



Work Network



CPRN RCRPP

Workplace Innovation in Government: On Becoming an Employer of Choice

Judith Maxwell

Canadian Policy Research Networks

*Presentation to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans
January 25, 2002*

Old and new models for government workplaces



Work Network

THE BUREAUCRATIC WORKPLACE

- multi-layered, rigid hierarchical structure
- top-down chain of command
- specialized division of labour, narrow job descriptions
- majority of workers performed routine administrative tasks
- driven by rules and regulations
- training
- vertical career mobility for a minority
- work environment not important

THE FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE

- flatter, more fluid organizational form
- employee participation in decisions, shared information
- extensive team work
- more skilled and knowledge-intensive jobs
- delegated responsibility
- learning
- horizontal and spiral career paths
- healthy work environment



Work Network

Why public sector workplace must change

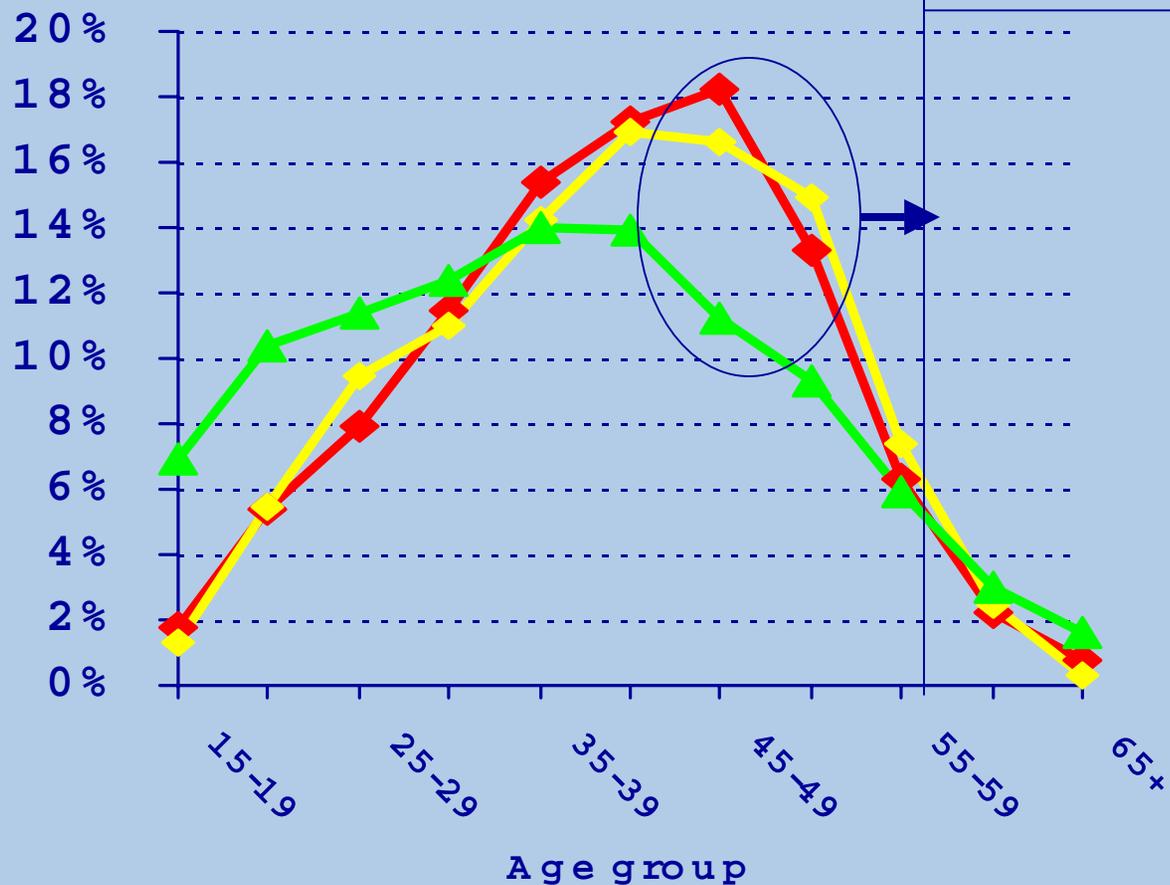
- ✓ Demographics, rising skills requirements,
- ✓ Governments do knowledge work and employ knowledge workers
- ✓ Workplace innovation is crucial for recruitment, retention, especially when wage package is constrained
- ✓ Employees need good quality work life to be effective
- ✓ Public expectations for service and quality

The ageing work force



Work Network

Public administration Other public sector
Private sector

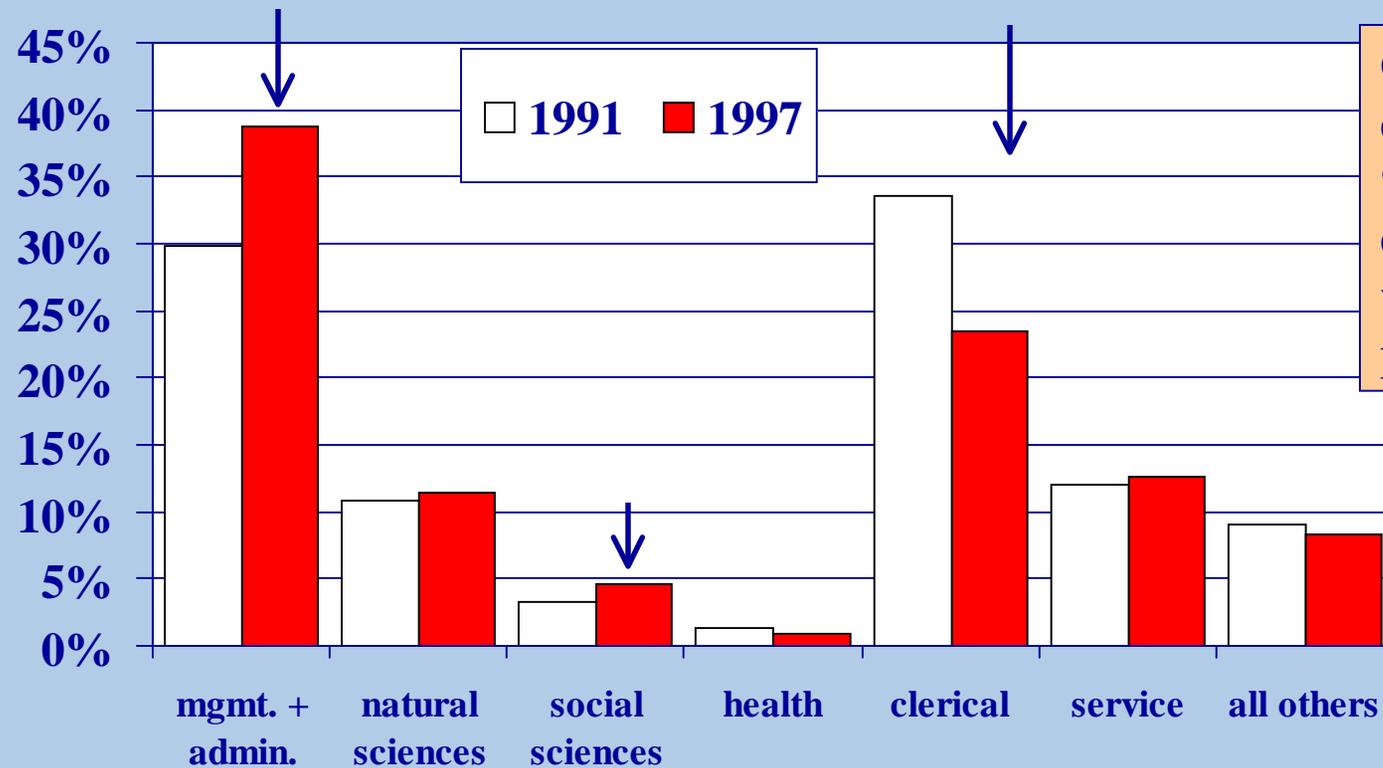




Work Network

More knowledge workers

Changing occupational composition of the federal public service, 1991 and 1997



Governments employ a higher % of university-educated workers than the private sector.

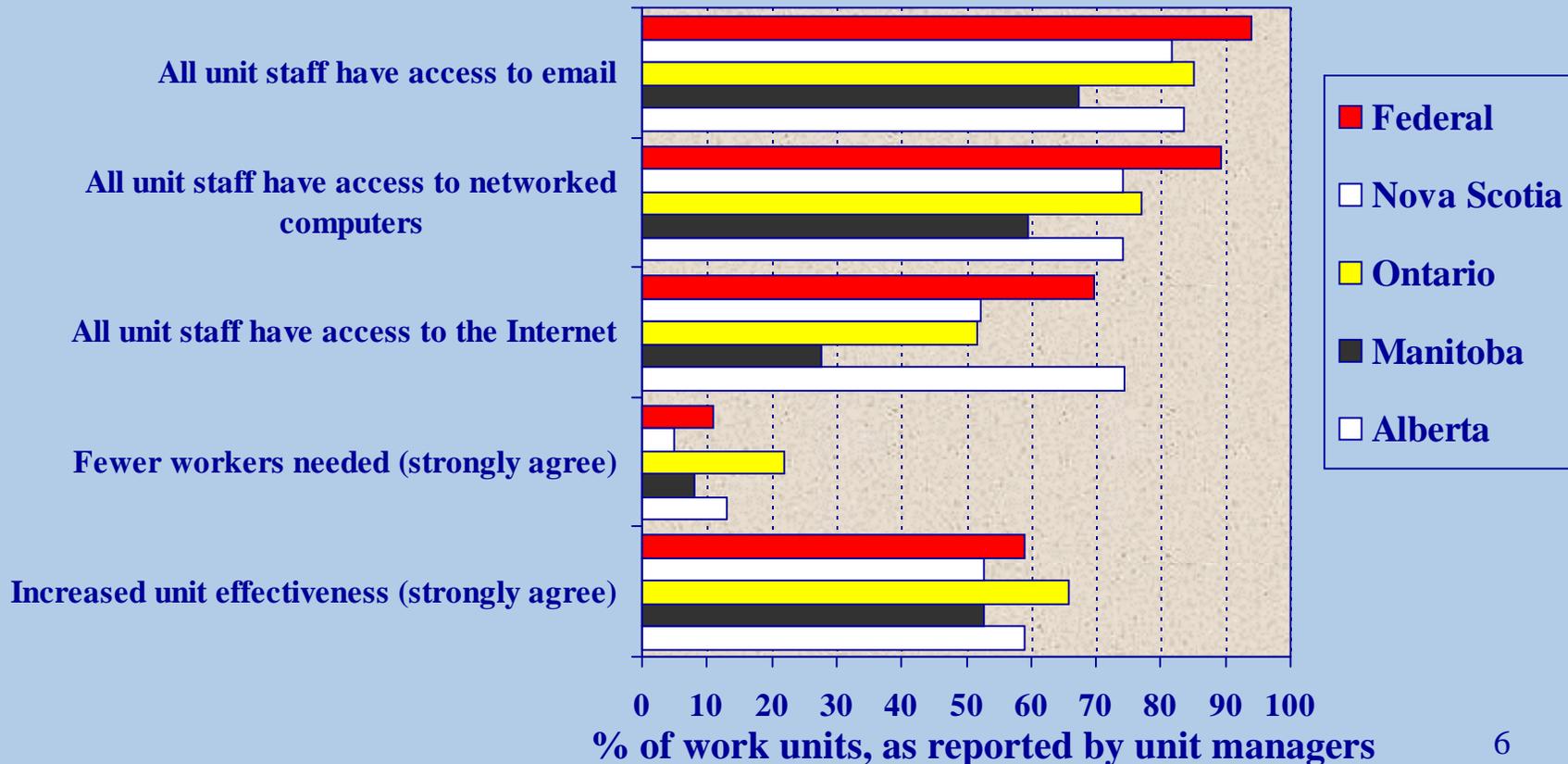
Source: Survey of Workplace Issues in Government.

Governments are technology intensive



Work Network

Use and impact of information technology by HRG Project jurisdiction, 1998





Work Network

Two perspectives on workplace challenges

	Line Managers	Union Reps
Employee burnout	YES	YES
Loss of experience	YES	----
Morale	YES	YES
Hiring/staffing	YES	YES
Higher skill, no empowerment	----	YES
No union involvement	----	YES



Work Network

Barriers to innovation

- Managers resist giving up power
- Low trust between managers and workers
- Adversarial labour-management relations
- A one-off approach to organizational change e.g. response to a crisis
- Overlooking how HR rules block reform

Source: Jackson and DiGiacomo, *Collective Bargaining Review*, 1997



Work Network

Defining workplace innovation

- 1) Functional flexibility (job enrichment, job enlargement, multi-skilling/job rotation, self-directed work teams, quality circles/problem solving teams)
- 2) Flexible schedules
- 3) Training
- 4) Formal participation programs (employee suggestion programs, attitude surveys, information sharing)
- 5) Information sharing (on strategic planning, budgets, workforce reductions and quality issues; at an early stage in process)



Work Network

Recipe for workplace change

- Enabling conditions -- from central agencies
- Foundations -- central and local
 - Technology
 - Training
- Innovative workplace practices -- primarily departmental and work unit

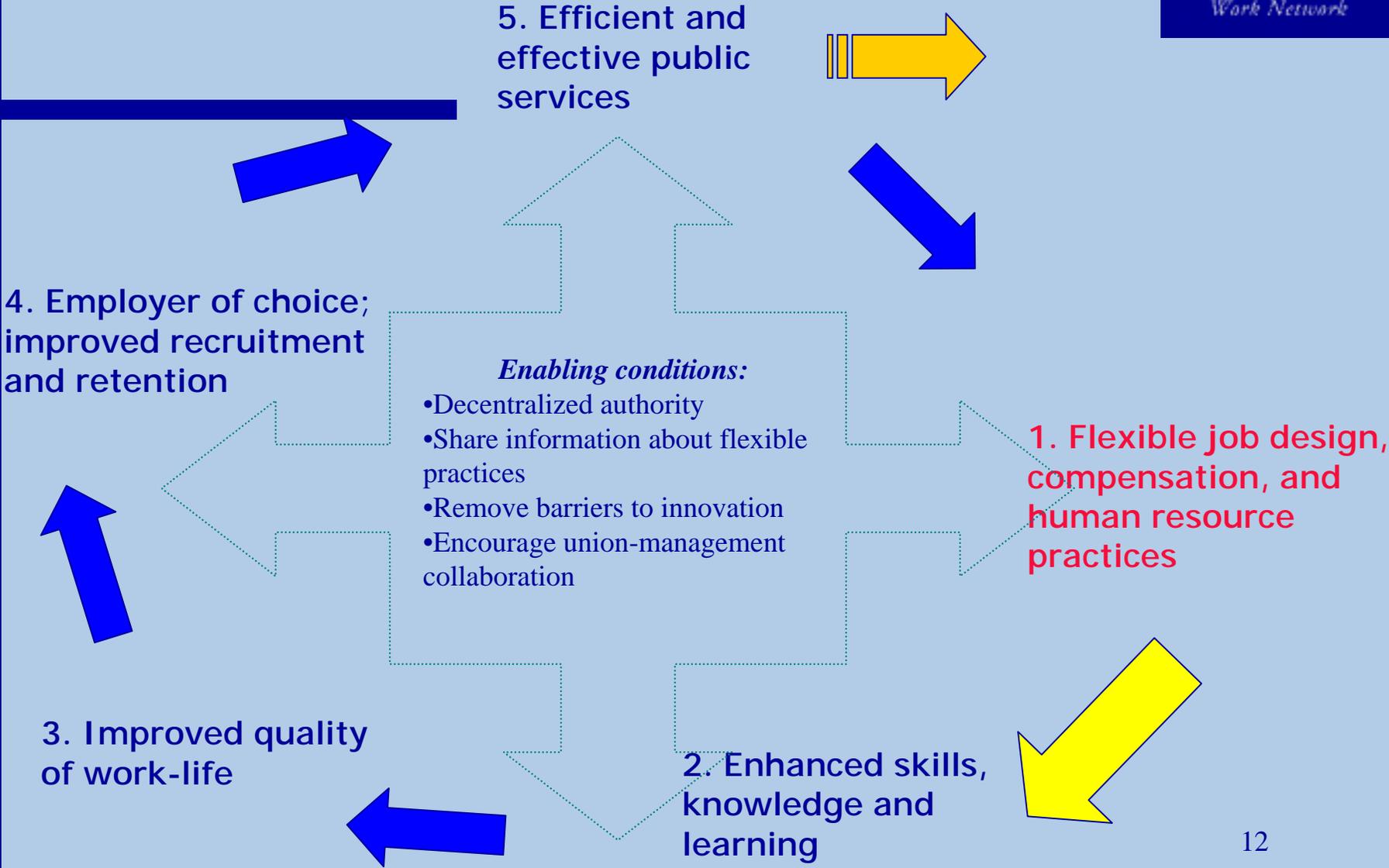


Work Network

Enabling conditions

- Decentralized authority -- let managers manage
- Resources/knowledge base on flexible workplace practices
- Support for union-management collaboration - central and (especially) local
- Capacity to measure outcomes from workplace change

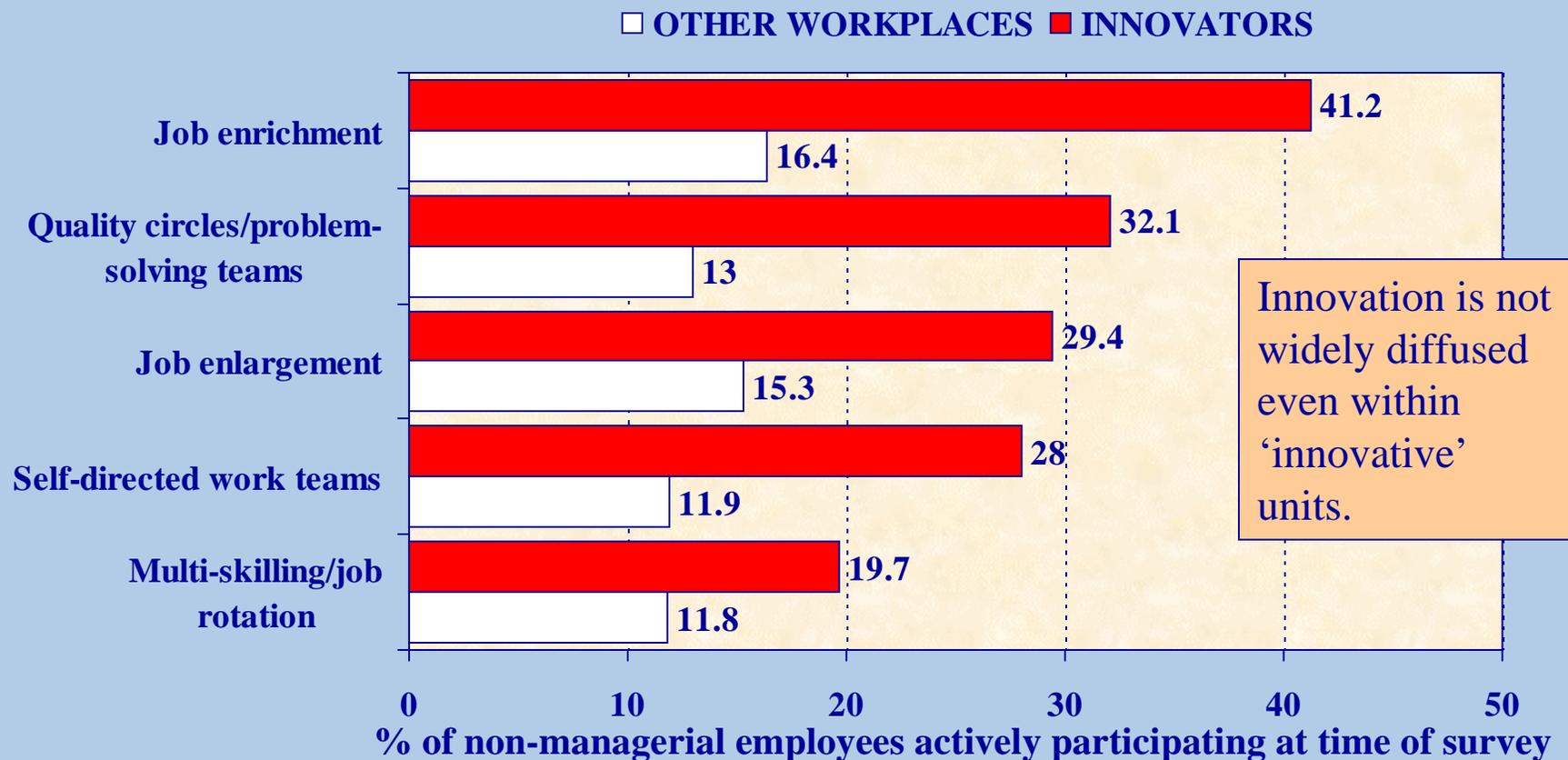
The virtuous circle of innovation



Innovation in five jurisdictions



Work Network



Source: Survey of Workplace Issues in Government.



Creating workplace innovation

- No universal recipe
- Flexible work design (“functional flexibility”) is the key to workplace innovation
- Flexibility is bundled with other HR practices, such as training, flexible schedules
- The unit manager plays a pivotal role
- The most ‘innovative’ units had:
 - Greater manager autonomy;
 - Big changes in work content; and
 - More intensive information-technology
- Some positive links with unit performance



Assessing progress on renewal

- ✓ Governments have not moved far on enabling conditions, especially labour-management relations and delegation to managers.
- ✓ Training and technology generally in place
- ✓ Yet, 28 percent of federal work units have made significant progress (as good as or better than the private sector).
- ✓ This shows that individual work units can move forward despite barriers in the system as a whole. They are in the vanguard, and can lead the way by documenting best practices.



Work Network

First steps toward flexibility

- ✓ Treat quality of worklife (workloads, morale, stress, etc.) as a renewal and effectiveness issue
- ✓ Balance higher skill/responsibilities with employee consultation and empowerment
- ✓ Take an integrated approach to technology, training, job design, staffing, compensation, and other HRM issues
- ✓ Foster cooperative labour-management relations



Work Network

Concluding comments

- Document existing innovative practices
- Create ‘change champions’ at all levels
- We do not recommend a government-wide initiative -- work units have to take the lead.
- But they can move faster if there is support and encouragement from DM and the centre
- To become an employer of choice: Enable and reward the use of innovative practices



Work Network



For additional information visit
CPRN's website: www.cprn.org

Join our weekly news service:

e-network

(see website for details)