committee has been struck to revamp the CORA DWAN website (<http://ord.mil.ca>). An online survey was developed and administered to all CORA employees on their website usage, what they like and do not like about the website, and what new features they would like to see added to the website. The survey found that the majority of CORA employees have in fact visited the website in the last six months, like the format and content of the website, don't like that the content is so out of date, and have some creative suggestions for new features for the website. This technical note concludes with a set of recommendations on the revamping of the CORA DWAN website and on administering surveys online.

Résumé

On a confié à un comité du CARO la tâche de restructurer le site Web du Réseau étendu de la Défense (RED) (<http://ord.mil.ca>). À cette fin, on a élaboré un questionnaire en ligne, que l'on a envoyé à tous les employés du CARO. On leur a posé des questions sur leur utilisation du site Web, sur les aspects qu'ils aiment et ceux qu'ils n'aiment pas et sur les nouvelles fonctions qu'ils voudraient voir ajoutées. Le sondage a révélé que la majorité des employés du CARO avaient visité le site au cours des six derniers mois. Les employés aiment la présentation et le contenu du site, mais déplorent le fait que celui-ci ne soit pas à jour. Par ailleurs, ils ont quelques idées créatives concernant des caractéristiques à ajouter. La présente note technique se termine par un ensemble de recommandations visant le remaniement du site Web du RED du CARO et l'administration de questionnaires en ligne.

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1 Introduction

The Center for Operational Research and Analysis (CORA) has a website on the defence wide area network (DWAN) that has not been updated in several years. There has been talk at several annual general meetings (AGM) to revamp the website. A committee was formed this year to take on the task of revamping the outdated website. To assist in this process the committee asked that a survey be created and administered to all CORA employees to gather information on:

- their usage of the website (how often, when, and for what do they use the website);
- what they like about the website;
- what they do not like about the website; and,
- what new features they would like to see added to the website.

This technical note reports on the development of the CORA website survey, the pilot testing of the CORA website survey, the results of the CORA website survey, recommendations from the results of the CORA website survey, and recommendations from administering the CORA website survey online.

2 Method

2.1 Survey Development

The CORA website committee requested that a CORA website survey be developed. The author (a Social Scientist) developed the survey after gathering, from the committee, what type of information they wanted to gain from such a survey. The draft version of the survey consisted of eight questions (4 close-ended and 4 open-ended). The eight questions were:

1. Have you ever visited the CORA website?
2. In the last year, how often did you use the CORA website?
3. When is the last time you visited the CORA website?
4. Which of the following features do you use when you go to the CORA website?
5. What do you like about the website?
6. What do you not like about the website?
7. What new features would you like to see added to the website?
8. Please add any other comments.

The first four questions in the list above were close-ended and included set response categories defined by the author. Refer to Annex A for the draft english version of the survey questions with the set response categories. The last four questions in the list above were open-ended so that respondents could write as little or as much as they saw fit. The draft version of the survey was written in both English and French. The draft version was then pilot tested for format and content.

2.2 Pilot Testing

A sample of five individuals was selected by the author to complete the pilot testing of the survey. The author did ensure that the individuals selected were reflective of the known sample that the survey would be administered too. The pilot testing sample consisted of individuals who were defence scientists (both natural and social scientists), civilian and military personnel, management, and bilingual individuals. The author gave these individuals both an English and French paper version of the survey and asked them to review either one or both of the versions for both content and format. The author also included one page of questions that the individual could use as a guide to commenting on the content and format of the survey. The questions asked were:

1. Are the questions clear? Can you suggest a better way to word them?
2. Are the questions relevant? Do you have suggestions for additional relevant questions?

3. Is the survey user-friendly? If no, please explain why. Do you have any suggestions to make the survey more user-friendly?
4. Do you have any additional comments?

The pilot test resulted in minor changes to the survey. Changes were made to the french translation, extra response categories were added in the closed-ended questions, and a few changes were made to the wording of questions for clarity. Refer to Annex B for the final english version of the survey questions. Once the pilot testing changes were made, the author submitted the survey for ethics and coordination.

2.3 Ethics and Coordination

The author completed a research ethics board (REB) form and submitted the survey to the research ethics board. Due to the administrative nature of the survey, there were no ethical concerns. The author did assure participant confidentiality by not collecting information that could identify respondents. The survey was then given a coordination number.

2.4 Online Survey Development

A survey software program called GlobalSCAPE was then purchased and the paper version of the survey was converted into an online version. When the author was testing the online survey it became apparent that there were a few problems with the survey software. For starters, the author had problems getting a URL to post the survey online. Secondly, when testing the online survey, the author realized that the survey submissions were being routed through a web survey response server at GlobalSCAPE. The first problem was a technical problem but the second was considered a security problem. As a result, the use of GlobalSCAPE as an online survey tool was abandoned.

The author instead gave the paper version of the survey to the information technology (IT) section at the Directorate of Personnel Applied Research (D Pers AR). The IT section for D Pers AR uses a survey software program called Elisten that has been approved by the Department of National Defence (DND). The Elisten survey software tool does not submit survey responses through a survey response server at Elisten and the tool also does not provide electronic identifiers, so confidentiality of all respondents can be ensured.

When the IT section was converting the paper version of the survey into an online version, they were also able to format the survey by branching question one, "Have you ever visited the CORA DWAN website (<http://ord.mil.ca>)?" If a respondent answered yes, then they would automatically be directed to continue the survey. If a respondent answered no, then they would be redirected to answer a question, "If no, why not?" and then the final question in the survey, "Do you have any other comments?". If a respondent answered unsure, then they would automatically be redirected to the final question in the survey, "Do you have any other comments." Once the IT section had converted the paper version of the survey into an online version in both English and French, the author was provided with the hyperlinks to these online versions so that they could be sent out to the sample.

2.5 Sample

The sample for this survey was all CORA employees (N=176). Since it was a known sample and the author knew that the whole sample had access to a computer and a work email address on the DWAN, it was decided that an online version of the survey could be used and the link to the online survey would be administered by email. A group email was sent out from the Administrative Assistant on behalf of the Director General of CORA with an introduction to the survey in both English and French and hyperlinks to both the English and French versions of the survey. The author gave respondents three weeks to fill out the survey online. One week before the deadline a reminder email was sent out.

2.6 Analysis

The results of the survey were inputted into a SPSS database. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) were performed on the quantitative questions. The author analyzed the responses to the qualitative questions by hand, by examining the data for emerging themes.

3 Results

The survey was sent by email to all CORA employees (N=176). Eighty-nine individuals completed the survey making the response rate 50.57%. Even though it is an acceptable response rate it is important to note that the author can not be 100% certain that the 50% who responded are reflective of the entire population. Eighty-five respondents completed the survey in English and four respondents completed the survey in French.

3.1 Quantitative Results

The majority of those who responded said that they had in fact visited the CORA DWAN website before.

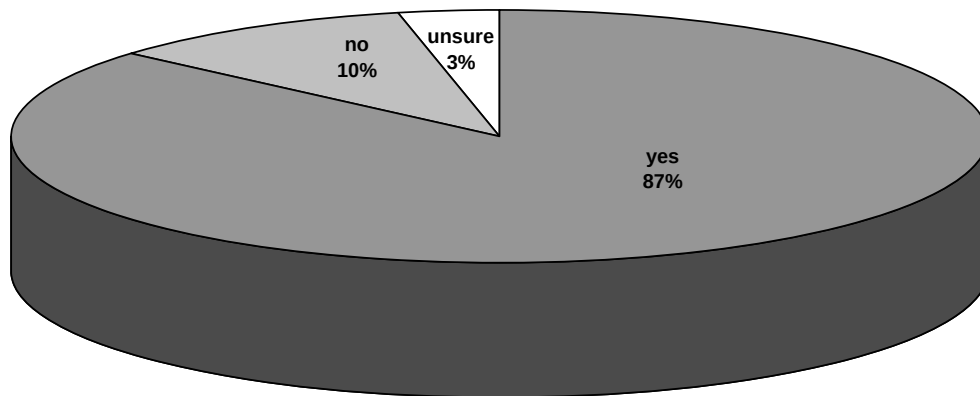


Figure 1: Graph of Responses to the Question: Have you ever visited the CORA DWAN website (<http://ord.mil.ca>)?

The respondents who answered that they had not visited the CORA website before were redirected to a question asking, "if no, why not?" Seven out of the nine respondents who answered that they had not visited the CORA website before did give a reason. Two respondents said it was due to not having access to the website. Another two respondents stated that it was because they didn't know the website existed. The other answers given were that the daily operations of CORA didn't affect this person due to reporting outside of CORA, they had never received a link to the website, and a respondent stated that they had never been told what was at this website or why one should go to that website.

The respondents who answered that they were unsure if they had ever visited the CORA website before were redirected to the last question in the survey asking if they had any other comments to share. Only one out of the three respondents who answered that they were unsure if they had ever visited the CORA website gave a comment. This respondent said that they had tried to find the website and just did not think that they had seen the website referred to in the survey.

The majority of respondents (53.9%) said that they had visited the CORA website between 1-10 times in the last year with the percentage decreasing as the categories of times visiting the CORA website increased.

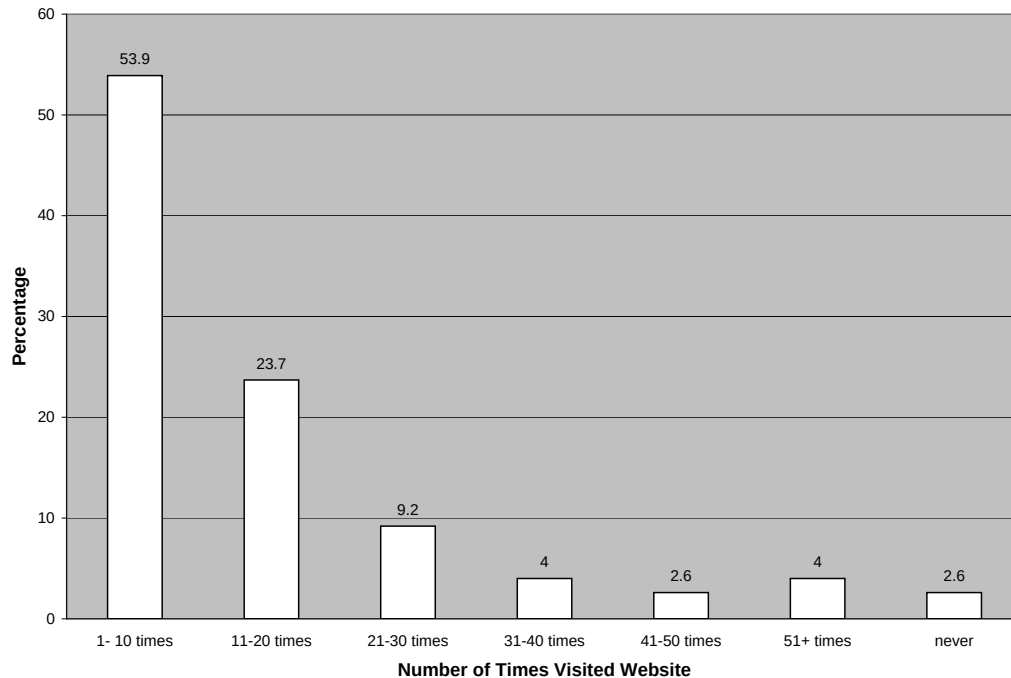


Figure 2: Graph of Responses to the Question: In the last year, how often did you use the CORA website?

It is interesting to note in Figure 2 that 2.6% did not visit the website in the last year and 4% had visited it over 51+ times in the last year.

Respondents were also asked when they had last visited the CORA DWAN website and the majority of respondents (42.7%) had last visited the CORA website within the last month.

It is interesting to note in Figure 3 that the majority of CORA employees (85.4%) had in fact visited the website in the last six months (whether it was in the last week, last month, or last six months). This means that even though the website is out of date it is still being used by CORA employees.

For the fourth question, respondents were asked to click what features they use, when they visit the CORA website. The majority of CORA employees actually clicked off three features. The most popular feature used by CORA employees is the search publications function followed by viewing the organizational chart, reviewing activity charts, looking up employee contact information, and getting library information.

As Figure 4 shows, respondents were also able to specify any other features they used when

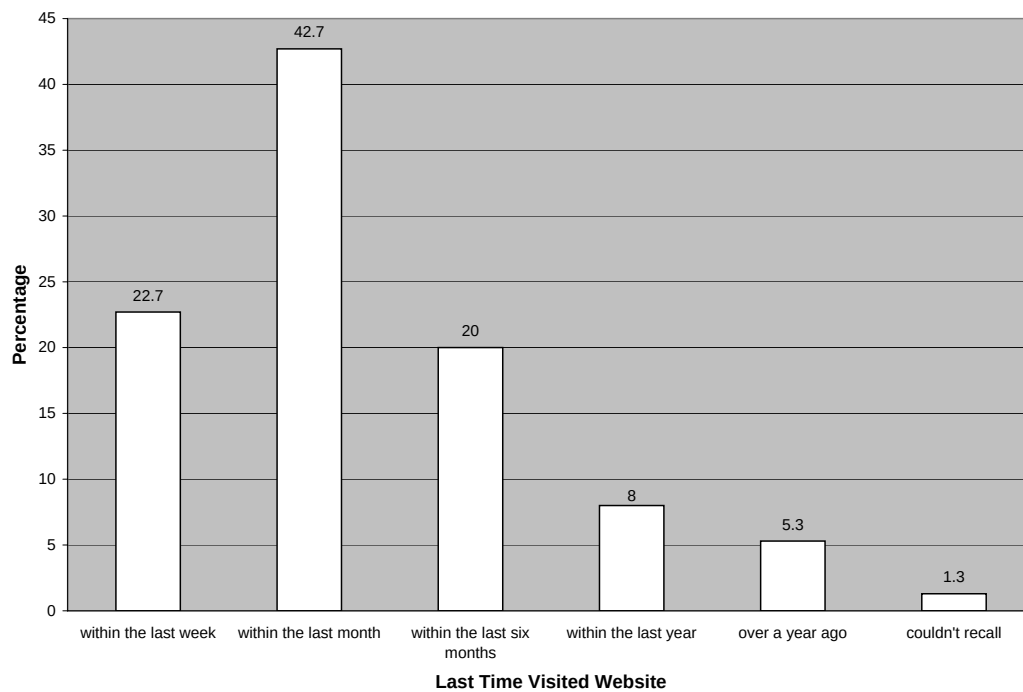


Figure 3: *Graph of Responses to the Question: When is the last time you visited the CORA website?*

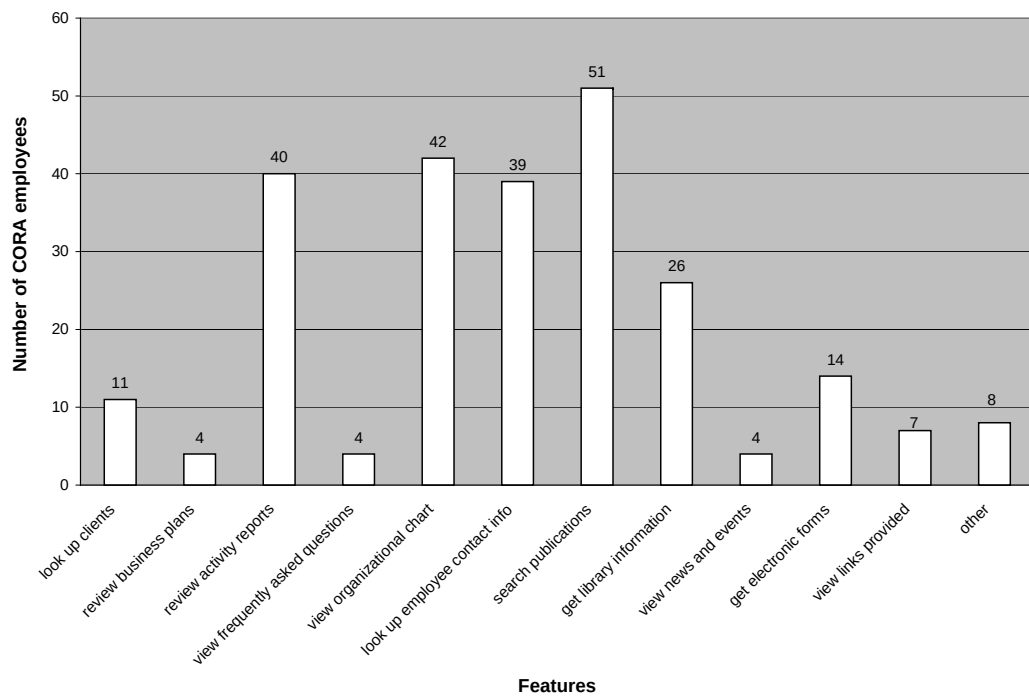


Figure 4: Graph of Responses to the Question: Which of the following features do you use when you go to the CORA website?

they visited the CORA website. Eight individuals specified other features. Two individuals mentioned they go to the website to find the mission and vision statements. Other features mentioned were to view the AGM picture, submit general search request to CORA library, check for survey purposes, online resources for research information, and notify IT staff of problem.

3.2 Qualitative Results

59.6% of respondents answered what they liked about the website. When respondents were asked what they liked about the website, the following themes emerged:

- Format (the simplicity of it, how easy it is to navigate, how functional it is, the organization of the site, how user-friendly it is, that it is a central location for information, and its accessibility)
- Features (activity reports, phone lists/contact information, publications, and organizational chart)
- Concept of such a website (what the site is suppose to be and do)

66.3% of respondents answered what they did not like about the website. When respondents were asked what they did not like about the website, the following themes emerged:

- website was out of date
- specific information was out of date (activity/quarterly reports, organizational chart, publications, and contact information)
- information is missing (pictures, information on teams, links, correct name, and layout is missing aesthetic appeal)
- website is hard to find

60.7% of respondents answered what new features they would like to see on the new CORA website. When respondents were asked what new features they would like included on the new website they responded by saying:

- Contact Information (information on teams, individuals, and directors)
- Library Features (up to date library, search capacity, and publications in pdf)
- Ability to Interact (message board/chat function)
- Miscellenous (photos, reading list, history of operational research (OR),site map, and news and events)

- Updated and New Links(links to sponsor sites, collective agreements, unions, HR sites, O Drive access, conferences, other research centers, current work plans, posting plans, transformation information) Also, it is important to note that a respondent mentioned that links to other information should be made available in both English and French links.

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to add any other comments. 29.2% of respondents gave other comments at the end of the survey. Repondents mentioned that updating the website was long overdue, the search engine and publications need to be updated, once the new website is in place regular updating should occur, more information needs to be included on the site (on courses and conferences, reference material for new staff, news and messages from DG, message board, lists of local and international partners, job postings, employee information, all relevant documents), and that the CORA website needs to be accessible to the outside world. On the otherhand, one respondent stated that they would probably not be interested in a new CORA website anyway and another respondent stated that the site currently is not useful after the initial information is read.

4 Discussion/Recommendations

4.1 Developing and Administering Online Surveys

Developing and administering the CORA website survey online proved to be both a learning experience and a viable way to conduct future surveys. The author learned that prior to purchasing an online survey software package, one must make sure that the survey submissions are not being routed through a web survey response server that the online survey software company has set up. The Elisten survey software tool appears to be the best choice to develop and administer online surveys. Firstly, it has been approved by DND. And, secondly, it is currently being used so there is existing expertise in this software tool within DRDC CORA. Administering the CORA website survey online also demonstrated that it is a successful way to conduct future surveys. The CORA website survey yielded a response rate of 50.57%, which is quite acceptable in the social sciences. After learning from D Pers AR that their response rates have increased since implementing online surveys, it is very likely that administering the CORA website survey online contributed to its response rate. Based upon this, it is recommended that:

- CORA CORT consider the possibility of purchasing a copy of the Elisten survey software tool to make it possible to convert paper versions of surveys into online versions in house.

4.2 Revamping the Website

The results of the CORA website survey revealed that the majority of CORA employees have visited the website, specifically within the last six months (whether it was in the last week, month, or last six months), between one and ten times. CORA employees indicated that they like the current format, the content needs to be revamped, and that this should all happen in a reasonable time period. Investing time and money into revamping the website will benefit many employees. All of which leads the author to recommend that:

- The committee should move ahead with plans to revamp the existing website. The format of the website should remain intact. The content of the website is what the committee should focus on revamping. Updates to the content should be done in a timely manner and once completed there should be a commitment to regular updates in the future.

The survey uncovered that the majority of CORA employees use more than one feature currently available on the website. The four most popular features used by CORA employees were the search publications function, viewing the organizational chart, reviewing activity reports, and looking up employee contact information. Interestingly, these same four features were also mentioned when CORA employees were asked what they like about the website, as well as, what they did not like about the website. Basically, employees like these features but feel they need to be updated and enhanced. As a result, the author recommends that:

- The library component of the website should be updated and the new library component should also include: a new search engine, up-to-date publications, and the publications should be made available in pdf.
- The website should include up-to-date contact information. The website committee should also look at creating webpages for individuals, teams, and directors.
- Activity reports/quarterly reports and the organizational chart should remain on the website but should be brought up-to-date.

CORA employees also suggested several new features that could be added to the website, as well as, new content for an existing feature already available on the website. The author recommends that:

- The committee review the possibility of adding some or all of the new features suggested by CORA employees. These features are: a message board/chat function, photos, a reading list, an OR history section, and a clear vision and statement section.
- Links that exist should be updated and the committee should review adding some or all of the new links suggested by CORA employees. The new links suggested are to: sponsor sites, collective agreements, unions, HR sites, access to the O Drive, upcoming conferences, other research centers, current work plans, posting plans, job postings, local and international partners, and news on transformation.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, there has been a lot of talk about revamping the CORA DWAN website (<http://ord.mil.ca>). A CORA committee has been struck and a survey has now been completed. The survey asked CORA employees about their website usage, what they like about the website, do not like about the website, and what new features they would like included on the website. CORA employees do in fact visit the CORA website, so it would be beneficial to revamp the website. The committee should focus on updating the content not the format of the website and consider adding some of the new features suggested by CORA employees. Most importantly, the revamping of this website should occur in a timely manner with a solid commitment to regular updates of the website in the future.

Annex A

Draft Version of CORA Website Survey Questions (English Version)

appendix a.pdf

1. Have you ever visited the CORA website? (please check one)

- ☐ yes
☐ no (please skip to the end of the survey)

2. In the last year, how often did you use the CORA website? (please check one)

- ☐ never
☐ 1-10 times
☐ 11-20 times
☐ 21-30 times
☐ 31-40 times
☐ 41-50 times
☐ 51+ times

3. When is the last time you visited the CORA website? (please check one)

- ☐ within the last week
☐ within the last month
☐ within the last six months
☐ within the last year
☐ over a year ago

4. Which of the following features do you use when you go to the CORA website? (please check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ look up clients | ☐ search publications |
| ☐ review business plans | ☐ library information |
| ☐ review activity reports | ☐ view news & events |
| ☐ view frequently asked questions | ☐ get electronic forms |
| ☐ view organizational chart | ☐ view links |
| ☐ look up employee contact information | ☐ other (please specify: _____) |

5. What do you like about the website?

6. What do you NOT like about the website?

7. What new features would you like to see added to the website?

8. Please add any other comments.

Annex B

Final Version of CORA Website Survey Questions (English Version)

Appendix B1.pdf

1. Have you ever visited the CORA DWAN website (<http://ord.mil.ca>)?
 - ☐ yes
 - ☐ no
 - ☐ unsure
2. In the last year, how often did you use the CORA website?
 - ☐ never
 - ☐ 1-10 times
 - ☐ 11-20 times
 - ☐ 21-30 times
 - ☐ 31-40 times
 - ☐ 41-50 times
 - ☐ 51+
3. When is the last time you visited the CORA website?
 - ☐ within the last week
 - ☐ within the last month
 - ☐ within the last six months
 - ☐ within the last year
 - ☐ over a year ago
 - ☐ don't recall
4. Which of the following features do you use when you go to the CORA website?
(Please check all that apply)
 - ☐ look up clients
 - ☐ review business plans
 - ☐ review activity reports
 - ☐ view frequently asked questions
 - ☐ view organizational chart
 - ☐ look up employee contact information
 - ☐ search publications
 - ☐ get library information
 - ☐ view news & events
 - ☐ get electronic forms
 - ☐ view links provided
 - ☐ other (please specify: _____)
5. What do you like about the website?

6. What do you NOT like about the website?

7. What new features would you like to see added to the website?

8. Please add any other comments.

List of symbols/abbreviations/acronyms/initialisms

DRDC	Defence Research and Development Canada
DND	Department of National Defence
CORT	Central Operational Research Team
CORA	Centre for Operational Research and Analysis
DWAN	Defence Wide Area Network
REB	Research Ethics Board
DWAN	Defence Wide Area Network
IT	Information Technology
D Pers AR	Directorate of Personnel Applied Research
OR	Operational Research

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A CORA committee has been struck to revamp the CORA DWAN website (<http://ord.mil.ca>). An online survey was developed and administered to all CORA employees on their website usage, what they like and do not like about the website, and what new features they would like to see added to the website. The survey found that the majority of CORA employees have in fact visited the website in the last six months, like the format and content of the website, don't like that the content is so out of date, and have some creative suggestions for new features for the website. This technical note concludes with a set of recommendations on the revamping of the CORA DWAN website and on administering surveys online.

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