**Administration & Finance Program Reviews**

**Sample External Reviewer Report 2**

**(Updated Spring 2017)**

**External Reviewer Final Report**

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Thank you for selecting me as an external reviewer of your Program Review. I have always believed that those closest to the day-to-day operations, were in a good position to offer up ideas. ’s staff does seem open to suggestions and have ideas of their own. Each institution is different in what they have determined as best practices. Below are not necessarily recommendations, but rather ideas based on our trial and errors in trying to supply the most efficient product to our customers in the most efficient means possible.

**STAFF TURNOVER**

The critical function performs is often-times over looked. The caliber of individual that staff must contact and sometimes-even challenging can be at any level within an organization. This requires the staff to constantly be abreast of all policies. It is a profession that is learned over time.

There are several temporary positions in JMU’s area. By maintaining temps it seems that training and re-training can consume a large amount of time. I might recommend a restructuring that would involve more permanent individuals to perform the more intense audit and review process and push some of the more clerical functions to a fewer number of temporary individuals. I will explain in a later section, examples of duties a temporary person may be best suited for. These would be duties that can be taught in a very short amount of time.

**STRONG SECOND TIER**

’s role at the institution varies in such a way that she may be out of the office for extended periods of time. I understand she is a key player in performing system testing for upgrades. Having worked on UVA’s system, I can speak from experience that this dual role can be overwhelming in ensuring that both processes run smoothly. The prompt payment law in the State of Virginia doesn’t make allowances for not meeting this goal.This makes a strong second tier in the organization a critical function. The person under should be able to make tough decisions and handle employee issues, under ’s oversight. In , these decisions are not ones that can wait since the prompt pay clock is ticking. Not to mention the customer may be waiting on a reply. I am not sure I left with the feeling that this tier was in place.

**SEPARATION OF FUNCTIONS-TRAVEL**

I can speak from experience, that at our institution, it works better to separate areas within by function. I have tried several different mixes from having everyone audit travel, petty cash and key invoices to having one individual audit travel and petty cash. These are considered the more difficult transactions to audit. The policy is more complicated and changes frequently. This is also the area where more fraud is encountered. I finally settled on two individuals to audit the travel and petty cash. My goal has been to have answer questions the same each time. Policies can be left up to interpretation. I found that users often complained they would receive a different answer depending on whom they called in .

I found it very difficult to keep an entire department abreast of recent decisions and constant changes in the travel industry. I now have regular meetings with the two travel auditors and we discuss the different, unusual questions they have encountered during the week. It helps to keep me in touch with what is happening and allows all three of us to answer the questions the same each time. This seems to be working better.

**PROBLEM RESOLUTION**

At UVA, there was a constant file of problems that never seemed to go away. It required handling of the same document multiple times. This is an area of your biggest time loss. We implemented a process called . Basically, this means a department has a certain amount of time to fix the cause of the problem. If after the allotted amount of time, the problem still exists, we will process the invoice and charge that Department’s Dean/VP clearing account. The department is required to transfer this cost back to their original code monthly. This allows prompt payment to be met and let’s the Dean/VP areas know who their problem departments are. This was a decision that was announced and supported from the highest level of accountability at UVA.

**MANDATORY TRAINING**

With a decentralized environment, we have approximately 1500 users out there making purchases for non-restricted items less than 5K. We developed a class called ‘ABC of . It explains to users their role vs. central ’s role. It teaches the users how to better perform their roles as departmental buyers. All users are required to attend or they will lose their system access. This decision was also made at the highest level and the announcement came from that level and not the office.

**RECEPTIONIST**

We have one individual at UVA that answers all incoming calls on main line. Our phone routing will also send to the receptionist, calls that are direct dialed to individuals where there was no answer. It allows the receptionist to offer another individual that could possibly help the customer. The receptionist also performs filler duties, as they are needed. These duties can be filing, faxing your invoice or even system-generated work. This individual also monitors when individuals are out of the office.

**ROUTINE MEETINGS**

We have weekly meetings. This is another opportunity to see if everyone is on the same page. There are always topics of interest as well as an opportunity to involve each person, as this is their time to discuss areas of interest. There are also weekly meetings. One person will rotate through attending the meeting and the rotate through meetings as well. It helps to hear how these two areas affect each other. Also, it allows education on the importance of the different areas.

**OTHER SUGGESTIONS**

We found no compelling reason to separate our invoices by commodity or alphabetically. All invoices are stamped in and put in small batches. Each person will simply take the next batch in the pile. This saves sorting time on the front end by not having to separate these invoices. It also gives the customer the entire staff to answer their question rather than relying on one or two individuals.

We use a new employee checklist and a departing employee checklist. I have enclosed copies. There are different sections depending on what area needs to handle what task. There are so many items that need to be remembered when hiring or preparing for a departing employee; the list makes it easier to keep items from falling through the cracks. I heard some comments from the staff that were not aware of some items of interest. Perhaps this list may help.

I understand JMU faxes copies of invoices to departments. This is an area where a temporary employee may be best utilized, perhaps the receptionist. This would allow the auditors, with their expertise in auditing, to use their time more wisely. You may just consider having more fax machines to save time.