

Chapter One: Leadership

A key to successfully accomplishing your goals and objectives will be clearly communicating them to a variety of audiences, including both political appointees and civil servants in your own organization.



IBM CENTER FOR THE BUSINESS OF GOVERNMENT
WASHINGTON, DC 20005

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

SUBJECT: **Leadership**

Your leadership can make all the difference in determining whether you accomplish your goals and objectives.

Effective leaders first gain an understanding of the context of their organization. Understanding the context of your organization includes knowing your mission, stakeholders, constraints, and the political environment facing you.

This *Memo* summarizes 11 leadership lessons that we have learned from observing effective agency heads.

Use different leadership styles. There is no single leadership style on which to rely. You should adjust your own leadership style to the specific situation and environment confronting your organization. There might be times in which the traditional “command and control” leadership style is appropriate, but there are likely to be other times when you will need to practice a more collaborative leadership style. You might also find that your style will need to change as the organization evolves and your external environment changes due to either an anticipated or unanticipated chain of events.

Define and focus on your goals and objectives. In other words, you must define and then tell people what you want to get accomplished. A key to successfully accomplishing your goals and objectives will be clearly communicating them to a variety of audiences, including both political appointees and civil servants in your own organization. Another key will be your ability to focus on a defined set of goals and to avoid being distracted by secondary issues or activities.

Articulate a strategy for moving forward. Everybody will be looking to you for how to act on the organization’s mission and vision. Articulating a forward-looking strategy that bridges the gap between policy and action will help ensure that the organization is doing what you want it to be doing. A clear strategy provides a map of how you and your leadership team get to where you want to go, given constraints within your operating environment and the resources available.

Engage employees. Employees have much to offer the organization via their ideas, including innovations, to improve the performance of the agency’s programs and activities. Former Internal Revenue Service Commissioner Charles Rossotti suggests that you should develop a policy of “engaging people and then deciding” rather than the traditional practice of “decide, then explain.” You will be able to learn much about your agency by going out and listening and engaging with people, especially those on the front lines.

Put customers first. Your agency serves the public. Get out and talk with your agency’s customers. Ensure all customers have a voice and that every voice is heard. You will learn surprising things your employees and stakeholders may not tell you. Encourage your senior managers to do the same. Recent technologies allow new ways to constructively engage with your customers. Use them.

Involve key stakeholders. In a similar approach to engaging employees, you must launch an active outreach program to meet with the stakeholders of your organization—interest groups, congressional staff members, and partners (such as nonprofit and private sector companies) with whom your organization collaborates. Include both your advocates and adversaries. The more time spent on outreach will make your job easier in both the long and short term. While you will be tempted to devote more time to players outside of the executive branch of government, don't underestimate the importance of building sound working relationships with key appointees in other agencies both inside and outside of your own department.

Seize the moment. The simple fact about serving as a political appointee is that you do not know from the outset how long you will have the opportunity to serve. You might be asked to serve in another position as the administration matures or you might leave government. Thus, an essential lesson from leaders is that you must “seize the moment” and take full advantage of the environment now surrounding your organization. You must take advantage of the moment and move as quickly as you can to implement your goals and objectives.

Communicate, communicate, and communicate. Leaders emphasize the importance of placing a high priority on communication from day one of their tenure. A major insight from the IBM Center profiles and interviews with leaders is that while all felt they did try to communicate and thought they were reaching their intended audience, nearly all felt in retrospect that they needed to communicate more both in quantity and frequency. The lesson learned is that one announcement or meeting is unlikely to get the job done. As in advertising, repetition is crucial to getting your message out. Leaders find that many employees in their agencies will likely become uncomfortable because change creates uncertainty regarding their future. You must be sensitive to this phenomenon and repeatedly meet with employees (as well as stakeholders) to answer all of their questions and attempt to alleviate concerns to the extent possible.

Create alignment. A key element of leadership is “putting it all together.” The accomplishment of your goals and objectives will depend on your ability to align the people in your organization around effective business practices, technology, and organizational structure. Based on your analysis of how well your organization is aligned structurally, you may conclude that reorganization is necessary. We caution you, however, to reorganize as a last resort. Reorganizations are time-consuming, frustrating, and likely to meet with resistance from both inside and outside of your organization.

Expect the unexpected. While you will have your plan in place for the coming years, it is likely that an unexpected event will occur which will require that you adapt and adjust your game plan to new realities and situations. You will need to be resilient in your capacity to overcome obstacles and unexpected problems as they arise.

“Stick with it.” None of the above will be easy. You are likely to face opposition that may disagree with your goals and objectives. While you may not know exactly how long you will serve, you must plan for the long term and persevere in your quest for the transformation of your organization. In describing former Under Secretary Ken Kizer's experience in transforming the Veterans Health Administration, Boston University's Gary Young writes, “No transformation will be perfect, and those who oppose the changes will seek to exploit flaws or limitations to derail the effort. Leaders of transformation need to be responsive to legitimate criticisms, but they also must avoid being swallowed up in technical details.”

REVITALIZING THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

QUESTION: What can I learn about leadership and transformation from the experience of James Lee Witt at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)?

ANSWER: James Lee Witt took over FEMA in the early 1990s after a decade in which the performance of the agency was severely criticized. In the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew in 1992, several members of Congress called for the abolishment of the agency.

In their report to the IBM Center, California State University, Bakersfield's R. Steven Daniels and the late Carolyn Clark-Daniels examined the FEMA experience and developed the following lessons:

- **Experience counts—recruit the best.** When appointed, James Lee Witt became the first head of FEMA with prior experience in emergency management. He had served as the head of the emergency management agency in Arkansas.
- **Clarify your mission.** FEMA historically had two diverse missions: emergency management and national preparedness (in response to a nuclear attack). Under Witt, the agency redefined the agency's primary target population to be disaster victims and placed increased focus on its emergency management role.
- **Structure your agency to reflect the agency's mission.** After the mission was clarified, Director Witt redesigned the agency's structure to reflect its emphasis on emergency management regardless of what causes the emergency. Separate directorates were created for Preparedness, Mitigation, and Response and Recovery.
- **Leverage the White House.** Because of its ineffectiveness during the late 1980s and early 1990s, FEMA had become a clear political liability. Because of this, White House support was sought by Witt and received for major changes in the agency. If the consequence of failure in your agency is high (such as the political aftermath following Hurricane Katrina), you will have more leverage with the White House.
- **Use your career staff.** From the beginning of his tenure, Witt concluded that the support of his career staff was crucial to the transformation of FEMA and regaining its credibility. Several key positions went to career officials, and Witt emphasized the importance of his political team and career team working closely together.
- **Don't be afraid of the press.** Director Witt also recognized that it was crucial for the agency to regain its credibility among citizens, as well as stakeholders such as state and local governments. Because of this, he launched a vigorous outreach effort to the press to communicate FEMA changes and its increased capacity and capability to respond to national emergencies.
- **Provide governmental and non-governmental partners a stake in the outcome.** Witt also recognized that the federal government was only one actor in the national emergency network, consisting of state and local governments, the private sector, and the nonprofit sector. In his report to the IBM Center, Georgia State University's William Waugh describes FEMA's increased focus on mitigation, the effort to prevent losses rather than simply being reactive and focusing on disaster recovery. As part of this initiative, Witt created a "safe construction" network consisting of nonprofit organizations (such as the American Red Cross), private sector members (the building and insurance industries), universities, other government organizations (the Agriculture Extension Service), and state and local government organizations.

An Interview with James Lee Witt Former Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency

From *Transforming Government: The Renewal and Revitalization of the Federal Emergency Management Agency* by R. Steven Daniels and Carolyn L. Clark-Daniels

This interview was conducted when James Lee Witt was director of FEMA.

In your role as administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, how do you define your job?

I found that the job came with a lot of responsibility, and I have taken the job very seriously. Shortly after assuming office, I undertook two major initiatives. First, I worked within the agency to strengthen it. I wanted to involve employees in the future of the agency. Second, I refocused the organization on the customer by placing emphasis on those we were serving externally.

As a new agency head, it was my job to describe where FEMA needed to go. After describing where we wanted to go, it was my job to involve the entire organization. I wanted employee input into how we could best meet our goals because I strongly believe in involving our people. I met with FEMA's senior managers during a three-day retreat in which I described where I thought the agency was heading.

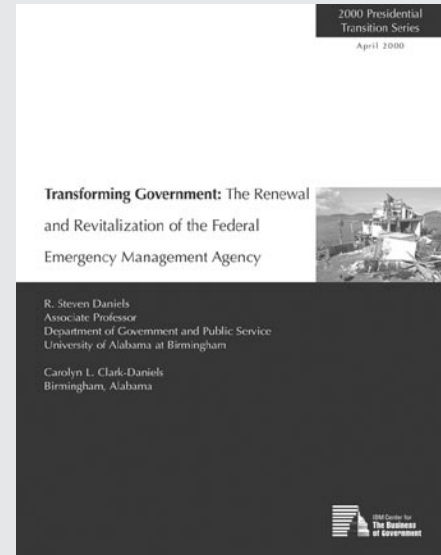
Can you tell us more about your efforts to involve your employees?

I made a special effort to visit with employees, both at headquarters and in the regions. I am constantly asking them what they think we should be doing. I also developed an open-door policy: Any employee can make an appointment to see me on Tuesdays to discuss any matter.

How are you transforming FEMA?

As I mentioned before, a major part of the transformation was getting all employees involved. We worked hard at creating a more customer-focused agency. A major initiative was to provide customer service training to all FEMA employees, including senior management. This was a huge undertaking. Our goal was to make FEMA a better agency, a better place to work, and an agency that provided better service to its customers. We were very pleased that our latest customer survey found that over 85 percent of our clients approved of our programs. Another aspect of managing change is constant communication to employees. You have to keep employees informed. I have a director's report that goes out weekly. I have received a very positive response to it. The report, two to three pages in length, describes what is going on in the agency and how we are doing in meeting our goals for the agency.

At the same time that we were involving employees, we were also improving the operations of the agency. We decreased the number of our financial accounts from 45 to 14. We simply had too many accounts. We have also moved to quarterly spending plans, which was a major change from the past when we never quite knew how much money we had remaining. I am now holding our senior managers responsible for their spending. In addition, I'm working closely with our chief financial officer in overseeing the agency's financial management systems. All of our changes at FEMA were based on my trusting my managers. I trusted my people to make the agency work. I gave them authority to do their jobs and I resisted the temptation to micro-manage.



TRANSFORMING THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

QUESTION: What can I learn about leadership and transformation from the experience of Dr. Kenneth Kizer at the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Department of Veterans Affairs?

ANSWER: Dr. Kizer took over the VHA in 1994 during a period of intense controversy about the future of veterans' health care in America. Many felt that the agency was out of sync with the prevailing trends in the delivery of health care. In addition, many veterans and many in Congress were dissatisfied with the quality of health care provided by VHA.

In his report to the IBM Center, Boston University's Gary Young examined the VHA experience and developed the following lessons:

- **Appoint leaders whose backgrounds and experiences are appropriate for the transformation.** There was clear agreement that VHA required a transformation. In selecting Kizer, the White House recruited a leader who had experience transforming organizations. Kizer had previously led the California Department of Health Services during a time of change. He also was an expert in innovation related to the financing and delivery of health care services.
- **Follow a focused and coherent transformation plan.** There were four components to Dr. Kizer's transformation plan:
 - **Create a vision for the agency.** This resulted in a series of documents that described the vision and the agency's game plan for accomplishing the vision.
 - **Align the organization around your goals and objective.** Kizer concluded that he could not get "from here to there" with the VHA structure he inherited, which resulted in a new organizational structure for the agency.
 - **Establish an accountability system.** Each of the members of Kizer's leadership team signed a performance contract that stipulated a set of performance goals to which she or he would be held accountable.
 - **Modify agency rules and regulations.** As with the need for a new organizational structure, the leadership team also concluded that the agency needed reforms to a number of long-standing agency rules and regulations.
- **Persevere in the presence of imperfection.** Many of the components of VHA's transformation plan indeed proved to be controversial, with some opposition to the changes within the organization.
- **Match changes in the external environment with changes in the internal environment.** Kizer and his management team worked closely with veterans service organizations and key members of Congress to gain support for his reforms.
- **Develop and manage communication channels from the highest to the lowest levels of the organization.** This is one area in which VHA could have performed more effectively. Communication is crucial during a transformation.
- **Do not overlook training and education.** In his analysis of the VHA experience, Young concluded that training was a key component in gaining the support of employees and assisting them in developing needed skills in a timely manner during the transformation.
- **Balance system-wide unity with operating-unit flexibility.** This is always a challenge: The organization must strike an appropriate balance between system-level coordination and control and operating-unit flexibility.

Kenneth W. Kizer's Key Principles of Transformation

From *Transforming Government: The Revitalization of the Veterans Health Administration* by Gary J. Young

Dr. Kizer served as under secretary for health at the Department of Veterans Affairs. He originally set forth his key principles in Straight from the CEO, edited by G. W. Dauphinais and C. Price (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998). The excerpt below is based on Gary Young's report.

1. Clearly articulate your vision, intent, and principles of change.

The VHA's statement is about "why," not "how." With a clear end-purpose in mind, we used certain principles of modern health care to lay the framework for transformation at the VHA, as well as the new managerial system that would implement it:

- The VHA is in the business of health care, not of running hospitals.
- Health care is now primarily a local outpatient activity.
- The VHA's critical mandate is to provide good value.
- Health care must reorient itself to become more population-directed, community-based, and health-promotive.

2. The process of change should be broadly inclusive. The top manager should allow all members of the organization to have their say in some form or forum—and what they say should be taken seriously and sincerely. However, that inclusivity should be flexible enough to embrace partnerships and outside associations that can facilitate the new vision.

3. Change within an organization must move in harmony with environmental or externally focused change. Top managers, particularly those in the public sector, cannot hope to stand against the "forces of nature"—this constitutes bad management. In the case of the VHA, that means being in sync with broad trends, such as the national revolution in health care, the explosion of biomedical research and knowledge, the shift to an "information society," and the aging of the eligible VHA population.

4. The top manager must make key personnel decisions. Bad hires stay around to haunt you; good ones make you look good. Here are seven key characteristics of the good hire: committed to change; shares the vision; experienced, knowledgeable; innovative, nontraditional; respected; empowered; and willing to get his or her hands dirty.

5. Set high expectations. People will meet them—unless your system impedes their best efforts.

6. Focus on rigorous execution, including minimizing errors. Innovative, nontraditional thinkers will make errors because errors are inherent to trailblazing. These should be openly discussed without instilling the kind of fear that engenders complacency. However, stupid, careless mistakes should not be tolerated.

7. Anticipate problems. Change, by definition, is rarely neutral. It will create new problems—but they shouldn't come as a surprise.



RESTRUCTURING THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

QUESTION: What can I learn about leadership and transformation from the experience of Charles Rossotti at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)?

ANSWER: Charles Rossotti served as commissioner of the IRS from 1997 to 2002, serving under two presidents of the United States. He took over shortly after a series of congressional hearings in which the IRS was criticized heavily for both ineffectiveness and accusations by citizens of abuse of its authority. IRS had also been intensely scrutinized (and criticized) by the National Commission on Restructuring the Internal Revenue Service, which resulted in legislation to reform the agency.

In his memoir, *Many Unhappy Returns: One Man's Quest to Turn Around the Most Unpopular Organization in America* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2005), Rossotti reflected on what he had learned from the IRS experience. He wrote, "The most important conclusion I can draw from my experience is that it is wrong to assume that a big, entrenched institution that gets into deep trouble cannot be changed for the better. The crisis can be turned into an opportunity. If it is important to do, it can be done." Specifically, Rossotti sets forth the following ingredients for successful transformations:

- **Successful change means improving the way an organization performs its missions on behalf of all of its stakeholders and rejecting an either/or model of performance.** At IRS, Rossotti worked to improve both service and treatment of taxpayers as well as the organization's effectiveness in enforcing compliance with the law.
- **Successful change means getting the right people in the right jobs.** Rossotti put together his team at IRS, which included senior executives from the private sector as well as senior career officials within IRS.
- **Successful change requires the right measurements and incentives.** Rossotti developed a balanced set of measurements for IRS that included feedback from taxpayers and employees, as well as measures of business results.
- **Successful change depends on aligning people, business practices, technology, and organizational structure with the needs of customers.** Rossotti developed a modernization program that addressed all four components.
- **Successful change requires knowing what is really going on where it counts—at the front line.** Rossotti made it a practice to visit IRS offices across the nation to speak directly to IRS frontline workers.
- **Successful change requires open and honest communication inside and outside the organization.** Rossotti writes, "Throughout the change program, I established a policy of 'engage, and then decide' rather than 'decide, and then explain' with stakeholders, including dozens of groups representing taxpayers and employees, congressional committees, and oversight bodies."
- **Successful change requires change, not just communication about change.** After arriving at IRS, Rossotti found that the agency was preoccupied with issuing announcements "about change" but lacked a transformation plan to bring about those changes. Rossotti quickly developed the plan.
- **Successful change depends more on having the right governance, leadership, direction, and authority than on rules and mandates.** Rossotti concludes that effective governance can only be achieved by "well-informed, competent, and diligent people paying serious and sustained attention to the health of the organization, not by the quantity of audits and procedures."
- **Successful change in any organization has its limits—set by the broader constraints of the context within which it operates.**

A Conversation with Charles Rossotti Former Commissioner, Internal Revenue Service

From *The Business of Government*, Winter 2002

On Arriving at IRS

The first thing to remember is that because of the confirmation process, you have a long windup period, whether you like it or not. I tried to make best use of that period to ... take the lay of the land, meet some people, and read a lot of things....

I had an interview with a bunch of reporters ... and I said it was like coming in from a beautiful fall day and then opening a door and having a blast furnace hit you.... it wasn't so much the blast furnace from inside the IRS, as it was all these blasts coming from everywhere else into the IRS. It was definitely a period of crisis in terms of the agency.

One of the things that was evident to me right off the bat was that the IRS was getting a lot of advice.... there were so many studies that had been done over the years ... the Vice President's Reinventing Government had done a study, the Presidential Commission had done a study, and there were any number of GAO [Government Accountability Office] reports that had done studies.

I had somebody add up all the recommendations that had been made, and by the time they got to 5,000, I stopped counting. I said, "We're not going to get where we need to go by doing 5,000 line items one at a time...."

The very first thing that had to be done was to create a sense of stability and say that what we're going to do is sit down and set some priorities ... [identifying] some of the things we're going to do—a few things we're going to really do in the short run—to get the place going.

There were a few things that were under way in the problem-solving days ... there was a need to have a safety valve to allow people who were coming forward every day and claiming that they were being unable to get their problems resolved, that their lives were being ruined by the IRS. We had to have an outlet for that. There were some other things like

that, which had to be done on a short-term basis. Then the other thing—on a longer-term basis—was to set some strategic priorities over what we were going to do to address the more fundamental problems in an organized way....

I put it together into a set of priorities of what we needed to do in terms of modernizing the organization, the management structure, and eventually the technology. Those were the initial things: try to get some short-term stability; concentrate on a few things that we could deliver right away; and then try to lay out ... a longer-term plan for addressing the bigger issues.

On the Need for Reorganization

[Reorganization] was a little bit controversial in the sense that it is a pretty expensive, disruptive thing to do and it doesn't immediately deliver any benefits to anybody. The question was, why focus on something like that, which is more internal than external. That was a pretty big choice.

... from what I know today ... it was the right decision. One of the reasons I believe previous attempts at modernizing the technology ... did not go very well was precisely because they were viewed as a technology program. There are a lot of people in a lot of places, including the government, that make the mistake that you can "modernize the technology" and leave everything else the same.

... there isn't any point in modernizing technology if you leave everything else the same.... If you just keep everything the same and modernize the technology, you have some new disk drives and maybe more reliable computing, but you don't really resolve anything. On the other hand, if you're going to put in technology to improve the way the business works, you can't be isolated in the IT area....

If nothing else, getting control over the information system resources [was essential] in order to create an appropriate level of standardization and management

to set the groundwork for reorganization.... One [reason for modernization] is to have a business owner that was properly aligned to be their customer, the proper customer to be the partner in modernizing the way business is done; and the other being to modernize the IT operations itself so that we had an appropriate management structure to manage it.

On His Role Leading IRS

It is different compared to being a CEO in business, because [there] you have to work with investors and securities analysts and the general public and the press, but it's a much smaller factor as compared with your customers and your employees.... in any public agency, especially one like the IRS, we have a multitude of stakeholders, including six congressional committees that oversee us....

We have, in addition to those governmental stakeholders, an enormous array of stakeholders [in the public]. In fact, everybody in the economy is a stakeholder ... [and] they're organized into a lot of different groups. We have numerous practitioner groups like the AICPA [American Institute of Certified Public Accountants] and the CPAs, we have many business groups like small-business groups, large-business groups, industry groups.... People forget that we [also] regulate the tax-exempt sector, which is a whole world unto itself with its own set of issues.

One of the jobs of the commissioner is to try to not only recognize those interests, but to keep people aligned as much as you can; to keep yourself aligned and to keep aligned with them in a way that is constructive, because one thing for sure is that almost any of them can slow you down or stop you in your tracks or really make life difficult if they want to....

So that is an extremely important role ... it's certainly one that takes a lot of time. But I'll say this—it takes a lot more time if you don't tend to it, because then what you have is the unplanned time that you didn't count on.... My view has been to try to get a clear set of messages of what we're trying to do, and basically ... we tell the same thing to everybody, because I can't see how you can tell one person one thing and tell somebody something else. If you do that, you're not going to get anywhere.



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On the Differences Between Management in the Public and Private Sectors

I think there are a lot of things that are similar.... There are [also] some things that are different. And one of them, of course, is the public visibility that you have. You really are operating in a fish bowl, and that is something that is a unique management challenge. Because one of the implications of that is the question, "How do you handle mistakes?... There is never going to be a major systems project, even small systems project, that doesn't have blind alleys and mistakes and false starts, and there just isn't ever going to be one no matter how skilled you are. The kind we're doing at the IRS, which is a rare one where you're sort of replacing the whole infrastructure as well as specific applications, is obviously pretty complex.

So how do you handle mistakes?... In the private sector world, you have them and you react to them and you do whatever you want to do. Here [in government], you've got to deal with them in the environment where you've got everybody watching you and writing about your mistakes while it happens. So, that's a ... challenge that's certainly unique.

Another thing is that you have more rules [in government]. And that's not only true of technical modernization, that's true of everything. You have personnel rules, you have procurement rules, you have budgeting rules. You have rules for just about everything....

REMAKING THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

QUESTION: What can I learn about leadership and transformation from the experience of Daniel Goldin at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)?

ANSWER: Dan Goldin had the longest tenure of any NASA administrator since the creation of the agency in 1958, serving for nine and a half years under two presidents of the United States. Over that nine-year period, Goldin dealt with numerous controversial issues and problems, such as repairing the Hubble telescope, finding funding for the International Space Station, and responding to several mission to Mars failures. In his report to the IBM Center (2001), Syracuse University's W. Henry Lambright set forth seven lessons based on his case study of the Goldin years at NASA:

- **Who is appointed the agency executive matters.** The key to success in many agencies is matching up both the leader and his or her leadership team with the challenges facing the agency. In the case of Goldin, the agency clearly needed a change agent and a change agenda. Lambright writes, "He was a good match for the organization and his times."
- **Make the most of a mandate for change.** There was agreement that NASA needed change. There was much unhappiness with NASA in Congress. Goldin used this "mandate" to push significant policy and management changes within NASA during his tenure.
- **Adopt a general strategy of what needs to be done.** In simple terms, this means having a plan and a set of priorities. Prior to his confirmation hearings, Goldin used that time to talk with knowledgeable individuals about NASA and to determine a strategy and a plan for bringing change to the agency.
- **Implement a change process quickly, instilling urgency and gaining as much organizational support as possible.** You will need to use your judgment here. A key factor in your success (or lack of success) will be your ability to move quickly and urgently—while at the same time gaining support for change among your management team and the larger organization. You will be walking a fine line between pushing hard, but yet not "too hard" and alienating your workforce.
- **Turn crisis into opportunity.** A crisis can indeed be helpful to you. In the case of Goldin, he had numerous crises (the future of the space station, the Hubble telescope) that he could "use" to push his change agenda. Lambright writes, "Crisis allows the leader to pull power up to himself. Because he spans the boundary across organization and environment, he is in a strategic position to seize the initiative. He can use a crisis to go beyond incremental to radical change."
- **Build on success.** In football, they call this "putting points on the board." It is often useful to put together some "small wins" quickly in order to both build credibility for yourself and to gain momentum.
- **Be aware of the limits of change and modify strategies when flaws are detected—preferably before they lead to setbacks.** If you stay for the entire four years of the first term of the new administration (or longer), you will most likely encounter some failures along the way. Lambright cautions, "The aim is to minimize the failures through realism.... It is also to learn from mistakes and make timely corrections in hardware, management, and, if need be, the [leader's] personal style in dealing with the agency."

A Conversation with Daniel S. Goldin, Former Administrator National Aeronautics and Space Administration

From *The Business of Government*, Fall 2001

On His Major Accomplishment at NASA

Freeing up the NASA people to dream, telling them that failure is okay in spite of the constant hammering they take. I remember early in my tenure, I was going home at about 9 o'clock, 9:30 at night. There were still offices lit at NASA headquarters and, contrary to popular belief, federal employees are terrific. They work long, hard hours, and it's very easy to take shots at them, and with NASA, it's an even bigger bull's-eye.

One of NASA's employees said to me, "I'm so depressed. The harder I work, the more we get criticized." And I said to him, "There is a new kid in town. You'll work hard, you'll get criticized, but you'll have fun because failure will be acceptable and you can dream again."

And I feel, based upon what NASA has done, the employees are really dreaming. That in my mind is more important than anything else. There were good people at NASA before I came, there are good people there now, and there will be outstanding people when I leave.

All that a leader can do is create an environment, pick good people, nurture and train those people, and support the hell out of those people and take personal responsibility for the problems so those people aren't afraid to fail. That in my mind is the most enjoyable thing that I had at NASA.

On Arriving at NASA

I felt that NASA, in a very honest attempt to deal with their environment, had gone into a survival mode. What was important then was how many jobs did people win in what part of the country—rather than what those jobs were about—and that more and more their budget was going into operations in near-term things because of the criticism over the *Challenger*, the Hubble being blind, *Galileo* being deaf, and I could go on and on.

People lost their confidence and were doing more and more mundane things. The space station was

dead man walking. They spent \$8 billion or \$10 billion in eight years. There wasn't a piece of hardware, but the contractors were having a good time. I could cry.

So I resolved that I would free up NASA employees from these burdens and try and get a process in place that would focus on performance, not style, that would focus on what needs to be done to fix things instead of putting our heads in the sand and transitioning NASA from near-term safe things into long-term high-risk things.

On Risk-Taking at NASA

... the most important message I wanted to get ... failure is good. Failure is really the process that you learn.

... 10 out of 10 failures is bad. On the other hand, zero out of 10 failures is worse, zero failures out of 10 attempts, because if you tried 10 things and had zero failures you set such mediocre goals you don't deserve being part of the space program. Getting that message across was the fundamental essence of what faster, better, cheaper was, and I came with this passion to do it.

If you have a few big things managed by a few powerful individuals, you suppress the creative process. Second, if you have a few big things managed by a few powerful individuals, you are terrified of failure because you risk the whole program.

So the concept of faster, better, cheaper that's not well understood is to get a large number, a diversity in number and function, so no one failure takes you down, and then to empower a broad range of people and develop the next generation and create competition of ideas, not emotions, within the organization.

On Accountability

Hyman Rickover was criticized for his success, but he had as a statement ... that fundamentally you don't know who is responsible unless you can take

your finger and point at that person and that person says "I'm responsible."

And one of the problems I had when I arrived at NASA, I tried to find out who was responsible for anything. People do a wonderful job and, again, these are good people. These are not bad people. But people were so afraid of failure no one wanted to say I'm responsible when something occurred.

So I decided I would tell them hey, look, when there is a major problem don't worry. The administrator will say he's responsible. I have a letter of resignation in my desk and the very minute it's necessary because I serve the American people I'm ready to go. I won't fight to stay. You've got to have the ability to do that, and once you do that everything is okay.

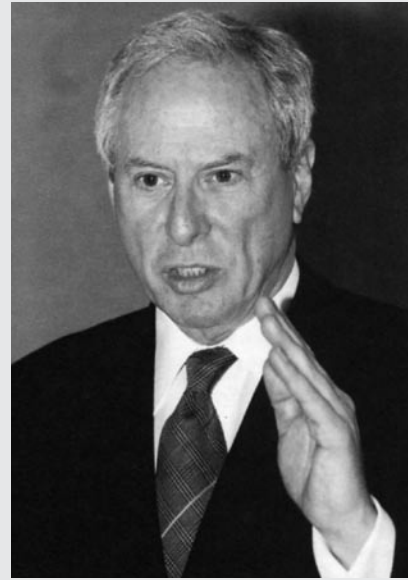
On Working with Congress

... the big lesson that I learned out of this job is we have a wonderful democracy. From the outside looking in, you don't see how well it works. And a democracy doesn't need everyone supporting you, and you don't need cheerleaders to make a democracy work. In fact, you need skeptics.

So if you go to the hearings—I go up on the Hill—we don't have cheerleaders. I could assure you that, but that's good. That's not bad. And in fact there is a story that I recollect. We faced the senator from Arkansas, Dale Bumpers. I mean, he got pretty graphic on the floor of the Senate about how upset he was with the space station.

And after the next to the last vote before he left the Congress I had been looming outside the Senate chambers watching the vote. And I walked up to him and I said, "How are you doing, Senator Bumpers?" He said, "Dan, you're talking to me?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I always go after the space station." I said, "Senator Bumpers, do you know what you don't realize? More than anyone else, with your criticism of the space station you have made us more determined to do a better job."

And people always think of the debate up on Capitol Hill as being bad. It's good. Go to some other countries and see where everyone talks together and votes together, and you lose the ability for a democracy.



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Having the open press, having the press criticize us, it gets depressing for the employees, but I keep telling them this is good; this is not bad. Because if you believe in what you're doing, deeply believe in what you're doing, you have a passion for what you're doing. You're not doing this to get promoted. You're not doing this to get a job after you leave the government. You're doing this for the benefit of the American people. You could stand up to the criticism, and the criticism makes you better.

Now, that takes an enormous amount of time, but that's called listening to your customer, and it is the job of the NASA administrator to understand what the customer wants. Now, the customer is the American people. I can't talk to each American person, but by talking to all of their representatives in the Congress and going to the districts and meeting with people, I got a sense of what the American people wanted and expected from NASA.

On Working in a Public Environment

It's more difficult than running a corporation without that glare.... I don't think there is any other place that has the kind of scrutiny that NASA does.... I would stack our employees against any corporation in the world, because they have a thick skin because of the public scrutiny.... this is a system full of checks and balances and don't fight the checks and balances.

CHANGING LEADERSHIP STYLES AT THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

QUESTION: What can I learn about leadership and transformation from the experience of Sean O’Keefe at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration?

ANSWER: The major lesson from the O’Keefe years at NASA is that you will be living in a rapidly changing environment in which the unexpected might (or is likely to) happen. In his report to the IBM Center (2005), W. Henry Lambright found that O’Keefe’s three years at NASA could be divided into three distinct periods, each being characterized by a different set of challenges:

- **Period One: As consolidator and incremental innovator.** When he first arrived at NASA, O’Keefe’s initial challenge was responding to the projected cost-overruns of the International Space Station. O’Keefe’s experience as the deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget in the first year of the administration had prepared him to fix the accounting and management practices within NASA.
- **Period Two: As crisis manager.** In February 2003 (a little over one year after O’Keefe became NASA administrator), the *Columbia* shuttle came apart and seven astronauts died. Lambright writes, “O’Keefe, the self-effacing financial manager, was immediately thrust into the national spotlight. He had to respond to a major disaster.”
- **Period Three: As steward of the president’s vision.** The last year of O’Keefe’s tenure was spent implementing the president’s “space exploration vision” to the moon, Mars, and beyond.

Thus, O’Keefe’s tenure is characterized by an ability to rapidly shift from managing in one situation to managing in a dramatically different environment. The key lesson, according to Lambright, is that managers must be prepared for the unexpected. Key leadership lessons can be gleaned from each of O’Keefe’s periods:

- **Period One:** In this period, O’Keefe was “Mr. Fix-it.” In that role, the following lessons are instructive:
 - **Mitigate the immediate problem, but monitor the solution over time.** O’Keefe’s initial priority was fixing the space station cost over-run (and NASA’s credibility), which he did.
 - **Communicate a vision.** While focusing on “fixing” problems, O’Keefe also presented his programmatic vision for the agency, which stressed a scientific role in NASA exploration.
 - **Deal with the next worst problem.**
- **Period Two:** In this period, O’Keefe was nearly a full-time “crisis manager” focused on determining the cause of the *Columbia* tragedy and then making appropriate changes in NASA based on findings from the Columbia Accident Investigation Board (CAIB). Lessons from this period include:
 - **Take charge of a crisis—be decisive, open, and consistent.**
 - **Use crisis to leverage transformative change.**
- **Period Three:** In this period, O’Keefe’s management challenge was implementing the vision set forth by the president in his January 2004 speech. Lessons from this period include:
 - **Get a presidential policy off to a fast start.** If your agency becomes a presidential priority, you will clearly need to devote a significant amount of your attention to ensuring that the policy is successfully implemented.
 - **Avoid distractions.** This will be a challenge throughout your time in government. It is easy to get distracted by side issues and you must continue to focus on the priorities of the president.

Turning Crisis into Opportunity

From *Executive Response to Changing Fortune: Sean O'Keefe as NASA Administrator*

by W. Henry Lambright

If there was any silver lining coming from the *Columbia* cloud, it was that there was a new consensus that NASA needed change, and O'Keefe was able to push change related to safety. He was setting up the new Engineering and Safety Center at Langley as a check on the program offices. He had the Stafford-Covey group, now grown to 26 strong.... He hired a well-known consulting organization to help him with the longer-term and deeper cultural change that CAIB said was needed at NASA. He said he would borrow a culture-change technique from the Marine Corps called "repeated rhythmic insult." All these moves aimed at enhancing the power of safety interests at NASA.

But now O'Keefe saw the chance for even broader change—transformation—linked to the call for a new vision from Congress, media, and many of his own advisors. CAIB said that an underlying problem causing the *Columbia* disaster was NASA's attempt to do too much with too little in the way of funding. The shuttle budget had been particularly squeezed as NASA sought to build a space station, pursue a viable space science effort, and create a shuttle successor launch system—all at a time of overall agency downsizing. The funding problem was due to the absence of a "compelling vision" of the future. To risk human lives to go into low Earth orbit just didn't seem worth it. In fact, this call for a new vision suggested to O'Keefe a window of opportunity for long-term NASA recovery.

O'Keefe now pursued two kinds of recovery strategies. One was short term: return to flight of the shuttle. Unfortunately, even the short-term plans were beginning to stretch longer. In early October, it was reported that instead of spring 2004, the shuttle might not go up until September 2004. CAIB had set forth 29 requirements NASA had to meet, and what NASA did would be reviewed by the Stafford-Covey team. Some of these requirements were technical changes to be surmounted before return to flight; others could happen later. Many would be difficult indeed, such as the capacity to repair the shuttle in space, particularly away from the space station. Cultural change fell into the very long-term, non-technical recovery mode.

But real long-term recovery also required a goal that would give NASA greater public support and additional funds, the opportunity to go beyond recovery to revitalization. What should that be? In the 1990s, Dan Goldin, O'Keefe's predecessor, championed a manned Mars mission as NASA's next big goal. But he could not sell that to the Clinton White House and he did not particularly try to do so. The Clinton administration would support only unmanned Mars flights. First, said President Clinton, finish the space station; then we'll discuss more distant human spaceflights.

The senior George Bush had proclaimed moon-Mars as a goal back in 1989, but that objective disappeared quickly from his and the nation's agenda. From the standpoint of congressional and public opinion, such a goal was premature and dismissed by most observers as empty rhetoric. O'Keefe felt the *Columbia* accident made a big decision that might adhere this time more possible. In 1989, there was no space station. In the 1990s, one had been built and orbited the Earth. There was much more work to do on the station, but the end was in sight. A space station in orbit was the major achievement of Goldin, albeit over cost and incomplete. O'Keefe had in his first year presented a modest agenda. He now decided the time was ripe to try for a big decision.



LEADING OTHERS INVOLVED IN THE HUMAN GENOME PROJECT

QUESTION: What can I learn about leadership from the experience of Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Human Genome Research Institute at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Department of Health and Human Services?

ANSWER: In many ways, Dr. Francis Collins represents a new type of leader in government. In addition to leading his own organization (initially, the National Center for Human Genome Research and later “upgraded” to full institute status as the National Human Genome Research Institute), Collins led an international coalition consisting of other government organizations, the private sector, and the academic community. Nearly one-third of funding for the Human Genome Project (HGP) came from the Department of Energy, requiring close coordination between NIH and Energy. Funding was also provided by the Wellcome Trust, a philanthropy in England that became a joint sponsor of the project. In addition, Collins developed an effective working relationship with J. Craig Venter, head of the private sector firm Celera, in what was often viewed as a “race” between the public and private sectors to sequence the human genome. Partners from other nations were involved in the project as well.

Collins thus faced the challenge of not only leading within his own agency but also leading many other key organizations that did not “report” to him. In his report to the IBM Center (2002), W. Henry Lambright sets forth the following key lessons from the experience of Collins in leading the Human Genome Project:

- **The importance of leadership.** Leadership was crucial. Collins faced the challenge of reorienting HGP from a loose consortium into a tight alliance with a small circle of performers and decision makers. Instead of relying on the traditional “command and control” leadership style, Collins relied on a more collegial, collaborative style of leadership.
- **The importance of goals.** In describing his experience leading the Human Genome Project, Collins frequently cites the importance of goals in the success of the project (see page 17). Lambright concurs with Collins’ assessment that large projects need clear, unmistakable goals. Lambright writes that a clear goal “provides a constant point of reference against which to measure, direct, prioritize, and modify actions by various individuals and organizations involved.”
- **The importance of political support.** In any government endeavor, political support is crucial. NIH leadership, including the NIH director and Collins, worked closely with the White House and Congress in gaining support and continued funding for HGP.
- **The importance of management.** The management of the Human Genome Project was a major challenge. The way in which government would pursue HGP was not clear at the start. It constantly evolved over the years, starting with funding by the Department of Energy followed by the designation of NIH as the “lead agency” for HGP. For most of its project life, HGP was managed as a loosely coupled international consortium located in six countries, with multiple sponsors and performers. After assuming leadership of the project, Collins concluded that the management of the genome project was too loose and too uncoupled. He then developed a more centralized management model.
- **The importance of competition.** Lambright concludes that competition, both internal and external, was a critical factor in HGP’s success. It was initially bureaucratic competition with the Department of Energy that induced NIH to launch HGP. The external competition came from Celera. With the addition of Celera in the game, HGP moved into “crash project mode” and Celera became the measure against which HGP would be judged. Lambright writes, “Whether or not HGP wished to be in a race, it was in one.”

A Conversation with Dr. Francis S. Collins, Director, National Human Genome Research Institute, National Institutes of Health

From *The Business of Government*, Winter 2002

On 'Managing' Talent

What helps in terms of managing ... was the unquestionable shared commitment to the goal. If I had tried to manage a project where there was uncertainty about the value of what we were trying to do, it would have been very difficult to keep those opinions from gradually beginning to erode the determination of the team to do this together. But that never wavered. There was never a question about whether this was worth doing.

I also had the benefit of an incredible group of advisers who were willing to put a lot of their time into overseeing the effort and giving me advice about whether we were on the right track. We also were much benefited by the NIH system of how you do science, which is: You don't give a lot of money to anybody until they have been peer reviewed. And that gave an opportunity both to nurture the centers that were doing well and were ready to expand, and, frankly, it gave me the clout necessary to shut down the centers that were not performing. And we shut down quite a few. That was a painful part of the enterprise, but you have to do that in a project of this magnitude if you expect to deliver.

On the Importance of Deadlines in Management

The genome project has benefited from the beginning from having this explicit set of goals—and there was quite a long list of them—and having each of those goals attached to a timetable, a set of intermediate milestones, ways of checking the quality of the data that was being produced, and enforcing that that quality was being maintained, and making sure that costs had been projected and were closely tracked as well. I have been enormously benefited by having a talented staff of Ph.D. scientists who have been involved in all of that tracking, and particularly making sure that we weren't slipping on any of those milestones. And that has helped immeasurably in gaining credibility for a project which, at the beginning, had its doubters in terms of "big science" being applied to biology.



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That same mentality needs to be applied to many other aspects of genome research that we support in the next decade, although I should quickly add that is not appropriate for a lot of other medical research that is critically important for the benefits of all this to play out. In the same breath that I am saying we need those milestones for an organized genome-project-style management, we probably don't want them when you are talking about trying to get the investigators in this country to come forward with their best and brightest blue-sky ideas. There, you want to really let their creativity drive the process, which is what most of NIH's research funds are devoted to. But for some parts of the enterprise—and particularly the parts that we are likely to support, whether it's sequencing additional genomes like the chimpanzee, which we are about to embark upon; or whether it's a haplotype map; or whether it's trying to understand how all the genes turn on or off in an organized way instead of just doing it in a cottage-industry fashion—we will continue to be driven by that very managerial approach that sets milestones and timetables. I think everybody is now getting pretty used to that.

DEVELOPING LEADERS

QUESTION: How do I develop future leaders?

ANSWER: Your legacy will depend in part on your ability to develop and nurture future leaders to sustain your goals and objectives. This important role, developing a cadre of future leaders, is frequently overlooked in government. It is worth your devoting time and effort to this endeavor.

The rhetoric of the private sector places greater emphasis on this role. University of Michigan's Noel Tichy writes in *The Leadership Engine* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997):

Winning companies win because they have good leaders that nurture the development of other leaders at all levels of the organization. The key ability of winning organizations and winning leaders is creating leaders....

The ultimate test for a leader is not whether he or she makes smart decisions and takes decisive action, but whether he or she teaches others to be leaders and builds an organization that can sustain success even when he or she is not around.

In his report to the IBM Center, Ray Blunt describes roles that leaders can play in growing future public service leaders.

- **Growing leaders through personal example: As an exemplar.** This role often receives little attention. Throughout your tenure, the entire organization will be watching you and observing both your management style and your management decisions. This will be especially true of your mid-level managers. Blunt writes, "Leaders are followed more for who they are as observed by their behavior than for what title they have or how expert they are." Blunt cautions that people will learn leadership from you whether you intend for them to or not.
- **Growing leaders through relationships: As a mentor.** There is often confusion about the role of serving as a mentor. While there are *formal* mentorship programs in many organizations where senior individuals are assigned to mentor future leaders, there is also *informal* mentoring that takes place frequently in all organizations. At its core, mentoring involves your spending some time over the course of your tenure with individuals within your organization that you deem to have high potential. At a minimum, serving as a mentor could include meeting or having lunch with a high-potential individual (or individuals) several times over the course of the year. The goal of these encounters is to share your experiences on becoming a leader and to answer questions from the mentee both about the mentee's own career and your career.
- **Growing leaders through experiences or development programs: As a coach or teacher.** There are several components to these roles and you can select the one which works best for you:
 - **Forming coaching relationships.** This could involve selecting a high-potential individual to serve as a special assistant in your office on either a rotating or fixed-term basis. During the period in which that individual works in your office, you can set aside time to provide feedback and advice to the individual on how he or she is doing.
 - **Participating in executive development programs in your agency.** Jack Welch, the well-known former chief executive officer of General Electric, received much acclaim for participating every two weeks in GE's leadership program in Crotonville, New York. He met with participants in the program, talked about his career and his vision for GE, and answered questions. You can do the same. Just ask your chief human capital officer to book you at the next session of your agency's executive development program. In addition to providing you with an opportunity to meet face-to-face with your agency's future leaders, you will also likely enjoy the experience.

Getting Started on Developing Leaders

From *Growing Leaders for Public Service* by Ray Blunt

Making It a Priority: Take Stock of Your Time, Then Make the Time

... leaders who grow leaders start by setting an example, blocking time for this important task. Perhaps the greatest message you can give as a leader that you are making it your priority to serve the needs of the next generation is how you use your time.

To start, go back over your calendar for the past 30 days and see how you have spent your time. How much of it was spent on what was most urgent: your “in box,” interrupting phone calls or visits, extended meetings about budget issues, correspondence, etc.? How much of your time was spent with your peers or with top executives, Congress, or OMB? If you are like most senior leaders, you will find that, as St. Augustine observed, “the urgent will drive out the important.”

Finding and Preparing Your Leadership Stories

Effective leaders convey their own learning through stories—the lessons of their experience.... this is the heart of extending leader learning—teachable experience. Stories wrap the two central facets of leader learning into a package—experience and example—and make it a memorable and practical package.

... we learn and remember information and even plan strategically by ingesting knowledge and storing it in the form of stories. So storytelling should be an integral part of your leadership coaching, mentoring, and teaching. But where do the stories themselves come from? Perhaps you think that you don't have any. Then a first step might be to see what were your own leader learning points.

To start, get a large spiral notebook to use as a journal for notes about what you have learned and want to pass on. On the first page of the journal, draw a horizontal line across the middle. At the top of the upper section write “Highs” in the center. Near the bottom of the page in the lower section, in the center, write “Lows.” The horizontal line represents your career or perhaps even your life. The upper portion, the relative “Highs,” represents significant challenge, excitement, high achievement, recognition, a great event, or a satisfying accomplishment—personally or professionally. The lower portion, the relative “Lows,” represents failure, disappointment, tragedy, a setback, a bad boss, a bad relationship, a dead-end job, boredom, getting fired or demoted, etc.

Once you have identified these key events across the span of your career and personal life, reflect on each one. For each high and each low, begin to draw out the lessons from it that may have informed or reshaped the way you now lead. If it is true that the emotionally impacting events of our lives lead to leader learning—even career setbacks and bad bosses—then these lessons are critical and constitute the learned wisdom that we each possess about leadership.

Each of these events is a story that can be told to others as an illustration of a key learning in your life. It is a story that links ideas and experiences together with a “moral” or a central learning for others. Not only does this give you insight about how you learned leadership—lessons to pass on—but it gives you ideas about how you might challenge others to learn as well and apply these lessons to their lives.



For Additional Information on Leadership



Government Reorganization: Strategies and Tools to Getting It Done (2004) by Hannah Sistare

This report examines various approaches to how government can undertake reorganization initiatives. The report examines four principal reorganization strategies that policy makers have used in the past: commissions, presidential reorganization authority, executive-branch reorganization staff, and congressional initiatives. In addition, four new strategies are identified: virtual reorganization through e-government, virtual reorganization through coordinating councils, reorganization by commission, and reorganization by legislative authorization.



Making Public Sector Mergers Work: Lessons Learned (2003) by Peter Frumkin

This report discusses the challenges of mergers and consolidations of government agencies. The report provides guidance to policy makers on how to analyze proposed mergers and presents practical advice to agency and department managers on how to respond to the many challenges created when several independent public organizations suddenly become one.



Managing Across Boundaries: A Case Study of Dr. Helene Gayle and the AIDS Epidemic (2002) by Norma M. Riccucci

A major challenge facing the public sector in the years ahead will be to manage across boundaries. To better understand the challenge of boundary-spanning leadership, this report profiles Dr. Helen Gayle, former director of the National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention (NCHSTP) at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). In her role as director of the Center, Dr. Gayle was responsible for working closely with the United Nations and other international organizations and nations in combating the AIDS epidemic.



Moving Toward More Capable Government: A Guide to Organizational Design (2002) by Thomas H. Stanton

This report provides a resource for policy makers in federal agencies and the Congress who are considering whether to create or restructure a government agency or instrumentality. The report provides insights to public sector executives on how various tools and changes in government organizations can be applied to developing creative solutions and interventions to national problems.



Trans-Atlantic Experiences in Health Reform: The United Kingdom's National Health Service and the United States Veterans Health Administration (2000) by Marilyn A. DeLuca

This report is a comparative study of the National Health Service in the United Kingdom and the Veterans Health Administration in the United States, and examines how two large public systems responded to the challenge of health reform. The study evaluates the reform impacts on health service delivery in each setting, explores how implementation was managed, and describes the effects on organization, workforce, and culture.

For Additional Information on Leadership



The Challenge of Managing Across Boundaries: The Case of the Office of the Secretary in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000) by Beryl A. Radin

In this report, Professor Radin presents seven case studies of how one cabinet department—the United States Department of Health and Human Services—effectively used a portfolio of crosscutting mechanisms to address specific issues or problems facing the department. Radin argues that in the 21st century, contemporary organizations will have to find new organizational mechanisms to address constantly arising crosscutting issues and problems. The movement toward flatter, less hierarchical organizations will require new ways to share responsibility and jointly problem-solve within organizations.



Leadership for Change: Case Studies in American Local Government (1999) by Janet Vinzant Denhardt and Robert B. Denhardt

This report profiles three outstanding local government executives—Robert O’Neill, Jan Perkins, and Phil Penland—who have served in various local governments over the years. The study profiles the change activities of these city/county managers as they sought to transfer a set of values and a methodology for leading change into a new setting. Case studies are presented on the change activities of each of these managers, drawing out lessons from their experiences that might suggest a new model of leading change in American local governments.



Transforming Government: Creating the New Defense Procurement System (1999) by Kimberly A. Harokopus

This report focuses on the government leaders within the Department of Defense and the White House who transformed the weapons procurement process from a rule-bound, inflexible, and inefficient system to a more subjective, cost-effective, and innovative public acquisition process. The study seeks to discover how these public sector leaders injected private sector business methodologies into the traditional federal bureaucracy and offers an illustration of how this government team exemplified leading widespread change and instilling innovation.



Managing Decentralized Departments: The Case of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1999) by Beryl A. Radin

Since its creation in 1953 as an amalgam of several existing agencies, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (originally the Department of Health, Education and Welfare) attempted to find the appropriate balance between centralized functions in the Office of the Secretary and autonomy to the various agencies and bureaus contained within its boundaries. Over the years, the pendulum has swung back and forth between an emphasis on centralization and decentralization. This report examines the efforts by former Secretary Donna Shalala to delegate many functions to the operating components, while attempting to devise processes that emphasize coordination and crosscutting approaches as appropriate.

For Additional Information on Leadership



The Importance of Leadership: The Role of School Principals (1999) by Paul E. Teske and Mark Schneider

This report examines how public school leaders affect change by transforming the environment and culture of schools, turning rule-bound organizations, often more concerned with the needs of staff, into responsive organizations more concerned with student needs and performance. The study identifies high-performing schools and includes a series of interviews to understand the leadership tools and service delivery techniques that lead to higher performance.