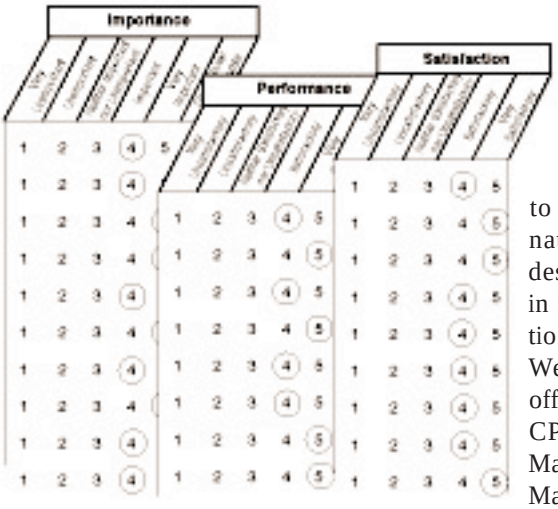
Western makes the grade

In August 1997, Western's senior managers developed strategic planning implementation strategies to assure the competitiveness of Western and its customers over the next five years. A report card summarizing Western's progress in accomplishing its strategic objectives will soon be available. Here are some of the highlights.



In response to our need to evaluate the size and nature of our construction, design and related programs in light of changing organizational needs and priorities, Western's Construction offices were moved from the CPO to regional Maintenance managers on March 1. A plan was also put into action to downsize CPO Design from 63 to 42 full-time equivalents. Reassignments into the reorganized Design organization were communicated to employees late last month.

In an effort to deploy maintenance crews seasonally-based on geographical/weather diversity, exchanges of personnel over the last year included construction inspectors, an electrician, a field engineer and training of apprentices. Equipment was also shared among the regions.

Western made significant strides in cutting overhead expenses. Accounting and Finance proposed streamlining and process improvement initiatives that will result in a 17 FTE reduction from the "Will Be" staffing level and a projected net savings of $4.8 million over the five-year evaluation period. Procurement will be reduced by 11 FTE from the "Will Be" staffing level, resulting in a savings of $4.1 million over the five-year evaluation period. This savings is possible due to the reduction in Western's construction budget and streamlining and simplifying procurement processes. Human Resources processing functions will be consolidated and located at Golden while other HR functions will re-main decentralized to preserve customer service throughout Western. Over a transitional period of five years, adoption of consolidation is expected to result in a staffing reduction of six Federal and six contract employees and a savings of $3.3 million over the five-year evaluation period.

Each region has completed a self-assessment of its power billing processes. The SN Region's new power billing system went into production in November 1997. UGP continues to upgrade its power billing to a Windows-based system with an estimated completion this month. As part of a joint effort to develop a new power billing program with Western's Business Information Decision Support System interface, DSW and RM made a commitment to clarify system requirements with a delivery date of January 1999.

CSO's Power Marketing Support function was realigned and a Power Marketing Council comprised of the Power Marketing managers was formed to oversee the functions of the Power Marketing Support Office. Power Marketing managers re-viewed the Energy Services budget and more closely aligned that function with the rest of Power Marketing.

The effectiveness of Western's training programs was evaluated and senior managers strongly supported the continued existence of the Electric Power Training Center.

Since only a limited number of new apprentices will be hired in the future, a decision was made to close the Craft Training Center by Dec. 31, 1998. The outside labor market has well-qualified applicants for many Western craft vacancies. Regions will assume the important task of training those new hires.

Another area assessed was the benefits of EPRI participation. Western will continue as an EPRI member, but our dues are focusing on those products that provide the greatest value to Western.

In the future, Western will evaluate managerial staff and make recommendations to retain or reduce current managerial staffing as appropriate, consistent with our commitment to keep Western's power rates stable.

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