



Foreign & Commonwealth Office - Summary

Delivering the mission statement

Introduction

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) is the lead UK government department in foreign affairs. Its mission is to look after UK interests abroad. This involves:

- providing a worldwide network for staff and other parts of the UK government to tackle issues affecting Britain through its embassies, high commissions and consulates
- formulating and delivering British foreign policy
- providing services for British nationals travelling or working abroad and supporting British businesses in overseas markets through UK Trade and Investment

This study examines how the FCO meets its goals through the skills and competencies of its people.

Aims and objectives

A mission statement gives an organisation direction. The FCO's mission is: *'Better World, Better Britain'*, recognising the interdependence of countries. To meet this it sets clear goals, which have a number of objectives. These are in three areas:

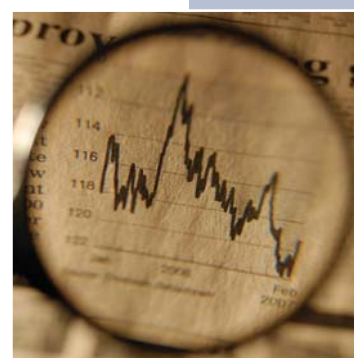
1. Essential services – supporting the British people and economy. One objective within this goal is *'to improve the reputation of the UK as the international business partner of choice in key sectors in leading overseas markets'*.
2. Policy goals – wider issues and relationships. For example, within the goal of preventing and resolving conflict, objectives include *'to promote human rights, democracy, rule of law and good governance'*.
3. The global network – arranging meetings between host governments and experts from the British government, ensuring the right messages are communicated at the right time.

Strategy

Once the FCO has identified what it wants to achieve, it then develops strategies and tactics. Strategies are broader plans and are generally long-term. Tactics are shorter term activities which help to fulfil the strategies. For example, the FCO aims to counter the spread of nuclear weapons. One of the strategies adopted to meet this aim was to hold discussions with world leaders in order to secure a unanimous UN resolution to curb Iran's nuclear weapons programme.

Roles and responsibilities

FCO staff come from a range of backgrounds and have different skills. These skills are matched to appropriate job roles. Each role is varied and responsibilities high, so training and development is important. People can join the FCO at various entry levels and those joining have four weeks induction training. They then decide, with their managers, on appropriate training according to their role. Coaching and mentoring is also provided.





Measuring outcomes

Every year the FCO's autumn performance report illustrates how it has met its objectives and Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets. The FCO uses the report to assess how it will make improvements. It also provides the UK public and government with a clear view about its performance and whether it has fulfilled its mission. The FCO goes beyond these targets by winning awards. Without the different skills of its employees, these targets and awards could not be achieved.

Conclusion

The FCO's mission is to protect and support the British public abroad. To achieve this, the organisation sets goals and objectives that must also meet government targets. Feedback is then published in the autumn performance report, where it can be assessed against these targets. The FCO's scope of work requires people with a range of skills and competencies. Its mission provides focus for its workforce and the opportunity to make a difference.

