

**Evaluation of  
International Trade Centre  
(UNCTAD/WTO)**

**Volume 5  
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and Capacity**

**HUMAN  
RESOURCE  
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## Table of Contents

List of Acronyms .....	4
<b>1 ITC's People: Human Resource Management in the International Trade Centre .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 Basic Principles .....	5
1.2 Summary of Main Findings .....	6
1.3 Methodology .....	7
1.4 Profile of Human Resources in ITC .....	8
1.5 Management of People in ITC .....	16
1.6 Recommendations .....	30

## Figures

- Figure 1: ITC Organisation
- Figure 2: Age – All Categories
- Figure 3: Contract Type – Assistant Secretary General and Directors
- Figure 4: Age – Assistant Secretary General and Directors
- Figure 5: Contract Type – Permanent Professional Staff
- Figure 6: Age – Permanent Professional Staff
- Figure 7: Contract Type – Contract Professional Staff
- Figure 8: Age – Contract Professional Staff
- Figure 9: Contract Type – General Service Staff
- Figure 10: Age – General Service Staff

## Tables

- Table 1: Distribution of all Staff at ITC Headquarter
- Table 2: Staff Positions Funded from Regular Budget and Support Costs

## Annexes

- Annex 1: ITC Organisation Structure
- Annex 2: Staff Comments on Communications

## List of Acronyms

ASG	Assistant Secretary General
BAS	Business Advisory Services
DPMD	Division of Product and Market Development
DTCC	Division of Technical Cooperation and Coordination
ETDU	E-Trade Development Unit
DPS	Division of Program Support
DTSS	Division of Trade Support Services
EMDS	Enterprise Management Development Section
FMS	Financial Management Section
GSPS	General Services and Publications Section
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
HRS	Human Resources Section
IPSM	International Purchasing and Supply Management
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITSS	Information Technology Services Section
MAS	Market Analysis Services
MDS	Market Development Services
OA	Office for Africa
OAPLAC	Office for Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean
OASEC	Office for Arab States, Europe and the Commonwealth
OD	Office of Director
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
OIP	Office for Interregional Programmes
PAS	Performance Appraisal System
TIS	Trade Information Services
TSS	Trade in Services Section
SMC	Senior Management Committee
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WTO	World Trade Organisation

# 1 ITC's People: Human Resource Management in the International Trade Centre

## 1.1 Basic Principles

The literature provides some basic principles that have to be followed in order to create effective Human Resource Management (HRM). These might be applied to the International Trade Centre, (ITC) as follows:

- Effective HRM is the key to the effective operation of the ITC: most of the organisation's budget is spent on its people (or their associated costs – accommodation, travel, etc);
- At the same time, the people are the only thing that ITC has that “adds value”: all of its activities are dependent on the effective choice, allocation, deployment and motivation of capable people;
- The corollary of these first two principles is that the effective management of Human Resources (HR) is key to the effective operation and success of ITC and should be a major priority for its management and governance structures;
- Effective HRM means that the policies and practices related to the management of HR must be fully integrated with the strategic mission and future of the organisation;
- Effective HRM is an activity carried out by all managers – acting as managers – with an HR section that provides enabling and supporting systems for them to carry out their work;
- HRM includes all HR: permanent staff at all grades, short-term staff and consultants;
- Although ITC operates within the United Nations (UN) Common System rules, which both provides benefits in terms of clear principles and procedures and provides difficulties in aligning HRM to the specific mission and future of ITC, it is clear that the organisation has more scope than is believed in the way that HRM may be managed within those rules;
- There are no “right answers” in HRM: but it is possible to move continually towards better ways of working;
- It is an axiom of HRM that policies propounded at a senior level rarely affect the staff in ways that create the results that those who propounded the policies believe they should have. It is therefore important continually to monitor the reality of HRM as well as the policies in force.

## 1.2 Summary of Main Findings

- Amongst Permanent Professional and Directors staff, morale and commitment amongst the employees of ITC is good. This is not an unexpected finding in a small, professional and well-paid organisation. It may be because management is close to subordinates and some managers are intuitively managing them well; it may be because people are comfortable in individual niches that suit their personalities. Amongst General Service staff morale is not so good.
- The Human Resource Section (HRS) in ITC appears to be fundamentally administrative in nature and is well-staffed to perform that role.
- There is less Management Information available about employees or consultants than would be necessary to adopt a fully strategic approach to HRM. In particular information about consultants is limited and the roster of consultants and the format for Curriculum Vitae needs to be reviewed.
- There is little evidence of strategic thinking about HRM within the organisation. It is not obvious that steps having been taken to address the connection between individuals' work and the mission of ITC; little evidence of forward thinking in terms of the kind of staff the organisation needs to employ, how they need to employ them, how to maintain their skills, etc Combined with the administrative role of the HR section, this means that there are few people in the organisation looking at the "bigger picture" in terms of HRM. There is little evidence of forward thinking about the role, composition and skills required by the management team.
- Line management capability is lacking within ITC:
  - Promotion to managerial position within ITC has frequently been done in the past on the basis of technical capability (rather than management competence);
  - Many managers are very "hands-on", still doing the technical job and closely involved in the work of their subordinates, but abjuring responsibilities for the work or development of their subordinates;
  - No-one has a comprehensive overview of the HR used by ITC. Consultants, for example, are employed on a personal basis by the specialist responsible and a small number of consultants are employed virtually full-time by ITC (the data is incomplete but what is available indicates that 10% of those so employed do more than a third of the total work; there are 81 consultants doing more than 100 working days for ITC per year – including some doing more working days than there are working days in the year!) It should be noted that the expenditure on consultants is not wasteful: few consultants are paid more than a few hundred dollars a day and the ones that are paid significantly more are used for very few days, indicating a sensible ability to match prices against usage;
  - The UN Common System is seen within the organisation to be a significant barrier preventing various kinds of change in ITC. In fact, it is by no means the kind of constraint that ITC managers seem to believe it to be. It may be that there would be significant psychological value in the HRM policies of ITC reflecting the nature of the organisation and moving closer towards a World Trade Organisation (WTO) approach to HRM.

### 1.3 Methodology

This report is an evaluation of HRM in ITC. It is based on various sources including:

- Desk study of ITC documentation and procedures;
- Information gathered throughout the process of the evaluation including response to questions by the Evaluation and comments of ITC management on various documents prepared by the Evaluation;
- Specific meetings and interviews on this topic with all members of the senior management team, the staff responsible for the HR function of ITC, and members of the Staff Council;
- Review and analysis of numerical data that was supplied by the HR function; and
- A questionnaire sent to Professional and Management staff by the Joint Evaluation on management processes and communication which was responded to by 60 of 122 professional and management staff;
- The results of 2003 questionnaire to all staff answered by 110 staff including general administration staff; and
- The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) Report on Programme Management and Administrative Practices, 2004.

All this data was analyzed carefully. The Evaluation met with representatives of HRM in the UN and WTO and with some Government representatives. The Evaluation is grateful to all those who gave so willingly of their time and were so helpful in assisting us to achieve our objectives.

The Report takes the following shape: After presenting basic demographic data on ITC and a general introduction to atmosphere and morale in the organisation, the Evaluation explore ITC's approach to strategy in the management of people and the capacity of managers to adopt and develop effective ways of managing their subordinates. Then the report examines the process of filling posts, staff communications, staff development, career planning, succession planning and performance management. Finally, the report considers the role of the HR department.

## 1.4 Profile of Human Resources in ITC

This section presents some summary descriptive data on the distribution of staff by section and the age profile of staff as well as the contract type. The data is limited by the manner in which the records are kept and collated, making it unduly costly to present more detailed information. Thus, for example, it is difficult for ITC to collate information to present a breakdown by professional training and background, by geographic origin, by gender. It would also be unduly expensive to correlate age groups with kind of contracts (permanent vs. fixed term), or to learn more about the length of stay with ITC. The following summary tables are provided:

- The distribution by sections of all staff at ITC headquarters including permanent staff, temporary staff, consultants and interns<sup>1</sup>.
- The distribution by section of staff positions funded from Regular Budget and Support Costs.
- Analysis of the age profile and contract type for the categories: Assistant Secretary General (ASG), Director, Permanent Professional Staff, Contract Professional Staff and General Service Staff<sup>2</sup>.

This descriptive data provides background for the analysis of HRM in ITC.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be taken into consideration that the Staff list, which has been analyzed, has been taken from the ITC Intranet on the 20/11/2004, as a pattern, and, as a result, the current number of ITC staff may differ from that in November 2004

<sup>2</sup> Below-provided analysis of the categories has been prepared on the basis of the Table: 'Extract from Staffing', Including Short-Term, Temporary and Project Staff, provided by ITC in September 2004.



Figure 1: ITC Organisation

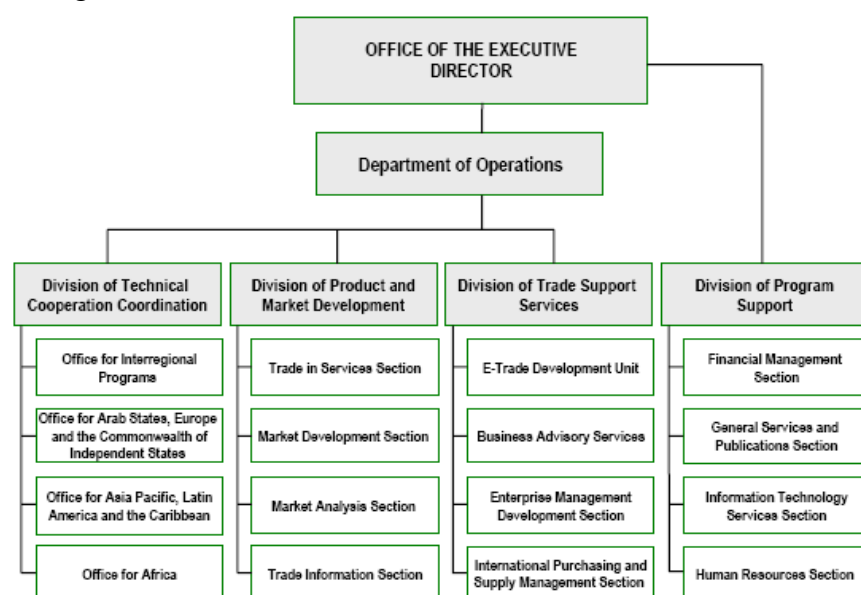


Table 1: Distribution of all Staff at ITC Headquarter

<b>OED</b>	<b>OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>DO</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT OF OPERATIONS</b>	<b>242</b>
<i>DTCC</i>	<i>Division of Technical Cooperation and Coordination</i>	<i>75</i>
DTCC/OD	Office of Director	4
DTCC/OIP	Office for Interregional Programmes	24
DTCC/OA	Office for Africa	20
DTCC/OAPLAC	Office for Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean	17
DTCC/OASEC	Office for Arab States, Europe and the Commonwealth	10
<i>DPMD</i>	<i>Division of Product and Market Development</i>	<i>85</i>
DPMD/OD	Office of Director	3
DPMD/MAS	Market Analysis Services	36
DPMD/MDS	Market Development Services	23
DPMD/TIS	Trade Information Services	16
DPMD/TSS	Trade in Services Section	7
<i>DTSS</i>	<i>Division of Trade Support Services</i>	<i>82</i>
DTSS/OD	Office of Director	3
DTSS/BAS	Business Advisory Services	38
DTSS/EMDS	Enterprise Management Development Section	20
DTSS/IPSM	International Purchasing and Supply Management	16
DTSS/ETDU	E-Trade Development Unit	5
<i>DPS</i>	<i>Division of Program Support</i>	<i>64</i>
DPS/OD	Office of Director	2
DPS/GSPS	General Services and Publications Section	24
DPS/HRS	Human Resources Section	14
DPS/ITSS	Information Technology Services Section	13
DPS/FMS	Financial Management Section	11
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>229</b>

Source: ITC Intranet - List: 20/11/2004 Staff Positions: distribution of all staff resident in Geneva including permanent staff, contract staff, consultants and interns.

**Table 2: Staff Positions funded from Regular Budget and Support Costs**

Division	Regular Budget	Funded from Support Costs	Total
Executive Directorate	15	3	18
Department of Operations	93	8	101
- Division of Trade Support Services	26	2	28
- Division of Product and Market Development	42	3	45
- Division of Technical Cooperation Coordination	25	3	28
Division of Programme Support	49	5	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>173</b>

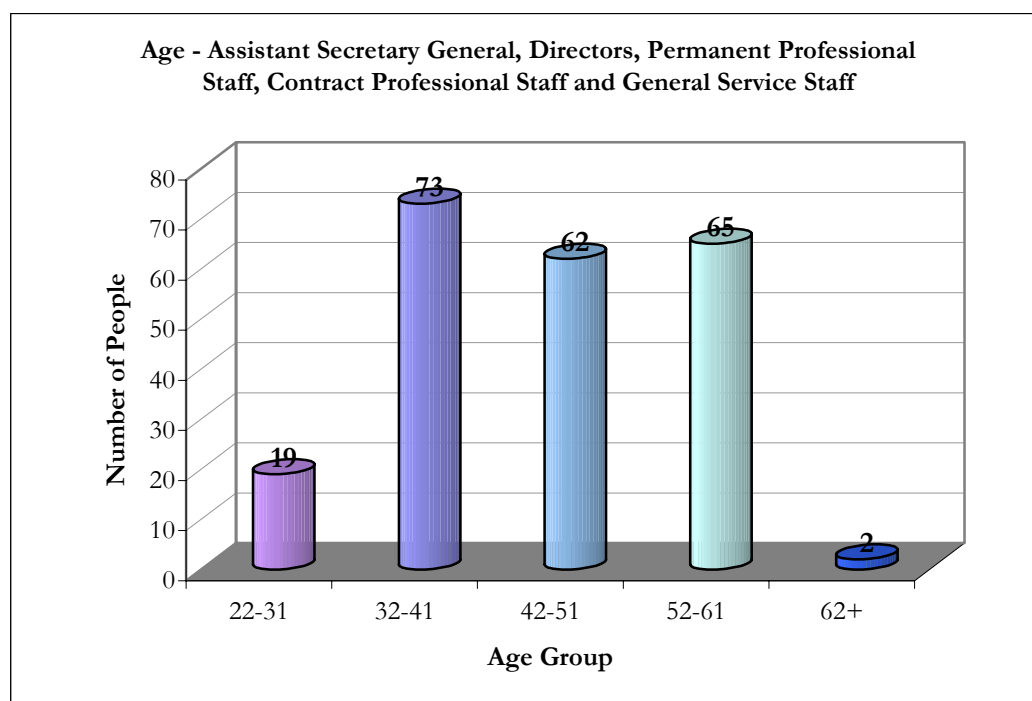
### Analysis of Age and Contract Type<sup>3</sup>

The analysis covers the categories: Assistant Secretary General, Directors, Permanent Professional Staff, Contract Professional Staff and General Service Staff.

#### *All Categories*

The total number of staff in these categories is 221. This includes the 173 staff funded from the Regular Budget and Support Costs.

Figure 2: Age – All Categories



<sup>3</sup> The analysis is based on data provided by ITC in September 2004.

Based on this data, it is evident, that the overall or aggregate age distribution of ITC staff is uniformly distributed. In the following charts a different picture emerges for particular categories.

***Categories Assistant Secretary General and Directors***

There are six people in this category: one Assistant Secretary General and five Directors.

Figure 3: Contract Type – Assistant Secretary General and Directors

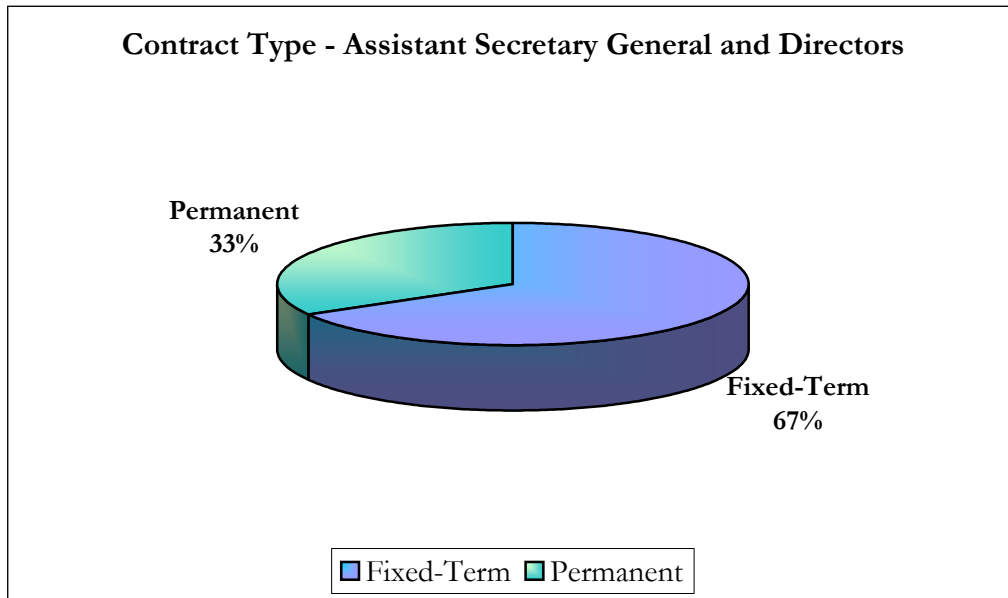
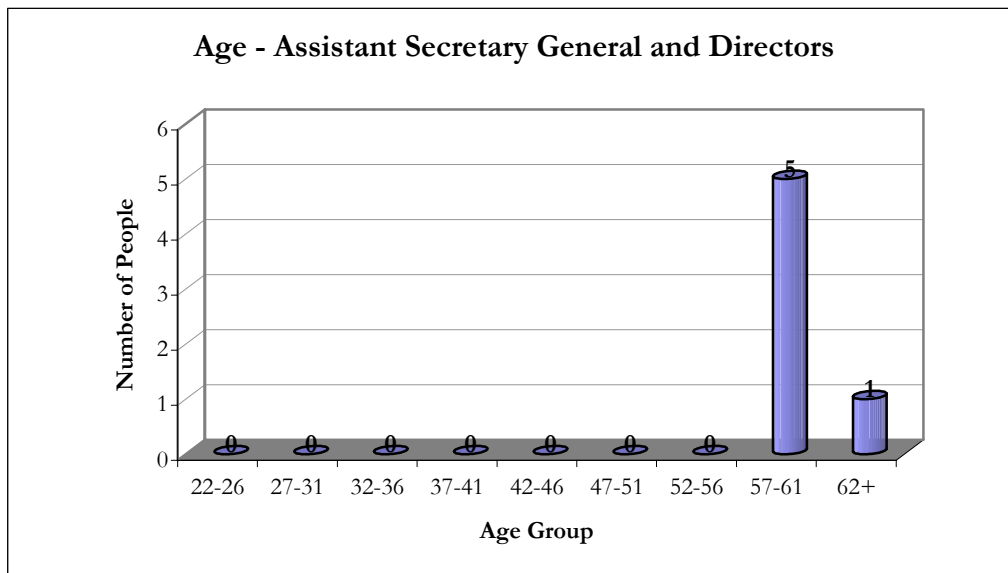


Figure 4: Age – Assistant Secretary General and Directors

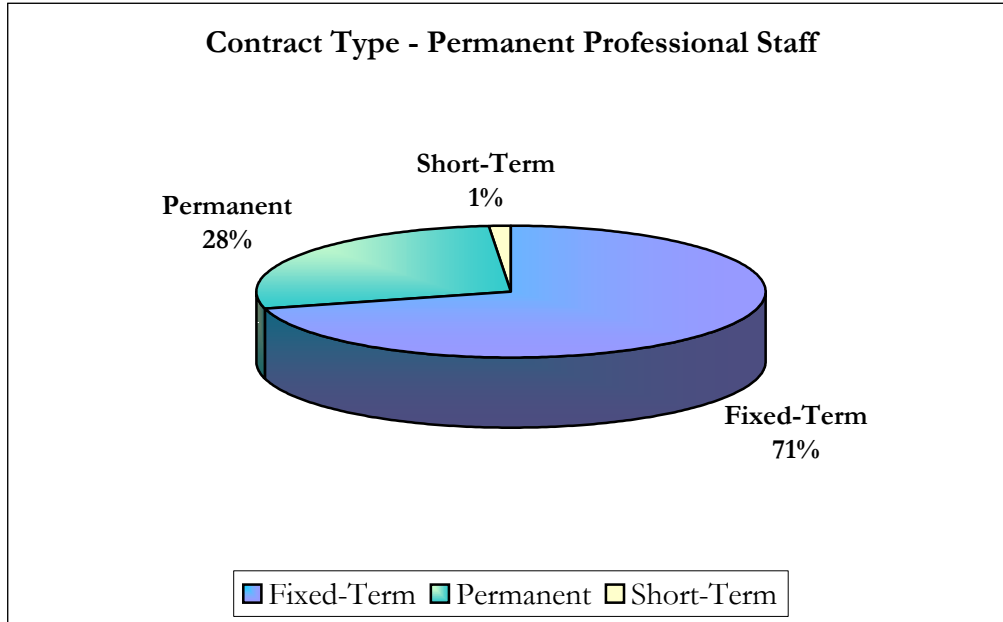


As is evident from Figure 3, the age distribution of Directors is tightly bunched. Indeed, all six of the senior management committee members are retiring within the next 18 months.

**Category Permanent Professional Staff**

The total number of Permanent Professional Staff is 72 people.

Figure 5: Contract Type – Permanent Professional Staff



More than 70% of the category permanent professional staff s is on long-term contracts, indicating that they have been with the ITC for more than five years. Permanent staff members on short-term contract are those that have not completed five years service with the organisation.

Figure 6: Age – Permanent Professional Staff



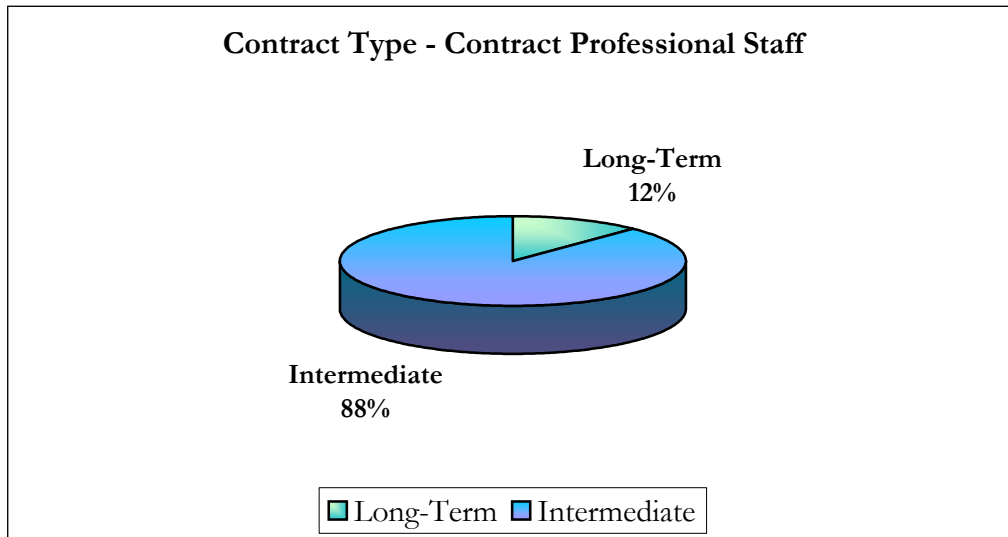
Although there is some variation in the age distribution of the permanent professional staff (fewer are 47-51), the overall age distribution is quite uniform. Notwithstanding the

recent retirement of some long serving professional staff, there is a sizable group of permanent and experienced professional staff to give continuity to the organisation.

***Category Contract Professional Staff***

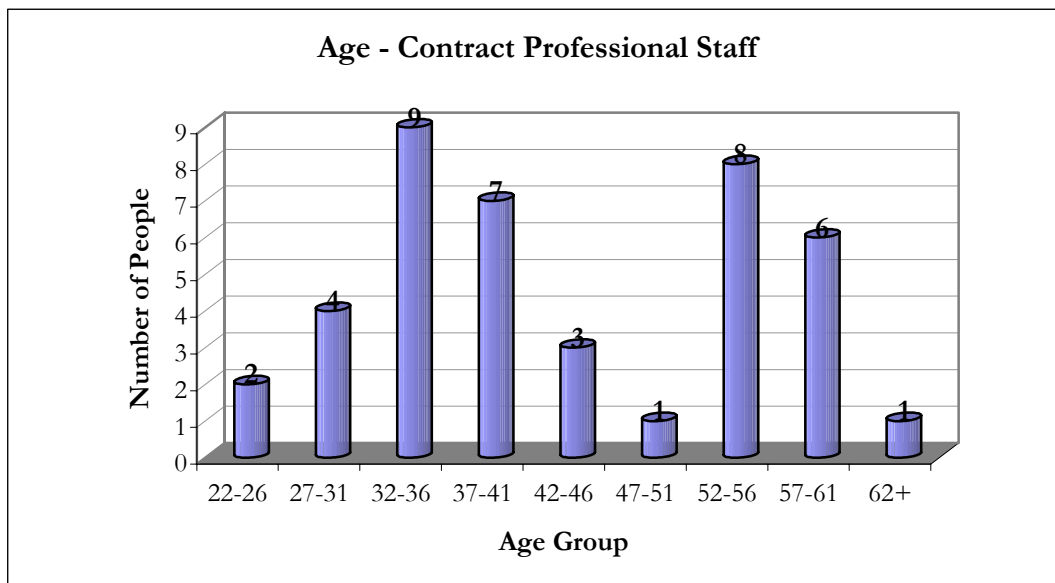
The total number of Contract Professional Staff is 41 people.

Figure 7: Contract Type – Contract Professional Staff



Contracted professional staff members have the same grading levels as the permanent professional staff, but almost 90% of the contracted staff is on intermediate contracts, the reverse of the permanent staff. Although grade levels can be the same, the tendency for increments to be awarded on the basis of length of service suggests that compensation levels are higher for the permanent at similar grade levels to contracted staff.

Figure 8: Age – Contract Professional Staff



The overall age distribution of contracted professional staff is double peaked with 14 in the 52-61 group and 16 in the 32-41 age groups.

***Category General Service Staff***

The total number of General Service Staff is 102 people.

Figure 9: Contract Type – General Service Staff

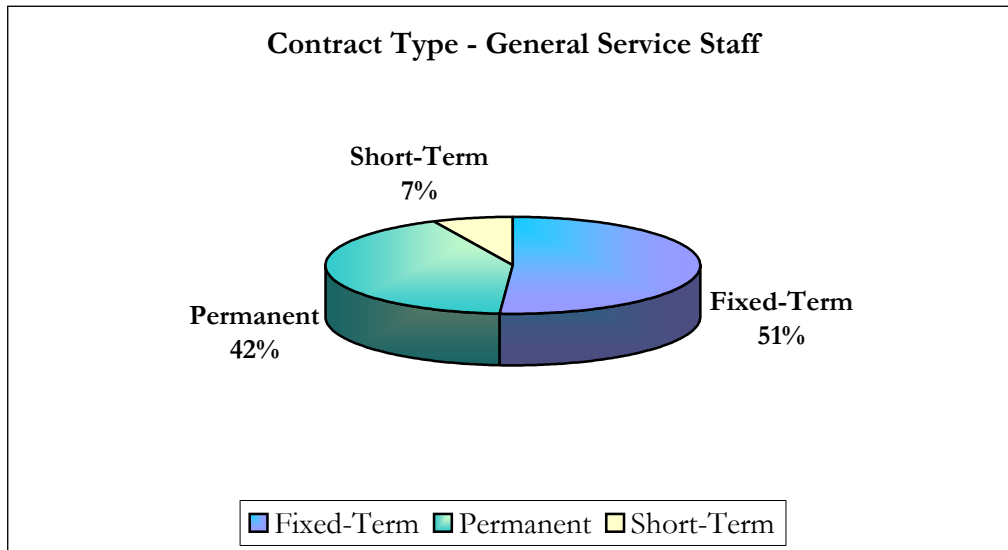


Figure 10: Age – General Service Staff



The general service staff tends to be older as a group than the professional staff of ITC, 49 of the 102 General Service staff were between 47 and 61.

ITC applies the UN staff rules, but does so selectively. It does not, for example, apply national quotas nor have gender targets. About 40 nationalities are represented among ITC staff members. None of the current senior management, however, is female, and only three section chiefs are women. About 22% of series 200 professionals are women, and about 33% of series 100 professionals. Recent recruitment of junior staff has reflected better gender balance. Regardless of the UN targets, it would appear that a substantial proportion of the available skilled workforce is not being fully utilised by ITC.

## 1.5 Management of People in ITC

In recent years ITC management has successfully managed to start to change the culture of the organisation away from a bureaucratic mentality and towards a service minded, innovation based culture. This is a long-term process that requires careful management.

The change of mentality cannot be carried out overnight, and requires skilful and balanced management. Corporate services will have to be developed not only for internal purposes, but also for the sake of improving customers' (beneficiary) services and satisfaction. ITC is a small organisation, with lots of people working on their own "pet projects" and having their own areas of responsibility and with few constraints from a strategic management system impinging on them. Hence, many of the staff is motivated to carry out their view of their role with individual job satisfaction. This is related to a pride in the organisation created by the development by the top management level of increased levels of visibility for ITC and the promotion of its role in the global context of trade and development.

Our overall conclusions are much as those of the OIOS Report (2004) "ITC provides a supporting working environment for its generally well qualified, professional and motivated staff."

There are inevitably some dangers here:

- This rather "rosy" view of HRM in ITC, which is shared by top management, is not reflected throughout the system and morale manifestly declines at the lower levels.
- It is not obvious that all the work, whilst satisfying to the individuals, has any direct relationship to the ITC targets or the overall ITC mission. Furthermore, some individuals are being overloaded and this has increased focus on resource allocation and mobilisation within the organisation.
- Staff stress towards the end of each year is common in many organisations and needs to be carefully managed. In ITC this pressure is not formally recognized and therefore not managed. At the end of the year, overtime is not feasible (since the requirement to approve in advance doesn't fit work needs). Attitudes to time off in lieu of extra hours worked varies between managers. Furthermore, the Annual Report is prepared for the end of the year: the heaviest workload period. Annual reports could be prepared at other times of the year.
- This inadequate/uneven distribution of tasks, if not addressed, will affect the quality of the work and the job satisfaction of individuals.
- The staff surveys indicate that there is a substantial minority of staff who feel that their efforts are not recognized or appreciated.

### **Strategic Human Resource Management**

ITC is not a status-quo organisation. Over the last decade, it has faced a number of managerial challenges and has responded to them effectively and succeeded in reorienting



itself. It has opted in favour of constantly refining its operations on the basis of dialogue with its stakeholders.

Given its importance (see above), HRM is a strategic activity: this is not obviously the case in ITC. (Again the Evaluation emphasize that it is discussing the management of HR by ITC, not just the role of the HR department). As a straightforward example, it is clear that succession plans for the retiring top management team, which should have been implemented from five years ago (preparing replacements and a judicious mix of, say, four internal and two external appointments), were not even identified as necessary until last year. HRM is seen as external to, not a key element of, managerial roles.

HRM policies and practices need to be not only “vertically” consistent with the mission and targets of the organisation but also “horizontally” consistent, so that, for example, the outcomes of the performance management system lead on to obvious rewards and sanctions. This is always the case in ITC (see below).

In addition, it is vital that the full set of HR available to ITC is considered holistically: at present the Permanent Professional staff, the Contract Professional staff, the Consultants, and the General Service staff (and the various combinations of these categories) are considered as separate and rarely considered together. In many cases these distinctions reflect tradition or budgetary drivers rather than the strategic needs of the organisation. The General Service staff/Permanent Professional staff boundary is a particular issue. There are highly qualified General Service staff frustrated by their managers’ attitudes towards them and their inability to progress, often working alongside Permanent Professional staff who are no more qualified.

There is little evidence of forward planning of HRM in ITC. The Evaluation could identify no policies relating to the kinds of HR skills and attributes ITC will need in the future and how it intends to make the transition towards those capabilities.

### **Senior Management Committee and Management Framework**

ITC’s operations are governed through a number of committees, the main one of which is the Senior Management Committee (SMC), which is composed of the Executive Director (chair), the Deputy Executive Director, the directors of each of the four divisions and the Senior Programme Officer (Secretary). The SMC is essential to the functioning of the organisation as it is the one venue where policy is developed and approved, projects and programmes are reviewed and approved, discussion (information exchange) takes place on events, activities, internal systems, financing, etc. A key feature of the SMC in terms of internal communication is that staffs are invited to participate when a topic relevant to their area of activity is being discussed/reviewed.

The SMC also functions as a Project Approval and Clearance Committee that, if necessary, approves a project. In the normal course of events the lead division on a project takes the initiative to coordinate activities with other divisions. If no coordination prob-

lems arise, then a project (below a given size) does not have to go to Project Approval and Clearance Committee.

The publication on the intranet of SMC (minutes) is considered by staff to be an effective internal communications mechanism. On the previous staff survey 92% of respondents felt SMC minutes were an average to very good communications tool.

Within the next year all six members of the SMC reach retirement age<sup>4</sup>. This is a cause for concern as these individuals have guided ITC through one of its most difficult and at the same time most successful periods in its history. Dates of retirement are clearly known; three director posts will become open for replacement during the tenure of the current Executive Director, and two under the new Executive Director. A new Executive Director will be appointed based on processes in the UN and WTO systems. The succession issue is highly visible and needs to be addressed in a timely manner to ensure a smooth transition.

Change management in general will be a major challenge for ITC over the next two to four years to ensure that management changes throughout the organisation as a result of changes at the most senior level take place with the least disruption to ongoing operations, while at the same time being significant enough to take the accumulated experience of ITC and develop an even stronger organisational structure to guide ITC over the next 10 years.

### **Line Management Capacity for HRM**

There is a widespread feeling that past selection of higher level Permanent Professional and Director staff has been carried out with little attention to the people management competences required for these roles and that, as a consequence, ITC does not have a high proportion of excellent managers. Indeed, unlike many organisations in the UN system, ITC currently has no outline of managerial competences and has neither adopted the UN system recommendations nor developed its own list of managerial competences. The effect is that senior staff are promoted or selected on the basis of technical competence alone or as a reward for previously showing evidence of technical skill, rather than on the basis of competences for the job they are about to take up. It also means that management training (see below) is noticeable by its very limited and untargeted nature. Without a set of competency criteria against which to assess individual managers, it is difficult to see how such training needs could be identified.

The OIOS report (2004) noted that “a comprehensive HR strategy was being developed”, but stated that it “had not seen any documentation...” and that “important areas not cover by the indicators, such as recruitment and performance assessment”. The position still seems to be the same.

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<sup>4</sup> An exception is the Executive Director who does not have a mandatory retirement age; however, he has clearly stated that he will not seek re-appointment.

### **Management Development**

Like many other technical specialist International Organisations, ITC faces a dual dilemma in its development activities. On the one hand, these technical specialists are often in danger of failing to keep their expertise up to date as they become immersed in the immediate tasks and have limited opportunity for attending expert conferences, debating with university, government or scientific think-tank colleagues and reading and contributing to the latest journals. On the other hand, their jobs are arguably increasingly at the project management end of activities where technical expertise above a certain level is perhaps less crucial, but they rarely undertake project management or general management training.

ITC should identify which staff are in managerial positions and which in senior technical specialist positions (numbers supervised would be an obvious way to determine that). Clarity about the role and competences required of staff in such positions would enable the training needs of such mission-critical staff to be assessed and addressed. There is a dearth of serious management training in ITC.

It is important that people management responsibilities are clearly identified and monitored in the assessment system for all managerial staff.

### **Contracts**

There is a trend towards hiring staff on a fixed term basis. Since the late 1990s, more than half of the chiefs of sections have been employed on a fixed-term basis<sup>5</sup>. This provides the senior management with a large degree of flexibility, with respect to replacing senior staff, and opens up the option of internal mobility within the organisation. For employees hired on fixed terms, performance criteria can develop as an integral part of the employment contract. However, this form of employment can give serious motivational problems, with staff at the end of their contracts more concerned about their renewal than about the tasks they are charged to undertake. It also increases the administrative burden on the HR department. The use of staff at the General Service level on short-term contracts appears to be a particular problem.

There are strategic HRM issues with the increased use of Contract Professional staff on short-term contracts. It is not clear, in other words, that this use is a thought through response to the exigencies and current and needs of ITC operations: in many cases it is entirely a short-term response to budget pressures.

The General Service – Permanent Professional staff transfer option between General Service and Permanent Professional staff is a barrier in most UN common system organisations. The UN must be one of the few organisations left in the world that makes it difficult for itself to make the maximum use of all the talent available to it.

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<sup>5</sup> Extract from staffing Table, including short-term, temporary and project staff, data provided by HRS

ITC should consider the option of more of the staff working on a part-time basis. Obviously, this is a different issue for internationally recruited staff but, nevertheless, there is a strong demand for this option amongst staff (one third would like to have the option available according to the 2003 staff council survey) and it has been shown to be a cost-efficient way of employing HR<sup>6</sup>.

### Consultants

ITC maintains a “consultants” roster, which includes key information on each individual’s qualifications and experience, and from which the staff can select potential candidates when external consultancies are needed. The form for Curriculum Vitae contains minimal information compared to that required by many organisations and consultancies when mobilising experts, which suggests that information on consultants is obtained through other channels such as recommendations and contacts. Consultants are identified through the network of the professional staff of ITC. The HRS screens candidates to ensure that they meet the minimum qualifications. The roster, as designed presently, is seen as an inefficient tool by the majority of the staff interviewed:

- The system is mainly reactive as limited efforts are deployed to identify potential qualified consultants and attract new candidates;
- The competence base is inadequate; getting qualified consultants in specialised fields is not always possible; and
- There are time constraints for selection of consultants due to registration and approval procedures.

Consultants are hired to provide a defined deliverable, which may be a study, training materials, report etc. The deliverable becomes the property of ITC and is integrated into its programme. A means of drawing on expertise and alleviating the pressure of resource mobilisation is to draw on experienced external consultants. And this is where the flexibility of the roster plays a very important role.

Division of Program Support currently has on its work programme a project to enhance the system to facilitate collection and management of data in the consultants’ roster and for intranet access. A new online system will be established for application and screening candidates and linked to the improvement of the consultants’ roster and candidate selection process (ITC business plan 2003-2005). There is a general feeling within the organisation that the pressure to spend money before each year-end means that ITC staff tend to worry less about quality than about availability.

Given the uneven use of consultants, the limited “pool” from which they are drawn, and the limited confirmation about consultants that is currently held, this new system will be a major step forward.

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<sup>6</sup> Brewster, C., (1997): “Flexible Working in Europe: extent, growth and the implications for HRM” in Sparrow (ed) *HRM in Crisis*.

### **Institutional Memory**

Almost one third of ITC staff (at all levels) are 50 years of age or over with many years of experience in the organisation. Over two thirds of staff (some 130+ people) is 40 years of age or over. And all members of the SMC will be leaving the organisation in the next two years.

It is obvious that there is a tremendous amount of information that is available from these people directly or indirectly, i.e. they either have the information themselves, or they know where to find it. In addition, ITC has fewer generalists than similar organisations and more specialists who have worked in their area of expertise for many years and have knowledge and judgment on what information should be used, how and when. Much of this information that is in people's heads is already captured in various databases, and more is being captured as an ongoing process.

There remains a danger that ITC will lose much valuable "institutional memory"<sup>7</sup>. Institutional memory is the collective knowledge and history of an organisation held by its employees, especially those that have been there for a number of years. Different people in the same organisation regularly interact with the same beneficiary, partner, donor, etc. At these interaction points both the collection and use of information are crucial in providing the right mix of value and service either in real time or in the future. ITC's past and future successes are based on leveraging both new or existing information and requires creating, developing, and maintaining an institutional memory.

Most organisations do not have a complete and contextual representation of their clients. ITC, like many organisations, creates multiple representations of its beneficiaries, which results in incomplete or inaccurate information of individual clients. An organisation's lack of complete knowledge and faulty memory of corporate history (not only recall of previous programmes, policies, procedures, etc., but the reasons for them) contributes to the loss of institutional memory. The result is often a failure to act on new information (because the organisation cannot place it in context) and duplication of effort.

To create a useful institutional memory (not just a historical record) through the use of information technology requires substantial resources (people, time and money). The result will be a database of some kind that is composed of the following typical kinds of information, and that is cross-referenced internally and also cross-referenced to other information sources, e.g. in sister organisations. ITC is working on such systems. However, much of the information is intangible: why things were done that way, who was involved and what their attitudes were, the reactions of donors and clients, etc. Younger people working alongside more experienced staff prior to the latter's retirement best capture this sort of memory.

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<sup>7</sup> Adapted from Chettayar, K., Assistant Vice President, D&B Sales & Marketing Solutions, "Creating Institutional Memory: The Key to Successful Customer Relationship Management".

### ITC Field Presence

Virtually all staff members are located at ITC's head office in Geneva. This is a result of history as, some 20 years ago; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was the "retail" arm of ITC and as such provided a field presence. With UNDP's change in focus from economic development (in the broadest sense) to social development (with, as a result, many fewer joint projects implemented), and the reduction in its economic development budget<sup>8</sup>, ITC's relationship with UNDP has changed. UNDP still assists ITC on request as the UNDP Resident Representative is also the UN Resident Coordinator. ITC's normal mode of operation is to work out of the head office in Geneva (with the exception of project offices – see below) and to make periodic visits to the field as and when required. This has led to some comment that ITC's experts (particularly external consultants) are not "on the ground" long enough in any country to be able to fully understand the issues and situation in that particular country.

At the moment ITC's only field presence is five project-related offices outside Geneva (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Kyrgyzstan and Bolivia) which are funded by State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (seco). There are likely to be additional seco-funded project offices in the near future.

Given that the nature of Trade Related Technical Assistance is changing and that many donors are decentralizing operations, it may be necessary for ITC to re-think its policy of delivering most assistance from Geneva. It is recognized that building and operating a decentralized operational structure is more complicated and more expensive than conducting all operations from one central location (ITC will either need additional resources or will have to reallocate existing resources).

A possible approach that falls between having ITC's own field offices (greatest control and strongest impact, but probably, despite cuts in travel costs and the availability of cheaper GS staff, most expensive) and a long-term representation partnership (relatively inexpensive, but low control and modest impact – see next section), is to adapt the manufacturer's agent model to ITC's needs. Under this model an individual (contracted full-time or part-time as required) in certain countries would be ITC's official representative. Fees and expenses would be negotiated individually. The advantage with this approach is that from the client's point of view ITC has a permanent agent in the country or region, while from ITC's point of view it gives maximum representation and flexibility with less-than-maximum financial expenditure.

ITC has a variation of this in place in South Africa where a consultant is contracted to ITC for six months per year. In Asia ITC uses national consultants for projects and the same ones are used year after year. The limitation on these two approaches, satisfactory as they are given the current requirements, is that they are reactive not pro-active.

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<sup>8</sup> In 2004, only one half of 1% of ITC's regular budget funds comes from UNDP.

## **The Employment Cycle in ITC**

### ***Filling Posts***

ITC posts are not subject to the geographic or gender distribution rules applied in the UN common system organisations, but are increasingly based on the identification of competences and skills needed to fulfil the functions of the organisation, and based on the future expected performance of individuals.

There is some evidence that ITC's recruitment is becoming more difficult. The Evaluation was quoted one example of a Head of Section advertised four times in a year: evidence that the organisation has problems both in its succession planning and in its capacity to attract good quality candidates from outside. Members of the SMC told us that ITC "needs more proper managers" and increasingly is looking to the private sector in an attempt to find them. This reflects the OIOS (2004) report conclusion that "efforts to streamline the recruitment process" were necessary and that "one of the main goals of the new staff selection system, i.e. to empower managers in making recruitment selection decisions, has not become part of the ITC recruitment process". Job Descriptions are still very technical and generally include nothing on people management skills.

The 2003 staff survey found that almost half of those who responded either disagreed or strongly disagreed that selection for posts was transparent; a third did not believe that either General Service or Permanent Professional posts were awarded on the basis of merit. The Evaluation heard comments about the lack of transparency in appointments; about differences between departments; and about an "old boy network". However, the Evaluation has no evidence as to whether the system has improved since 2003.

### ***Communication***

A key element in a knowledge management based organisation such as ITC is internal communication. ITC has a number of communications mechanisms both formal and informal for keeping staff informed.

The most useful formal communications mechanisms identified in the 2004 survey are considered to be number one: the Project Portal, number two the SMC minutes, and number three is the Division and Section meetings. The Project Portal is used at least once a week by 70% of respondents, and 87% found the information on the portal to be quite accurate to very accurate.

Nevertheless, respondents also feel that communications could be improved. 27.7% felt that communication was "good" or "very good". 40% felt that consultation among staff of different divisions on product and program delivery was "good" or "very good". Some typical comments include the following (additional comments are included in Annex 2):

- Annual Operations Plan (AOP) could be a very useful source of information if properly implemented;
- Groups presenting their activities are also providing an excellent vehicle for cross functional communication. However, perhaps the most critical element is the fact the

Evaluation are missing the process of cascading down the Annual Business Plan and Operating Plan;

- Informal gatherings such as coffee breaks, lunches and ITC parties provides useful information; and
- Less formal, but still official, communications mechanisms such as lunch-time presentations appear to be working well.

There is some evidence that internal communications have improved in the two years since the last staff survey. Thus, management's efforts to increase and improve communication appear to be yielding results. The evaluators can only encourage further activity in this direction.

An excellent feature of the SMC functioning is the open and free discussions and exchange of views on issues at the highest management level. The sharing of decision making and transparency within higher management means that, as the 2004 OIOS report pointed out: "the SMCs practices enhance transparency of decision-making in ITC and constitute good practice" This is complemented by the policy of every Director holding weekly meeting with the Chiefs and every Chief periodically meeting their section staff with the aim of ensuring the free flow of information within the organisation in both directions. At the highest levels it is clear that significant steps are being taken to enhance communication within ITC.

However, as the OIOS report also pointed out "while...information sharing had improved over time, communication was still seen as strongly hierarchical". The 2003 staff survey found a third of the staff felt unable to agree to the statement that they can contribute irrespective of level and without fear.

There is a general belief that information does not flow as well as it could in sections and across sections and divisions. There is still room for improvement, and sharing of information. Internal communication across sections as indicated by many staff is mainly on an ad hoc basis, and relies on personal contacts developed among the staff. Sharing of information is essential for the development of ITC and increase in efficiency. The SMC has recognised the need to improve the coordination among divisions. Within the course of the year, the SMC undertook the following steps:

- Allocating the value of the project work to the staff who is involved in the implementation of activities. Efforts are made to create transparency in the project portal;
- Promoting agreements across divisions where technical staff act as sub contractors to project managers; and
- Involving technical divisions in the early stages of project development to ensure the relevance of expertise, ensure professional input to project design, and increase the commitment of the technical staff to be involved.

The results of the SMC efforts have a clear positive effect on the coordination across divisions. It has reduced the sub-optimisation of activities among sections, and enhanced the communication level across the organisation. There are signs that the level of com-



munication and coordination has increased recently, as this issue has been the focus of the SMC and the Office of the Executive Director which have organised activities to enhance internal communication and sharing of knowledge. The latest initiatives such as interdivisional consultations, transparency in contribution of staff in project activities have enhanced the level of communication, sharing of knowledge and cooperation among sections.

### ***Training and Development***

HRS prepares the annual training plan: Division Directors are requested to indicate the skills gaps that have been identified among their staff. Gaps can be identified in the context of the Performance Appraisal process, or as part of overall programme performance evaluation. HRS endeavours to identify facilitators and organize courses that will address the identified needs. Training plans are then developed. Capacity-building is the core of the programmes and ITC staff members are expected to be qualified in this. Yet technical specialists may be recruited who are not trained in the skills and knowledge for capacity building and managing technical assistance projects. In addition, Division of Programme Support organizes courses such as Project Management, Presentation Skills, Public Speaking. Enterprise Management Development Section also has a programme for training of trainers. Like the OIOS, the Evaluation considers that there is a “need for more technical and substantive training”.

A report that had been prepared for ITC management in 1998 proposed more training and development activities, but the recommendations of the report have not been implemented. The Evaluation was unable to establish any reason for ITC ignoring this report, although it was suggested that this was simply because of costs.

ITC has its own training budget, and courses can be organized directly by HRS using contracted facilitators, by participating in certain courses organized by UN Office Geneva, and by tapping into the services offered by the UN Staff College.

There are three main problems here:

1. The ITC training and development budget is low for an organisation with ITC's scale and much of that budget is spent on Information Technology and language training. The Evaluation has already noted issues about management development above.
2. Managers are not necessarily good at identifying staff training needs and staff may not be aware of the options open to them.
3. Many people feel under too much pressure with their work to consider taking time to learn. This is, of course, a vicious circle as staff who do not learn will increasingly struggle to keep up with the work demands (the old joke: “I've got too much work to go on a time management course...”).

Training and development are crucial not just to the effective achievement of the mission of ITC but also in motivation, by showing that the organisation cares about its employees'

capacities. Good training and development is seen as a mutual gains reward for the employees, opening up the opportunity for career advancement or career change (it is recognized that in ITC opportunities for career advancement are relatively few as people like to work in the organisation and tend to stay for a long time). Even though it appears that progress has been made recently, there is an opportunity to undertake further research on the importance of training (in the broadest sense) as an employee motivator.

Training in ITC is not part of a comprehensive HR strategy. Because resources for training are limited, much of it is done quickly “on the cheap”, there is no proper training needs assessment, and too much focus on short-term training. Much of the training is seen by the recipients as poor quality training and/or is not followed through into practice.

Only about one-third of the respondents to the e-questionnaire conducted by the Joint Evaluation expressed the view that there was ample opportunity for training and professional development and more than two-fifths expressed the view that training opportunities were too limited or constrained.

There is a particular problem with new hires, including those who are theoretically on short-term contracts.

The best development activities are not always in the class-room. The Evaluation found no clear rotation program within ITC. There is a secondment program available in ITC, but there are very few examples of it being used.

### ***Career Planning***

The Evaluation could find no evidence of career planning for staff and considerable concern about its absence. This is a particular challenge for ITC because it is a small agency employing technical specialists with limited internal opportunities for promotion. Paradoxically, in such circumstances, there is greater pressure on the organisation to show that it is concerned about people’s futures, is actively seeking to provide variety and mobility, is thinking broadly and is clear about options.

The 2004 survey of Permanent Professional staff conducted by the Evaluation found, like the wider 2003 staff council survey, that around half of the staff did not feel that they are treated equally in terms of career progression. In all surveys there is an element of disappointment about this issue, but these are comparatively high figures. There is also evidence that the selection of candidates for posts is not seen by everyone as being undertaken in a transparent manner or that posts are awarded on the basis of merit.

### ***Succession Planning***

Linking the issues of retirement of senior management with the concern for continuity and career planning in the context of a comprehensive HR strategy raises the related issue of succession planning. Clearly, the retirement of the whole SMC in the next year has made this issue very apparent, but it should go down through the organisation. The SMC argues that this will “Only become real in 2005” but that is obviously too late to have

started making the necessary arrangements. The learning message is that there needs to be a succession plan for all managerial appointments. The Evaluation has not seen a succession plan or a relevant part of an HR strategy. As with all organisations, and particularly the case with more democratic and transparent organisations, there are limits to the rigidity of such planning; but that, combined with the aging employment structure within ITC, should emphasize the importance of establishing such a policy. Again, the lack of a competency framework will make this more difficult.

### ***Enhancing Staff Performance***

Even though professional employee satisfaction appears to be high, senior management is considering how to identify and reward top performers in order to keep them working at their peak. The ability to use financial rewards is circumscribed by the UN system rules although changes here are currently being piloted (ITC chose not to be such a pilot organisation). Most commonly high performers and average (or even below average) performers receive the same rewards at the same time, e.g. a jump in classification with its commensurate increase in pay. The opposite is also true – under the UN administrative framework it is difficult to rid the organisation of low or poor performers. This dual conundrum adds a degree of difficulty to the constant challenge of keeping high performers working at their peak at all times.

The challenge is to both identify these high performers<sup>9</sup> and, within the constraints of the UN administrative framework, to reward them, thus keeping them motivated and providing a significantly above-average contribution to ITC.

The first issue is how to identify top performers. Senior management states that while "...ITC's ability to deliver larger quantities of Trade Related Technical Assistance is an important point; this is not done at the expense of quality. Outputs, outcomes and results are quality focused and do not, and cannot, be replaced by quantity alone." However, the 2004 survey indicates that the professional staff who responded feel that the primary performance measure is delivery rate (86% of respondents), followed by meeting budget (50%), with initiating new projects or projects in third place (40%). The Project Portal which tracks (dollar) delivery of products and services of professional staff in the three operational divisions<sup>10</sup> is one identification tool that is already being used and that continues to be enhanced. A better tool may be Annual Operations Plan 2 which will capture dollar figures "allocated" to staff in other divisions, as up to now Division of Technical Cooperation and Coordination (DTCC) has "monopolized" delivery dollars in program delivery. While everyone knew that other divisions contributed to program delivery, there was no way of allocating this contribution in financial terms. In its 2004 report "OIOS recommend[ed] enhancing further its effectiveness in programme performance monitoring and reporting, increasing internal cohesion and strengthening human resource management"

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<sup>9</sup> Intuitively it is easy to identify staff who consistently perform at an above-average level; however, in order to minimize complaints (formal and informal) from a certain segment of staff, the identification and reward systems must be fair, and must be seen to be fair.

<sup>10</sup> It is recognized that DTCC is the "marketing" division; however, both DPMD and DTSS also "market" their products and services.

The concept of performance assessment is individually based through the use of the UN Performance Appraisal System (PAS). The OIOS report noted significant delays in the implementation of the PAS. The survey carried out by ITC Staff Council in 2003 indicated that 48% of the respondents believed that the PAS was not used effectively by the staff and supervisors (17% said that it was). Consistency in the use of the PAS and the quality of the indicators for performance measurement are issues of concern for management. Lately management reviewed a sample of PAS forms with the aim of improving the quality of the indicators of performance, and provided feedback to supervisors on ways to improve performance measurement.

The question can also be raised about how performance is assessed. More than four-fifths of the respondents to survey of professional staff by the Joint Evaluation concluded that delivery rates in terms of spending technical assistance funds were the indicator used most intensively in judging performance as compared with other measures such as quality and timeliness.

The existing PAS does not meet the requirements in the view of many staff and managers in ITC. Furthermore, the weaknesses of the existing PAS in term of identifying training and development needs were emphasized above. Consequently, the organisation is now looking to upgrade the system and has been training its managers in its use. It is doing so without using a “competencies” approach and this will create difficulties for the future and may put the investment of resources here at risk. Without an agreed set of competences against which to measure results, it is unlikely that the system will achieve the necessary acceptance levels.

*The challenge for the future will be to develop the PAS to support the implementation of Results Based Management. If indicators or achievement or targets are specified in advance either for sections or for individuals this provides a metric for performance evaluation.*

### **The Role of the Human Resource Department**

The HR department is generally viewed as an effective administrative function.

The HR Information Systems are not modern and are a long way away from the electronically enabled and readily accessible “e-HRM” approach being adopted by some internationally operating private sector organisations. Without adequate and easily accessible information the function will be unable to develop the more strategic role to which it aspires.

The UN Common System is seen within the organisation to be a significant barrier preventing various kinds of change in ITC. In fact, it is by no means the kind of constraint that ITC managers seem to believe it to be. This can be seen both in the range of HRM policies and practices pursued within the UN family of organisations and in the recent steps taken by the International Civil Service Commission of the UN to allow organisations to adopt innovative new practices (an option not taken up by ITC). As the OIOS

report (2004) pointed out “ITC enjoys full delegation of authority in the recruitment and promotion of staff under all series of the staff rules up to the D-1 level”. This can be seen in the way that ITC feels itself not to be bound by the gender and geographical distribution policies of the UN (OIOS Report 2004 “further efforts are clearly needed in order to reach the goal of gender parity set by the Secretary-General, particularly in high-level ad project posts”). Nor does it feel itself to be bound by the UN’s flexible working or mobility policies. Following (selected elements of) the UN Common system allows ITC to take a “risk-averse” approach to HR issues: but this is not going to help the function to become more strategic. If the UN system is seen as a constraint ITC could consider moving to a position where it borrows more of its baseline policies from its other parent: WTO.

Moving towards a more strategic approach to HRM, which would be of considerable benefit to ITC, would require line managers to accept their role in managing staff fully and will also need the function to review its internal capabilities: do the staff currently there have sufficient competence for the new role?

## 1.6 Recommendations

1. ITC needs to identify bottlenecks and ensure back-ups for staff with heavy workloads and to mobilize resources and distribute the tasks more evenly. ITC should explore the benefits of adopting an “annual hours” work contract.
2. ITC should improve the HR planning process to ensure smooth changes and continuity in the skills and competence needed at ITC. This should be a regular item on the senior management team agenda. ITC should develop and publicise a comprehensive HR strategy built around the development of a set of managerial and technical competencies.
3. When a new management team is in place, ITC should develop a formal change management process and program to take the organisation in the direction decided by the new SMC.
4. HRM in ITC needs to be considered and monitored holistically: all the HR, whatever contact they are on, are vital to the effective operation of such a tightly resourced organisation and need to be handled comprehensively.
5. The production of the comprehensive HR strategy is the responsibility of SMC and should be accelerated and linked to a set of clear strategic principles and criteria for the management of people, with managers selected against managerial competences and well-trained in management would be a valuable addition to the administrative HR management currently in place.
6. Training and development for managerial staff is crucial to ITC meeting its targets. Spending on training and development, as a proportion of the total budget, should be increased.
7. As the new PAS is brought on-stream it needs to emphasize staff management; and in particular the ability of such managers to develop subordinates.
8. ITC should examine carefully its use of different forms of employment contract to ensure that it is deriving the maximum advantage from the options available to it.
9. ITC should extend its pool of consultants, making sure that consultants are selected for “fit for purpose” reasons. That will mean using a wider pool and relying less on a small number of those currently being used. Project managers should be required to show that they have updated their list of consultants and that none have been used for more than 100 days per year. The new online system needs to be established as a priority, linked to application by and screening of candidates and to the improvement of the consultants’ roster and candidate selection process.
10. ITC needs to examine its staff allocations and ensure that there are, wherever possible, younger people working alongside older people at every level.
11. ITC should evaluate establishing pro-active regional or country representation in order to be closer to both its clients and its stakeholders and partners.
12. Whilst recognizing the progress that has been made communication is an issue where no management can afford to relax its attention. The Evaluation would echo the OIOS report that “Enhanced horizontal communication and strengthened in-

- terdivisional and intersectional cooperation in project development and implementation would further increase the value of ITC activities”.
13. With the OIOS report, the Evaluation believe that “the training strategy should be finalized expeditiously and should address the need for more extensive substantive training and organisation-wide sharing of professional expertise”.
  14. OIOS advised that “ways to facilitate movement of staff among ITC divisions should be explored”. ITC should clarify and utilize a rotation program for staff, giving them the opportunity to move between departments. This should be monitored and the number of such movements be reported to the senior management team annually. New life should be breathed into ITC’s mobility program and the opportunity for secondments, to and from UN or WTO, but also to governments, universities and other bodies, should be made to work effectively.
  15. As a subsection of the HR strategy and linked to the training and development strategy, ITC should develop a consistent approach to career planning and development.
  16. As part of its comprehensive HR strategy and linked to the development strategy, ITC should develop succession planning policies.
  17. ITC should develop a comprehensive performance identification (measurement) system that takes into account both financial (objective) and non-financial (subjective) measures<sup>11</sup>.
  18. Develop and implement reward systems for consistent high performers (within the limits of the UN administrative framework). Possible rewards could be attendance at conferences, events or training programs that have no direct benefit to ITC but do to the employee; provision for a “sabbatical” every few years<sup>12</sup>; freedom to work on any project whatsoever (that is somewhat work-related) for a given period every year, e.g. two weeks.
  19. The HR function should identify a comprehensive new HR strategy and sets of policies as outlined here and have them approved by the SMC. The function should also have approved by the SMC a clear mission for itself outlining how it will contribute to the wider mission of ITC and outlining the competences it will need to achieve that.
  20. ITC needs to examine its staff allocations and ensure that there are, wherever possible, younger people working alongside older people at every level.
  21. ITC should evaluate establishing pro-active regional or country representation in order to be closer to both its clients and its stakeholders and partners.

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<sup>11</sup> The following summarizes some key points by Levinson, H., Harvard Business Review, January 2003 on using Management by Objectives for evaluating and motivating employees; “Levinson’s bottom line is that in order to have the most motivated and satisfied people (which in turn lead to more productive employees and overall organization success), the MBO process should always involve and incorporate the employee’s objectives. This creates a sense of value for the employee and keeps everyone moving in the right direction.”

<sup>12</sup> ITC has such a sabbatical program and in the three years since it was started there have been no applications.

22. Enhanced horizontal communication and strengthened interdivisional and inter-sectional cooperation in project development and implementation would further increase the value of ITC activities.

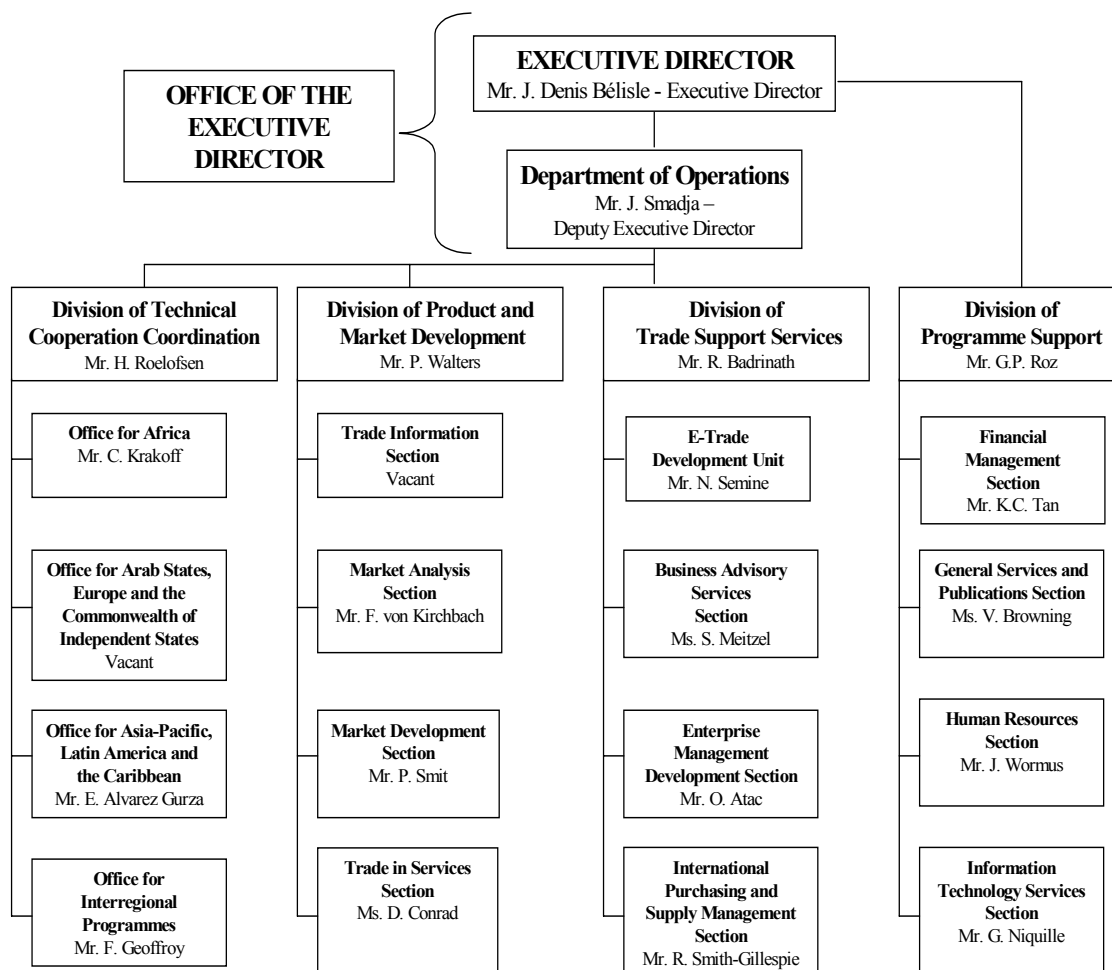


**Annexes**

Annex 1: ITC Organisation Structure

Annex 2: Staff Comments on Communications

Annex 1: ITC Organisation Structure



## Annex 2: Staff Responses and Comments on Communications

60 responders registered from the survey of professional staff

**3. Internal communication in all ways (vertically, horizontally, across divisions, between different levels of employees, formal/informal, etc.) is very good?**

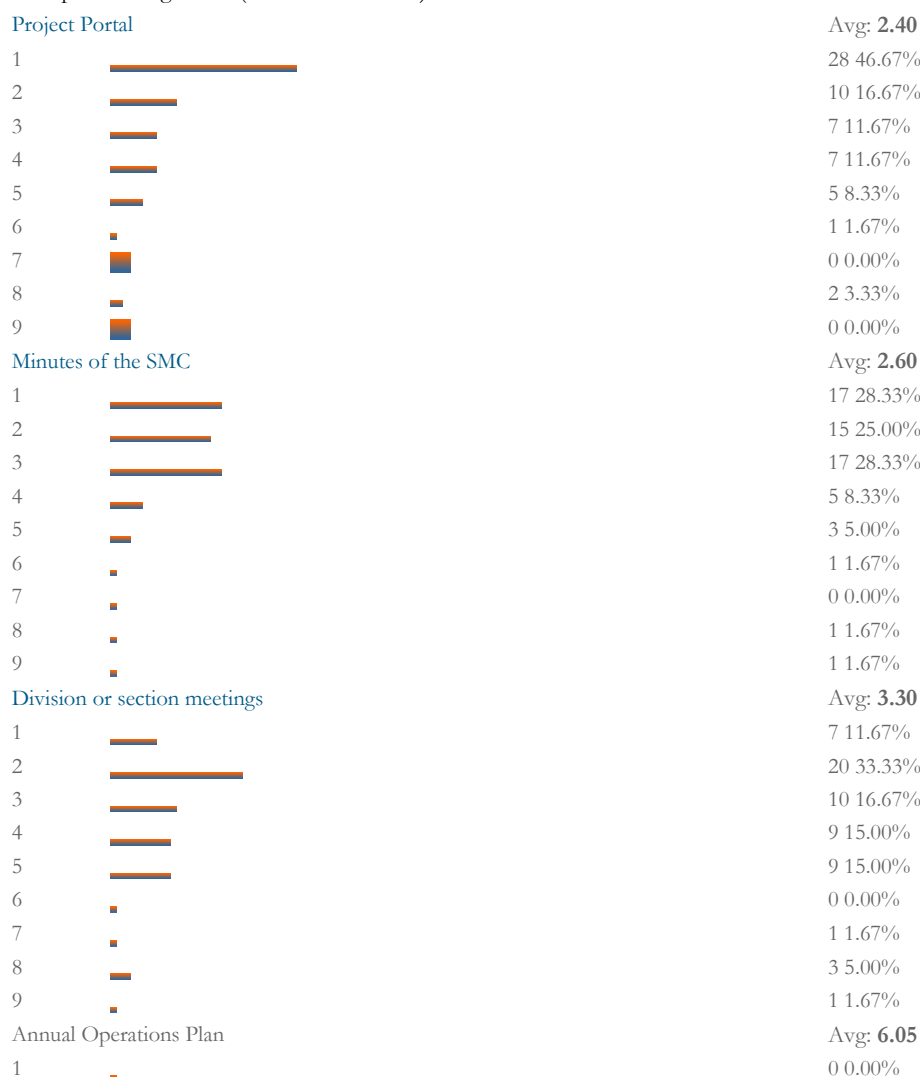
1 = not at all accurate 5 = very accurate

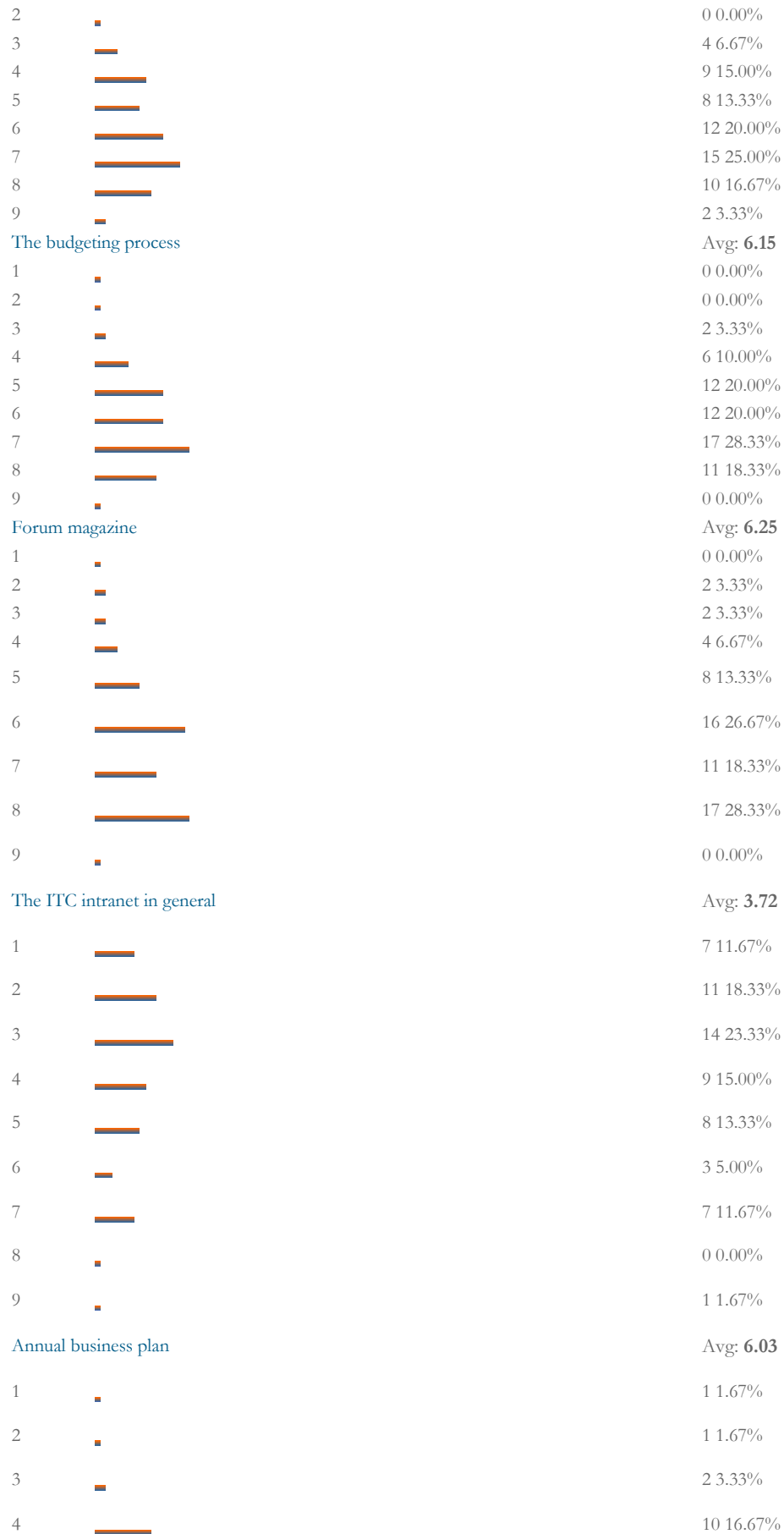
60 responders registered (100.00 % from 60)



**4. The most useful formal internal communications mechanism(s) are (indicate, in order of priority (mark 1, 2, 3, etc.), all that apply):**

60 responders registered (100.00 % from 60)







#### 4.1. Specify

15 responders registered (25.00 % from 60)

- In the past two years, the ITC Intranet has emerged as the major platform where ITC staff can easily find and share a lot of "corporate" information, e.g.: project documents, reports, miscellaneous notes, etc.
- ITC Cafeteria Section meetings, Lunch time meetings, other presentations at ITC.
- Annual Report.
- Minutes of the SMC, Project Portal, Annual Business Plan.
- I have ranked the mechanisms in order of priority I don't see how you can include the Forum magazine as in internal communication mechanism - it adds nothing to enhancing internal communication. Same remark for the budgeting process.
- 1. Minutes of the SMC, 2.Budgeting process, 3.Project portal, 4. Annual Operations Plan, 5.Annual business plan, 6.ITC Intranet, 7.Forum magazine, 8.Division section meeting.
- Annual Operations Plan could be a very useful source of information if properly implemented.
- PAS.
- Other: informal discussions with colleagues from other sections/divisions.
- The minutes could be very informative, if they were indeed transparent.!!!
- Groups presenting their activities are also providing an excellent vehicle for cross functional communication. However, perhaps the most critical element is the fact that the Evaluation is missing the process of cascading down the Annual Business Plan and Operating Plan.
- E-mails.
- Informal gatherings such as, coffee breaks, lunch and ITC parties provide useful information.
- As per order above.

- I rank very highly meetings with project managers and direct (one to one) meetings with project staff or functional/product experts. This is to me the only "quality" and practical information. Annual Operations Plan could become a good source but for the moment the format.

**5. There is a lot of consultation (both formal and informal) among staff of different divisions on all aspects of product and program delivery.**

**1 = not at all accurate 5 = very accurate**

60 responders registered (100.00 % from 60 )

