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The Organizational Ombuds Office and Corporate Social Responsibility: Driving Values in an Organization

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Abstract

When employees experience conflicts and concerns in the workplace, and cannot see a way to satisfactorily address them, their lives at work may become increasingly difficult, affecting the quality of their work and productivity. Ultimately, they may see that the only option available to resolve the problem is to leave the company.

In 2012, Baker Hughes executives voluntarily established an organizational ombuds office (OOO) that follows the ethical principles of the International Ombudsman Association: independence, neutrality, informality and confidentiality. The OOO provides a safe place where employees can obtain information, discuss their concerns, and evaluate options. The ombuds¹ works with employees through any job-related issue, from a minor annoyance to a serious concern on policy or law. In addition, the ombuds can bring systemic issues to the attention of leadership; this provides an additional means for employee concerns to be safely and confidentially relayed to the highest levels of the organization.

By mid-November 2014, over 1000 employees reached out to the OOO with a range of questions and concerns. These employees represented all levels of the organization, all groups and product lines, ranging from the newly hired to long-tenured employees.

The OOO complements and supports the company's corporate social responsibility objectives in considering the needs and expectations of one of our most important stakeholder groups – our employees. The company's investment in this resource demonstrates to employees that they are part of an organization that attends to their wellbeing. In addition, the existence and use of the OOO assures the company's core values and code of conduct are not merely philosophical, but an integral part of how employees work.

In this paper, we discuss how the OOO was established within Baker Hughes and share our experiences in the

¹ The **classical ombudsman** function, an approximately 200-year-old concept, has a global presence primarily in governmental institutions. From this concept, a variation— **organizational ombuds programs**— originated in U.S. and Canada academia approximately 60 years ago. Significant structural and practice differences [one investigates and adjudicates decisions, the other is an informal, alternative communication channel with no authority and does not participate in formal procedures or decision making] suggest terms to distinguish the two: “classical” and “organizational.” Organizational ombuds facilitate communications, generate options and choices, and coach those facing issues or concerns. Both formats offer benefits though the benefits differ. Although some organizational ombuds programs use the term “ombudsman” or “ombudsperson” using the term “ombuds” to denote organizational ombuds can provide clarity. While these terms are not universal, and ombudsmen did not and do not consider themselves “classical” until the advent of the organizational model, this phrasing is worthwhile, given the emerging use of both types of programs (from private correspondence with Pacifica Human Communications).

preparation and implementation, establishment and operation of the function. We share the range of benefits it brings to our employees, the company and the broader community as a key component of our corporate social responsibility strategy.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development defines corporate social responsibility (CSR) as the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families, as well as the local community and society at large. CSR can also be thought of as the deliberate consideration of stakeholder needs and expectations in the decisions and actions taken by a company. As the needs and expectations of a company's stakeholders evolve, so must the CSR strategy change in response. CSR is supported by the concept of sustainable development – finding the balance between social, environmental and economic benefits. Achieving this balance is fundamental to organizational growth and prosperity.

Corporate stakeholders are those people or groups that have an interest in the activities and performance of a company. They include customers, investors, policymakers, non-governmental organizations, communities and employees. Stakeholders expect companies to manage the social and environmental risks and impacts of their operations in a responsible and ethical manner, and be a positive force within the community.

Employee stakeholders are key in developing, manufacturing and delivering a company's products and services to its customers around the world. A well-trained, motivated workforce has a positive impact on an organization's ability to attract and retain business. In addition, it is often the decisions and actions of the employees demonstrating daily commitment to CSR that build a positive reputation and help a company earn its license to operate.

Organizational Ombuds Office

As defined by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA), an organizational ombuds (ombuds) is “a designated neutral who is appointed or employed by an organization to facilitate the informal resolution of concerns of employees (and) managers ...of the organization. The primary duties of an ombuds are 1) to work with individuals and groups ...to explore and assist them in determining options to help resolve conflicts, problematic issues or concerns, and 2) to bring systemic concerns to the attention of the organization for resolution.” The IOA's Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics (SOPCOE) establish four important ethical principles for ombuds: independence, neutrality, confidentiality and informality.

Both ombuds and human resource (HR) professionals operate in the people side of business, and there can be some confusion about the roles and responsibilities of each, and even questions concerning the need for both. Initially, the human resources and ombuds roles seem quite similar; however, these two roles are very different. HR professionals serve as part of the management of an organization, with direct responsibility for acquiring and managing talent, developing policies and programs, overseeing certain legal responsibilities such as equal employment opportunity, equal pay and recordkeeping. In addition, HR is an important formal channel, where employees can lodge complaints and request investigation of concerns. Such complaints to HR are officially placed on the company's radar and automatically notify the company of the concerns. The nature of the HR function as a formal channel for reporting purposes and the many management responsibilities prevent an HR professional from being able to offer confidentiality to employees. HR professionals cannot serve as neutrals, as ... “their function includes directly representing and protecting the interests of the company” (Bensinger et al). In contrast, the ombuds can and must ensure complete confidentiality; moreover, as a designated neutral, they have no vested interest in the outcome of an issue.

Synergies between CSR and OOO

Aguinis and Glavas, experts in the realm of organizational behavior, argue that to realize the full range of value, a CSR program must be embedded into an organization's strategies, routines and operations. An embedded CSR program relies on an organization's core competencies. In contrast, peripheral CSR strategies that rely on efforts outside of the core competencies (e.g., volunteering and philanthropy) are less successful as they are not as likely to instill a sense of meaningfulness and purpose that employees seek through their company and their job roles. When CSR is embedded in an organization's core competencies, it has a positive effect on employees such

as enhancing organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, retention and engagement. CSR therefore leads to important outcomes for employees, organizations and society.

Retention of employees has value for corporations for a variety of reasons. Oil and gas companies make significant investments in their employees. Once selected, a field engineer undergoes several months of basic training, progressing through a competency management program. It is therefore important to make every effort to retain employees, and to understand and wherever possible, mitigate concerns that might cause them to consider leaving. The OOO is an important aspect of a CSR program which complements and supports CSR objectives. It supports the needs and expectations of key stakeholders, and addresses key risks within the business - directly by addressing employee concerns, and indirectly in the benefits that the resolution of issues brings to external stakeholders including customers, suppliers, business partners and communities (Ulrich 2014). Furthermore, the creation of an OOO is a signal to employees that the organization is as concerned about their wellbeing as that of other stakeholders.

The OOO which aligns itself with the organization's CSR objectives brings additional value to the organization. The requirement of the OOO to be independent and neutral does not mean the office must be disconnected from the rest of the organization. For an OOO to be of the most value to the organization, it must be aligned with the organization's mission and values, embedded within the organization's existent structures, and integrated or networked to the organization's formal functions (Schenck and Zinsser, 2014). Embedding the OOO in the CSR is a clear example of value addition.

Driving Values and Adding Value

While ombuds are neutral concerning the people they work with and free of vested interest in the outcome of issues, an ombuds is focused on promoting certain values, such as fairness, equity and accountability. The ombuds operate following IOA's Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics (SOPCOE) to ensure their work aligns with both society and company ideals, reinforcing behavior expected within the organization and encouraging good citizenship. Not only does the work of the OOO add value to the employee and the organization, but it also drives corporate values. At Baker Hughes, first and foremost this includes the company's long-established and well-embraced core values of integrity, teamwork, learning, performance and courage. The existence and use of the OOO further assures that these core values are not merely philosophical, but an integral part of how the organization works.

- **Integrity.** Operating with integrity is critical to the ombuds in establishing confidence and trust with the employees who call them. In addition, the structure of the office supports its functional independence and integrity. The OOO helps foster an ethical workplace by working informally, independently, neutrally and confidentially. In this way, employees can speak with an ombuds in confidence and trust that the ombuds takes no side, but advocates for a fair process, supporting the resolution of concerns.
- **Teamwork.** Teamwork leverages individual strengths in the pursuit of common goals. The ombuds works together with an employee to identify possible solutions and strategies to address an issue. Often among the options is taking a team approach within the workplace to develop a solution.
- **Learning.** The OOO promotes learning for both the employee and the organization as a whole. The ombuds routinely informs and guides employees on policies, procedures and processes. Working with employees to assist them in resolving conflicts results in a workforce better equipped to deal independently on future issues that arise. In addition, the OOO identifies recurring themes and trends and shares these with leadership, enabling leadership to take appropriate corrective action.
- **Performance.** As employees who work with the OOO successfully resolve their concerns and issues, they are empowered to move forward with more focus and be more productive.
- **Courage.** It takes courage to take ownership of challenges, even those that appear insurmountable, and to stand for what is right. Employees who feel they have been unfairly treated may be reluctant to approach their management or an HR professional for fear of retaliation or embarrassment. The need for courage also extends to management and leadership, because it is important to listen openly and respond appropriately when concerns are brought forward, especially when such responses are difficult or involve risk. The OOO guarantees complete confidentiality and enables a safe sounding board for both employees and managers to identify and evaluate options.

The broader benefits of the OOO to the employee, the company and to society include improvements in the following areas:

- **Communication.** Vocalizing concerns and being able to discuss them with an ombuds in a safe environment can bring tremendous relief to employees who do not know where to turn. The ombuds can help employees better articulate their complaints or expectations. In addition, common issues are communicated in an anonymous way to the highest levels of the organization where they may not have previously been recognized.
- **Alignment of objectives.** The OOO works to align employee perceptions with the organization's identity by addressing misconceptions that lead to conflicts in the first place. Clarifying cultural differences, helping parties see other sides in a dispute and educating an employee or manager to become more sensitive to diversity are examples of the valuable contributions an ombuds can make to an organization.
- **Systems and processes.** An individual complaint can be the catalyst for an analysis of systemic difficulties and may be the first step in implementing improvements and efficiencies into established systems of work. An OOO is a supplement to the existing formal channels, and the office does not make the improvements; the OOO does not have the power to make such changes. As an embedded and integrated resource, the office can serve as a conduit to the formal channels that can respond to such systemic issues and amend processes as appropriate.
- **Employee engagement.** Employees who are more engaged with their work have higher morale, are more productive, have a more positive influence on those they work with and are less likely to leave the company. They also demonstrate the ethical and responsible behaviors expected of the company by its stakeholders. The work of the OOO in resolving conflicts helps to foster a culture of proactive engagement where employees are involved and enthusiastic about their work and feel a strong connection to the company.
- **Workplace relationships.** One of the most common issues addressed by the OOO is workplace relationships, particularly between the employee and their manager; these relationships are by nature unequal, because the supervisor has responsibility and control over performance reviews, salary decisions and many aspects of future career opportunities. The ombuds is therefore a regulatory agent in this power relationship, with respect to certain values (Rowe, 1995). Often the ombuds focuses on balancing these relationships by working through these sensitive issues with the employees, helping them develop appropriate strategies with integrity.
- **Reduced legal costs.** Ignoring conflict within the workplace can be costly. The OOO can help address issues before they escalate to a more serious situation, potentially leading to an employee taking legal action.
- **Reputation.** Ultimately, a company's objective is to be recognized as a good corporate citizen. By addressing issues and conflicts within the workplace, employees become more engaged and thus better ambassadors for the company, leading to a good reputation among stakeholders. The many benefits of a good reputation include attracting investment, top talent and new business, as well as earning or maintaining a license to operate in various regions around the globe.
- **Participation in society.** The ombuds also enables employees to become more empowered within their companies and in society. Through their interactions with the OOO, employees gain new skills, tools and information to resolve conflict or improve relationships. Knowing how to raise concerns effectively and discuss matters in an open, honest way builds trust, improves work environments and contributes to a healthy society. The ombuds' daily contribution to employees brings a continual reminder of the company's commitment to workplace harmony.

OOO: Rationale for Establishment

By 2008, Baker Hughes had operated for over a century as a number of independent companies. Each company represented a division of Baker Hughes and had its own unique culture, practices, policies and programs. Over time, some aspects of the business were harmonized, but in reality, each division still operated more or less separately. Most major decisions were made at the divisional headquarters in Houston, TX.

Over time, the nature of the oil and gas industry evolved and new hydrocarbon discoveries were increasingly found far from the United States. The client base included more national oil companies and independents as well as the more familiar international oil companies. Baker Hughes leadership determined that to better serve the diversity of clients, the company structure had to change. In 2009, the organization transformed from eight separate global divisions to an integrated, geographically based corporation. There are now four operating regions, comprising 25 geomarkets, which function with local teams working to understand customer needs and coordinate the delivery of solutions, incorporating the technology of all the product lines and required services.

Manufacturing and supply chain operations were separated from the front line operational units and consolidated.

Technology development and technical training were also centralized.

Also at this time, the company completed a major acquisition, adding new product lines previously outside its scope and increasing the number of employees by 15,000. Company cultures and histories varied, as did many programs and career development processes. Most formal and informal communication networks were dismantled; policies and programs were evaluated and harmonized. Such dramatic change in a short period of time can create challenges for employees. This was proven in employee engagement surveys conducted in 2010 and 2011, where employees indicated they felt disconnected from senior leadership and were unsure where the company was going.

A number of actions were taken by leadership to increase employee engagement, including the voluntary establishment of an organizational ombuds office.

Preparation and Implementation

In 2010, the chief legal and human resources officers of the company began discussing the concept of an OOO with an external consulting group with expertise in the functions, benefits and establishment of OOOs. Presentations made to executive leadership demonstrated the potential value an OOO can bring to the employees using the service, as well as to the organization, which can benefit from protected, unfiltered feedback from those employees. Consultation with various internal stakeholders followed, providing the first opportunity for the external consultant to begin learning the culture, history and needs of the company, as well as to communicate the concept of an OOO to a larger cross-section of the organization. A number of senior executives participated in a benchmarking process arranged by the external consultant, speaking to leaders of several corporations with well-established OOOs. The learnings from these meetings further proved the potential value such an office can bring to an organization undergoing such dramatic change and growth. Early on, the company's executive leadership anticipated the ombuds office would add value and naturally complement the company's corporate social responsibility objectives for employees. Executive leadership set out to establish an ombuds office with this value proposition in mind and in a way that best supports the OOO's success.

The design and buy-in phase of the project occurred in late 2011 through mid-2012. The office was designed to attentively respond to employee concerns, intentionally embrace strategic changes made in the company, and carefully align with the company's core values and important internal objectives. A team of employees from across North America, representing various business segments, grade levels, lengths of tenure and backgrounds, provided insights into company culture and business realities. In the process, the members gained early learnings of the OOO concept, which they were able to begin informally seeding throughout their parts of the organization. Next, leaders of key business segments and various support functions formed a committee to oversee the development and finalization of the key documents establishing the OOO, ensuring alignment with both the company's values as well as adherence to the IOA's SOPCOE. Facilitated by the external consultant, this committee approved the o3 moniker for the organizational ombuds office ("ombuds" was difficult to pronounce) and the o3 logo (using green to stand out from the company's blue), an initial communications plan, and corresponding materials. They also participated in hiring and onboarding the OOO staff, and supported the program's integration within the company.

The external consultant identified organizational needs and goals to form the OOO's charter. The project design, including program architecture, and communication and implementation plans, balanced these needs with the SOPCOE requirements. This approach fostered the program's alignment, embedment and integration (AEI), which best affords an effective launch and sustainable usage. These program elements included a staff position dedicated to working with the OOO data; oversight committee comprising members from various functions; a robust communications plan, use of a variety of vehicles to inform managers and employees, and a charter and policy which threaded the program within the company. Their expertise and behind the scenes leadership in the design and building of the program safeguarded the OOO staff's neutrality. For example, at the time the program was developed (which occurred nine months in advance of staff hiring), the company had a policy prohibiting special logos. The external consultant made the case that for the program to be noticed and its unique status appreciated, it needed a logo that distinguished it from other company offerings. While at first glance this may seem insignificant, the branding and recognition of the new function is integral to gaining awareness and understanding, as well as symbolizing the OOO's unique role in the company. This and other special requirements needed for an AEI and IOA SOPCOE-compliant program, such as independent communications systems, were topics the external consultant negotiated.

Prior to finalizing the program's charter and policy, the external consultant met with the leaders and senior

managers of several formal functions, including health, safety and environment, legal and human resources. These initial meetings were critical introductions in advance of its launch to present how this supplemental function operates and the purpose it serves, as well as to build greater awareness, understanding, acceptance and trust. These meetings covered data sharing, reporting structure and areas of overlapping responsibilities, and laid the foundation for the future interactions between the OOO and these formal functions, thus developing integration. The external consultant also worked with the communications department to develop pre-launch web site content, including a video statement from a senior leader, which provided additional information and resources for those leaders and managers interested in learning more. A frequently asked questions document was sent to managers prior to the launch, to familiarize them with the concept before the OOO started.

The external consultant also developed the content for the implementation communications plan, including brochures, posters and a mailing from the CEO sent to each employee's home. Having these pieces and other program components in place enabled the OOO staff to be ready to accept cases as soon as the program launched.

Establishment

In the summer of 2012, the OOO was staffed to create a team that embodied the necessary skills and experience in both workplace conflict management and the company's business operations and culture. Together, the team represented a balance of individuals with more than fifty combined years of service in various roles from within the company as well as external hires with prior experience in the field of conflict resolution. The combined strengths and perspectives empowered the team with a well-rounded appreciation for the challenges it faced in bringing the company's concept of an ombuds office to life.

As the team launched the OOO, they witnessed puzzled, confused expressions as they described their line of work. The team understood they were introducing a foreign concept to nearly thirty thousand employees across North America. They knew they needed a comprehensive strategy to introduce the OOO beyond the Houston-based leadership to other geographic parts and all levels of the organization and, therefore, followed the implementation plan which addressed details of branding, communications, oversight, office space, protocols and case tracking.

To ensure functional independence, the OOO reports to the chairman and chief executive officer of the company. This reporting structure establishes a separation from formal channels such as human resources and legal. Interests from the human resources and legal functions are appropriately heard through an oversight committee that was deliberately designed for the OOO to provide support and connectivity. The chief legal and human resources officers of the company are members of this oversight committee, along with executives from corporate strategy, operations and finance. To ensure that the oversight committee also connects more directly with employees, two committee members are managers from deeper within the organization with direct reports on the front line. In this way, the oversight committee purposely includes the voice of the employee. These processes and the committee's responsibilities are outlined in the OOO's charter and referenced in their policy. The OOO meets quarterly with the oversight committee to report on activity in the office and provide high-level reports concerning trends and systemic concerns.

The physical office space for the ombuds office was designed to address a number of important interests, some of which at times seemed in conflict. Employee access to the office might have suggested placing the physical office space in a large company facility housing thousands of employees. Employee concerns for confidentiality and privacy, however, ultimately guided the o3 team in selecting office space that was near, but not on, company property. In this way, local employees wanting to meet with ombuds in person can do so privately. The office is equipped with adequate security systems and designed to create an environment that is welcoming. The OOO avoided using the company's common office design standards to underscore the neutrality and independence of the office.

The team developed protocols for office operations, captured in handbook form. With an aim to develop consistent and repeatable standards, the handbook contains all elements of the office's operations including such matters as case intake and scheduling, confidentiality considerations, methods for referral or follow up, data management, document destruction, user satisfaction, and measurement and evaluation. The handbook is a living document, regularly updated to capture continuous improvement in office operations and guidelines for standard operating procedures.

For successful case tracking, the team utilizes a database tool to identify the essential issues that employees were bringing forward. The tool, designed by former ombuds for use in OOOs, balances the ability to track activity, develop metrics and identify trends with the need to ensure that no information is kept that could identify callers. Beginning with the uniform reporting categories (URC) promulgated by the IOA, the team refined two additional layers below those categories. By aligning with the IOA's nine categories, the team retained connection with the IOA and other OOOs to allow the organization to compare the breakdown of issues with other organizations, and to share learnings with peer ombuds at other institutions. By adding refinement within the nine categories, the team is able to capture the employee concerns unique to the company and the oil and gas industry. In this way, the team was well poised for maximum learning both internally and externally.

Operation

Employees began contacting the OOO immediately upon its opening in September 2012. Since then, the team meets regularly to discuss cases and meticulously identify the key issues and concerns employees express, categorizing each case using the refined URC. The team's information specialist gathers the issues for each case and ensures accurate entry into the database tool. The database is designed to capture the systemic concerns, so the team can identify and share the broad/generic issues emerging in the company. The employees' individual concerns are addressed by the ombuds in casework.

The team understands that an essential element of the value that an OOO brings to an organization is in sharing information appropriately. Supporting this element was an integral point in the creation of the data specialist position for the OOO. Communications with employees are targeted to address their unique concerns. Employee communications focus on building awareness of the office, overcoming resistance, encouraging usage and supporting engagement. Communications with leaders are targeted to demonstrate the value the office brings the company by surfacing systemic issues and serving as an early warning system. To accomplish this, the team sorts through the data, analyzes it and assembles reports to share key learnings with leadership. The OOO presents reports to business segment leaders on usage and trends emerging from caseload-specific to their areas of responsibility. Therefore, the OOO equips leadership with emerging trends earlier than they may otherwise surface, for example, by litigation or agency intervention.

The structural independence of the OOO is essential to its proper functioning, yet presents a challenge to the team in that it is intentionally separate from management. To make essential connections with important internal stakeholders, this OOO was envisioned with the expectation that the team meet with leaders in line management, human resources, legal, health safety and environment, finance and security. The team's meetings with these stakeholder groups take place on a recurring basis to establish essential connections, gain insight into company objectives and strategic changes, and share emerging trends as appropriate. The team also connects with the greater ombuds community outside the company to seize opportunities for networking, shared learning, growth and awareness of new developments in the field. The knowledge gleaned from these internal and external meetings empowers the OOO with critical information, insight and skills to best handle the matters employees bring to the office.

In adding the OOO, the company demonstrated its support for employees, who can gain confidential guidance to address concerns whenever necessary. In some cases, employees use the OOO to gain insight to explore career growth opportunities. In other cases, employees may consider options to address concerns at work, gain access to information or resources, or receive guidance in how to report a complaint or potential legal violation. In all instances, the OOO remains a safe resource for employees to explore all of their options and develop a plan to move forward.

Early Results

In early 2014, the OOO assembled its early experiences in the form of an annual report representing data from September 2012 through the end of 2013. The OOO's 2013 annual report served as a reminder to employees that the OOO is available as a safe and confidential resource to address workplace concerns and provided a description of how employees were using the office.

The report showed that employees at all stages of their careers, from newly hired to long-tenured, called the OOO for assistance. Interestingly, the representation of calls from each class of tenure tracked fairly closely with the corresponding portion of the employee population. For instance, employees with less than one year of service with the company made 16% of the calls to the OOO and represented 16% of the overall population. Similarly, employees with more than fifteen years of service with the company made 13% of the calls and represented 15% of the population (Fig. 1).

Who is using the o3?

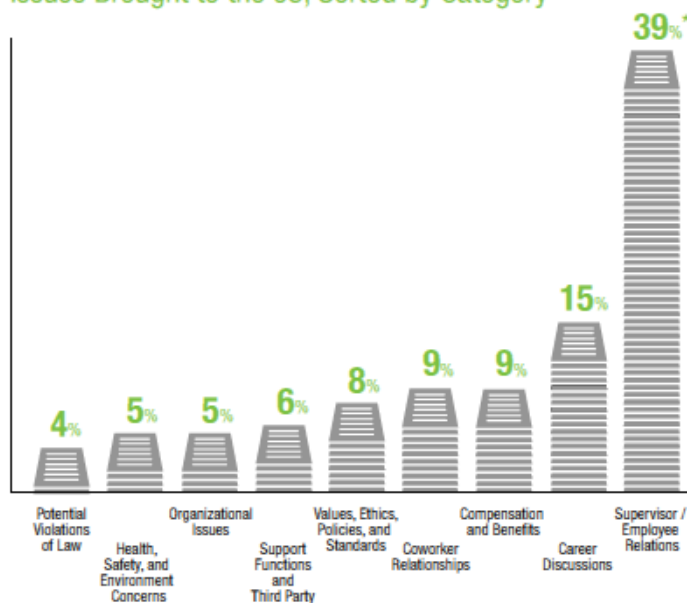
...everyone, from newly hired employees to those who have been here for years



Fig. 1. Correlation between years of service and usage of OOO

The report described the issues brought to the office, using the IOA URC's nine categories. At first glance, matters concerning supervisor / employee relations can appear high. However, these results aligned closely with data from other ombuds offices (Fig. 2).

Issues Brought to the o3, Sorted by Category



*Generally, the distribution of issues by categories within the o3 closely aligns with results seen in other ombuds offices. For example, in a report from the Journal of the International Ombudsman Association, issues between employees and their supervisors represented 35% of all issues brought to the ombuds offices in 26 organizations.

Fig. 2. Breakdown of issues brought to OOO

The OOO sorted calls by grade level and confirmed employees at all grade levels were using the office. Much like the results for usage by tenure, the usage by grade level aligned fairly closely with the respective employee populations. For instance, employees in field positions represented about 27% of the call volume and about 31% of the employee population. Employees in senior professional to executive positions represented about 11% of

the calls and 6% of the employee population (Fig. 3).

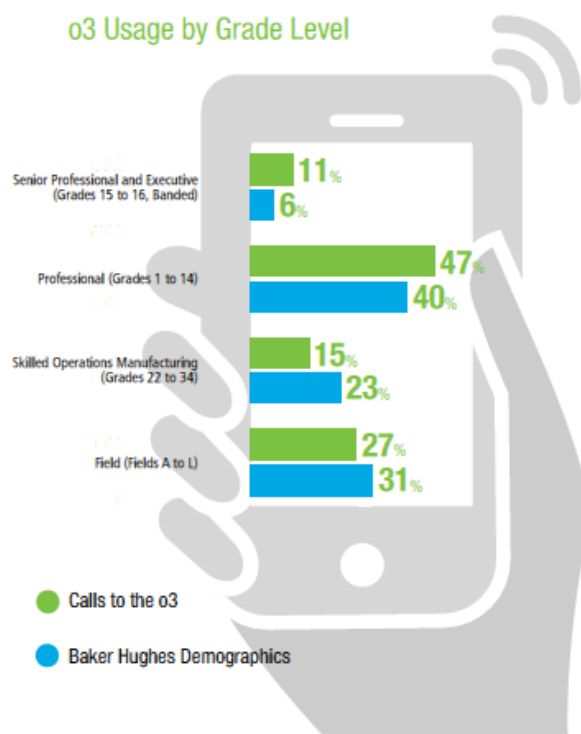


Fig. 3. Correlation of grade levels to usage of OOO

The report also shared common scenarios to better illustrate the kinds of concerns that employees brought to the office. In keeping with the OOO commitment to confidentiality, details from actual cases were not included; rather, fictional situations were developed. In one scenario, an employee (“Frank”) contacted the OOO to discuss his recent performance review. Frank heard that the OOO was confidential, and he liked the idea of talking with an ombuds before deciding what to do next. After talking with an ombuds, Frank spoke with his supervisor to both improve communication and clarify performance expectations.

An early example of a systemic improvement was described in the annual report. In the early months of the office, employees shared their thoughts with the OOO about applying for internal opportunities and receiving little feedback. Their reality did not align with the company’s intention to provide ongoing career opportunities for employees. When presented with this employee feedback via the o3, the talent acquisition team reevaluated the current recruiting process. They were able to improve the process to ensure qualified employees receive consideration when filling vacancies. The applicable policy was also revised to include an opportunity for internal candidates who interviewed, but were not offered the role, to meet with the hiring manager for feedback to better equip them for future opportunities.

Conclusions

The OOO operates in line with the IOA’s ethical principles of independence, neutrality, informality and confidentiality and fulfills what is outlined in its charter. With an ombuds, employees explore available resources and prepare an action plan to address their concerns. All this is done confidentially with the help of an ombuds as a neutral sounding board and guide.

The OOO complements but does not replace or compete with other company resources such as management, human resources, health, safety and environment, legal or the compliance hotline. The existence and use of the OOO supports the company’s core values and reinforces how those values can become an integral part of how each employee works.

An aligned, embedded and integrated organizational ombuds office addresses the needs and expectations of all corporate stakeholders, not only the employee, and is therefore an important aspect of a corporate social

responsibility program that is embedded within a company's operations. The establishment of an OOO demonstrates that a company cares about the wellbeing of their employees, and drives employee engagement and retention. This improves the individual's productivity which supports the company's values and economic objectives.

The OOO is also aligned with and supports company core values such as integrity, performance and courage. It also results in many benefits including improved communications, more efficient processes and systems, improved workplace relationships and enhanced company reputation. The OOO also brings broader social benefits by helping employees become more knowledgeable participants within the community.

Establishment of an OOO is recommended for any organization with a desire to better live its established values. It is particularly helpful in organizations undergoing frequent change and / or where employee engagement surveys identify discontent among the workforce. Lessons from Baker Hughes experience include the need for a collaborative and cross-functional design and build process, cascading communication plan involving leadership from the related formal functions and management, as well as a variety of communication tools to publicize and explain the purpose and activities of the office. A separate governance organization and appropriate office location are important to establish independence and instill a sense of trust in the confidential nature of the office. In addition, a robust information tracking system facilitates the objectives of learning and improving for both the employee and the company.

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World Business Council for Sustainable Development definition of corporate social responsibility:
<http://www.wbcsd.org/work-program/business-role/previous-work/corporate-social-responsibility.aspx>