Case Study: Creating One NOAA
How to Disseminate the Message and Encourage Employees to Embrace Change

Background:
In 2002, the NOAA Program Review Team (PRT) concluded NOAA was not adequately structured to meet its current and future missions efficiently and effectively. The PRT determined NOAA would be better served by moving from the existing Line Office structure to a more integrated structure, one that reflects the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of the challenges facing society. As a result, the PRT made a number of recommendations to implement better corporate practices and improve organizational alignment, i.e., develop an integrated One NOAA approach to agency operations. To date, NOAA has enacted the following to improve cross-agency coordination:

1) Developed a corporate-level decision-making process wherein Line and Staff Office heads meet regularly to address corporate matters and produce a clear message from leadership to the employees (NOAA Executive Council and NOAA Executive Panel);

2) Hired an Assistant Administrator for Program Planning and Integration, who is responsible for the performance of NOAA’s cross-cutting programs such as climate and ecosystem prediction, which need to transcend Line Office structures to flourish;

3) Established matrix management principles and practices to improve coordination of programs across NOAA, whereby goal team leads and program managers have been tasked to develop and execute cross-cutting programs;

4) Restructured NOAA budget along cross-cutting programs instead of organizational lines to foster horizontal integration;

5) Implemented a new matrixed functional management model for NOAA’s corporate financial and administrative service functions (budget and finance, grants and acquisitions, workforce management, information technology, and facilities management); and

6) Recently approved the establishment of a Communications Office in NOAA to enhance communication of corporate issues internally to employees and externally to stakeholders.

While there have been some successes, change within NOAA has been somewhat slow to materialize. The key reasons for the slow materialization are fundamentally human. First, there has been an unwillingness amongst some to embrace change. Some employees have a long history within their respective Line Offices and either: 1) are not concerned with what happens in other parts of NOAA; or 2) do not understand how other parts of NOAA may impact them. Second, NOAA leadership has not been fully successful in communicating to employees why the organization would benefit from a more integrated One NOAA approach.
Currently, the VADM Lautenbaucher highlights One NOAA issues through Town Halls, Weekly Emails, and NOAA Access. The Leadership also discusses how to improve integration at Senior Executive Service (SES) Summits. SESers, in turn, are directed to communicate the One NOAA message down the management chain and work with their employees to implement a corporate approach to agency operations and behavior. Mid-Level Retreats offer a similar opportunity to foster the One NOAA approach for NOAA’s mid-level employees.

**Objectives:**

- Devise ways to improve the One NOAA identity.
- Formulate concrete ways to communicate, advertise and emphasize the “One NOAA” concept internally.
- Identify anticipated resistance to the One NOAA concept and recommend how to overcome it.

**Activity:**

During the breakout session, participants will generate recommendations to improve the communication of the One-NOAA message and define strategies to encourage employees to embrace and execute the One NOAA vision. Participants will also site specific examples from their Line/Staff Office where NOAA would be better served through more integration with other parts of NOAA, as well as to discuss the types of resistance and suggestions for dealing effectively with the resistance.

Please follow the activity guidelines below in your small groups of 3-4 people, providing input on each section of the process:

1. What concrete steps could be taken to improve communication of the One NOAA message?
2. What strategies should we employ to encourage employees to embrace and execute the One NOAA vision?
3. Cite specific examples from your Line/Staff Office where NOAA would be better served through more integration with other parts of NOAA.
4. What types of resistance are there? What suggestions do you have for dealing effectively with the resistance?