



MPCS

Managing the Federal Government Workforce



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25 years executive experience includes Regional VP Construction & Engineering for \$17 billion national real estate company with oversight of 125 commercial buildings, and CEO, COO and CIO for several small co-founded successful CM/IT Management consulting companies between 1995-2000 & 2006-2015. Career includes several awards for Leadership and Energy Conservation, founder of a \$4M software & technology company in 1995, developed five (5) COTS software products and has received two Federal Government (2007 CIA & 1997 John F. Kennedy Center) prestigious service awards. In 2012, developed and copyright Velocity of Risk (VoR) 3D modeling software [VoR 3D Model](#) and 2014 Integrated Strategic Maturity Model (ISMM) [ISMM](#).

“The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done and self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it”.

Theodore Roosevelt

Management Challenges: Government vs. Private Sector

The following matrix provides a comparison between the challenges faced by government managers and those encountered by their private sector counterparts.

Issue	Private Sector	Government
Budgetary Constraints	Budgets are tight at bottom of business cycle, but decisions can be flexible and rational based on the circumstances at any given time.	Budget process starts 2 years in advance. Very inflexible; difficult to reallocate resources or obtain additional funding.
Hiring	Managers can hire new staff quickly if business cycle dictates they need more personnel.	It can take 1-2 years to create and encumber a new position and several months to fill an existing position that has become vacant. In many agencies, managers are only allowed to interview the top 3 applicants (who are selected by OPM guidelines).
Firing	Anyone can be fired at any time; severance packages are a cost of doing business. Non-producers can be fired.	Separation for poor performance requires extensive documentation over a long period of time.
Bureaucracy	While bureaucracies exist in most large organizations, corporate bureaucracies tend to be smaller and less tradition-bound than those in government.	Job security, stability, and sheer size of organizations tend to foster strong bureaucratic attitudes and resistance to change.
Procurement	Companies can buy what they need, when they need it-- provided they can afford it or obtain credit.	Government procurement rules have been streamlined in recent years for small purchases, but larger acquisitions/contracts must usually be put up for competitive bid. This tends to slow the procurement and/or contracting process significantly.

Managing Federal Workforce

Federal agencies use both federal employees and private sector contractors to deliver important services to citizens. Agency management practices must recognize the proper role of each sector's labor force and draw on their respective skills to help the government operate at its best. Current policies and practices must be improved so that agencies consistently identify the proper role of each sector and achieve the best mix of public and private labor resources to serve the American people.

Contractors provide vital expertise to the government and agencies must continue to strengthen their acquisition practices so they can take efficient and effective advantage of the marketplace to meet taxpayer needs. At the same time, agencies must be alert to situations in which excessive reliance on contractors undermines the ability of the federal government to accomplish its missions.

In particular, overreliance on contractors can lead to the erosion of the in-house capacity that is essential to effective government performance. Such overreliance has been encouraged by one-sided management priorities that have publicly rewarded agencies for becoming experts in identifying functions to outsource and have ignored the costs stemming from loss of institutional knowledge and capability and from inadequate management of contracted activities. Too often agencies neglect the investments in human capital planning, recruitment, hiring, and training that are necessary for building strong internal capacity – and then are forced to rely excessively on contractors because internal capacity is lacking. In many cases, agencies lack the information that would allow managers to understand how contractor employees are deployed throughout their organization and integrated with federal employees. The full potential of our total workforce -- both contracted and federal -- often goes unrealized due to insufficient or ineffective management attention. These management shortcomings work against effective government performance and must be corrected.

According to Federal policy ([OMB M-09-26](#)), agencies are required with developing and implementing policies, practices, and tools for managing the multi-sector workforce by taking the following steps:

1. Adopt a framework for planning and managing the multi-sector workforce that is built on strong strategic human capital planning. The framework emphasizes collaboration among program, human capital, acquisition, and budget and finance offices to achieve a high performing workforce made up of a strong internal core of federal employees supported by the expertise of contractors. See section, ***An Initial Framework for Managing the Multi-Sector Workforce***.
2. Conduct a pilot human capital analysis of at least one program, project, or activity, where the agency has concerns about the extent of reliance on contractors. The pilot will provide agencies with an opportunity to develop processes and practices that support the broader vision of multi-sector workforce management. See section, ***Multi-Sector Workforce Planning Pilot***.
3. When considering in-sourcing, use guidelines that facilitate consistent and sound application of statutory requirements. Pursuant to section 736 of Division D of

the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009, P.L. 111-8, civilian agencies are required to have guidelines for in-sourcing. Agencies' guidelines should be consistent with criteria developed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). See section, ***Criteria for In-sourcing Work Under Public Law 111-8.***

The Face of Leadership

Leaders must be followers too. If you're a leader without following, you're a dictator. And as fun as that sounds, being a leader-follower means finding value in your team, getting inspired by your team, encouraging your team to communicate, brainstorm and be open. A good leader shares the power by in-powering team members to take control of something demonstrates the leader's ability to let someone else on the team to be in the driver seat.

Leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal advancement in a given situation. Thus the leadership process is a function of the leader, the follower, the goals, and the situation at the time. It is active, exerts influence, requires effort, confronts conflict and is related to goals.

As an executive you are one of your organization's principal team leaders—the magnetic center of a group of people who look to you for leadership and vision. You are expected to create excitement and team spirit.

For this, you must not only inspire people, but motivate them to achieve beyond their own expectations. You must develop a power-team.

First, you must have an intuitive understanding of how teams work. Mature executives know that teams have a collective energy greater than that of any of the individuals on the team or even its leader. The challenge for executives is to harvest the synergies of the team to their entrepreneurial spirit and produce results.

Team members share responsibility for achieving these goals—successes will be impossible without team cohesion. For this to happen, much must be done to ensure that the members coordinate their activities and communicate well. Their mission will need to be clearly stated and communicated. They will have to learn how to solve problems together and follow clear norms and rules.

Everyone, including the leader, will have to keep their ego under control. Then, when the team has succeeded, everybody can share the praise and public recognition.

Mike McCormick - 2006

The Leadership Strategy Plan

The following provides an overview of my personal best practices when acquiring a new leadership role and responsibilities with managing Federal or Private sector employees. A good leadership plan includes requires the ability to identify and manage each type of personality (strengths and weaknesses) to provide the individual the opportunity to succeed within their capabilities by conducting routine skills assessments and performance reviews.

Assuming Leadership: 90 Days Transition Plan – Introductions, listening; assessment, plan, lead, control and motivation.

- **Planning:** Deciding what needs to happen in the future (today, next week, next month, next year, over the next 5 years, etc.) and generating achievable plans of action.
- **Organizing:** (Implementation) making optimum use of the resources required to enable the successful carrying out of plans.
- **Staffing:** Job analyzing, recruitment, and hiring individuals for appropriate jobs.
- **Leading:** Determining what needs to be done in a situation and getting people to do it.
- **Controlling:** Monitoring and checking progress against plans, which may need modification based on feedback and performance.
- **Motivating:** The process of stimulating an individual to take action that will accomplish a desired goal.

Introductions: I do not believe in making quick judgments' regarding initial introduction impressions for the situation usually does not provide an environment for most people to be comfortable with you the first time.

Listening: During the first few weeks depending on the size of the staff/department or project team members, I conduct a one-on-one interview session (30 minutes max) and typically try to do this in the employee's work space (their comfort zone). This creates the opportunity to make it less formal and to see how the individual reflects their personality in their space, i.e. organized, personal pictures, plants etc. This approach is less intrusive and fosters useful dialog and the opportunity to have my full attention to "listen" to what is important to the individual.

The Plan Assessment

The Plan assessment is to ascertain business/department goals and objectives, operating budgets, current timelines, deliverables and general philosophy, and work force resources and capabilities.

Assessment: This starts the first day and with each day from there begins the assessment, "collection" of key components of information to begin formulating a

two step planning program; the Transition Plan (short term) and the Management Plan (annual plan). During this process individual group meetings would be scheduled by functional areas and hierarchy, customers and contractors.

The Transition Plan: During this phase a quick skills assessment of all personnel will be determined in conjunction with position descriptions and any current reviews conducted during the past 12 months. This transition plan objective is to determine where we are now, how we're doing, what areas require immediate attention "risk assessment" and establish a priority schedule and make any necessary adjustments deemed necessary.

The Management Plan: During the second 90 day period following the initial plan should provide adequate time to complete a through assessment of current management operations, policies and procedures, position descriptions and contract services to finalize a management plan. This process management approach will be the application of knowledge, skills, tools, techniques and systems to define, visualize, measure, control, report and improve processes with the goal to meet customer requirements. The management plan will provide an overview of current assessment and define the necessary changes or business management improvement (BPI) goals and objects with milestones and deliverables. Implementation assessments and benchmarking of the plan will occur on quarterly basis to determine and adjust any necessary changes to the plan.

Leading (Structure)

The success of leading is dependent on well defined organizational structure, consisting of but not limited to:

- Policies and procedures
- Positions descriptions
- Well defined expectations and deliverables
- Employee reviews and Action Plans

This base line structure establishes the necessary parameters to establish control and eliminates confusion with required task and performance of those tasks. Any gray area is where effective leadership provides the necessary "guidance" to help those requiring assistance to achieve success.

Controlling

Control is one of the managerial functions like *planning, organizing, staffing* and *directing*. It is an important function because it helps to identify deficiencies/risk and to take the corrective action so that deviation from standards are minimized and stated goals of the organization are achieved in desired manner. Control is a foreseeing action and not when deficiencies are detected. Control in management means setting standards, measuring actual performance and proactively implementing corrective action.

Being a proactive management practitioner, the use of structure will ensure that most individuals will perform to the minimum standards of the position requirements. Providing individuals the opportunity of “empowerment” or “ownership” with positive feedback will typically bring questions and issues to the management before they become a reactive situation to resolve.

Motivating

Effective motivation is to influence the employee or team members in such a way that their output for the task given is most competent. This includes communication with the work force, recognizing and dealing with the problems they might be facing and also giving them good incentive to put in their best effort. Incentives can also include best performance awards. I prefer to incorporate all individuals as equal members of a team, soliciting their feedback and deferring to their expertise as needed. This helps with developing harmony and a true sense of belonging with purpose.

- Management involves power by position.
- Leadership involves power by influence.

Performance is considered to be a function of ability and motivation, thus:

Ability in turn depends on education, experience and training and its improvement is a slow and long process. On the other hand motivation can be improved quickly. There are many options and an uninitiated manager may not even know where to start.

As a practice, there are seven strategies for motivation:

- Positive reinforcement / high expectations
- Effective discipline
- Treating people fairly
- Satisfying employees needs (advancement, type of work, proud to work for)
- Setting work related goals
- Restructuring jobs
- Base rewards on job performance

These are the basic strategies, though the mix in the final 'recipe' will vary from workplace situation to situation. Essentially, there is a gap between an individual's actual state and some desired state and the manager tries to reduce this gap.

Motivation is, in effect, a means to reduce and manipulate this gap. It is inducing others in a specific way towards goals specifically stated by the motivator. Naturally, these goals are the motivation system and must conform to the organizational policy. The motivational system must be tailored to the situation and to the organization.

Team Environments

Depending on the size and diversity of the department or project team, I prefer to divide the work force into specific groups and give each group a specific task or project. Organizing groups stimulates employee involvement to improve communication of

information and coordination within these groups. Thus the basic aim of organizing is to simply divide the work load and define the tasks while setting up deadlines in such a way that although different groups do different things they all work together to achieve the team goal.

On major projects I have found creating a Management Plan or Charter which is essential for all team members to understand team structure, lines of responsibility and accountability. When dealing with outside consultants and contractors, is very important to establish this process to ensure timelines and deliverables are met by the team and prevent project confusion and accountability.

Team Dynamics: Team and group dynamics are influenced by many factors, such as the larger context in which the team operates, the organization, the team identity itself, and the mix of individuals within the team. To build positive relationships, there are four types of differences to consider. The challenge for the team is to find the unique combination of values that the team supports and that meet individual needs, so each member follows them for the benefits of the entire team.

1. Interpersonal styles
2. Personal work styles
3. Experience and Background
4. Communication styles

The Team Plan: Experience has proven that a defined Project or Charter Plan has helped a wide variety of teams achieve increased cohesion, trust, effectiveness and bottom-line results. The team works together to determine the objectives and scope of a team engagement:

- A team charter that aligns with the organization's strategy and defines the team's mission, values, and goals.
- A team culture based on trust and collaboration to ground team members through inevitable changes in scope, deadlines and resources.
- A unique decision-making framework for working together effectively.
- Individual action plans and/or coaching engagements for increased effectiveness
- Best practices for increased accountability
- Improved communication and collaboration skills
- Practical applications of emotional intelligence

Federal Employee Characteristics Assessments

The Federal Government is under increasing pressure to control spending and increase efficiency. At the same time, the rise in retirement eligibility and retirement rates among Federal employees means that many Federal workplaces are facing the loss of some of their most experienced employees. Yet, there have also been increasing demands for innovation and creativity. These challenges have made it more critical than ever for the

Federal workforce to be composed of highly capable individuals who are passionate about their work and service to the public; committed to their jobs and organizations; and willing to go beyond the parameters of their job descriptions to generate effective work products and services for the American people.

One strategy for cultivating such a workforce—in addition to formal mechanisms such as good performance management practices, succession management, and knowledge transfer—is promoting the engagement of individual Federal employees.

Motivating employees to perform at a high level and encouraging their engagement are essential to an efficient and effective Federal Government. Having skilled, engaged employees is more important than ever, especially in light of austere fiscal conditions, budget constraints, impending retirements, and public debate over the value of Federal employees and their work.

The benefits of conducting employee characteristics assessments will provide valuable employee feedback and clarity on the organization's overall human resource management structure and process efficiencies.

Characteristics Assessment Objectives:

- Identifies the importance of 5 job characteristics for supporting employee motivation: (1) skill variety, (2) task identity, (3) task significance, (4) autonomy, and (5) feedback;
- Identifies the relationship between Federal employees' perceptions of these job characteristics with their motivation and performance;
- Identifies the importance that Federal employees place on various rewards such as awards and bonuses, personal satisfaction, and developmental opportunities;
- Identifies employees' perceptions of the connections between their effort and performance and the rewards that agencies provide;

Characteristics Assessment Benefits:

- Assist with developing strategies for improving job characteristics, such as job enlargement, enrichment, and rotation, as well as communicating how jobs contribute to mission accomplishment;
- The importance of connecting desired rewards to employees' effort and performance, for supporting employee motivation;
- Provides diagnostic data that Federal agencies can use to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement in job design and rewards, respectively; and
- Supporting the development of an effective reward program, such as using sound performance management practices, communicating the availability of rewards and conditions for receiving them, whereby providing rewards that employees value, and making fair and transparent reward decisions.

Job Characteristics Reengineering:

Job design—structuring jobs to maximize desirable characteristics—supports organizational efficiency and effectiveness. This is because job characteristics can impact employee motivation, a necessary ingredient for engagement and performance.

Managers and supervisors should determine the extent to which their employees' jobs have motivating characteristics. Such characteristics include:

- Performing a variety of tasks that require a wide range of knowledge, skills, and abilities;
- Completing whole pieces of work or projects;
- Having a significant impact through work;
- Exercising autonomy in scheduling and performing work;
- Performance not tied to task impacted by others; and
- Receiving appropriate feedback.

In the event that improvements could be made to job characteristics to better support motivation and engagement, and to the extent permitted by mission requirements and employees' capabilities, managers and supervisors should work with relevant organizational leaders and employee representatives to design and implement changes.

Improvements could include:

- Diversifying the duties of a job to increase the knowledge and skill sets that employees must apply to tasks;
- Cross-training by rotating employees among jobs to increase their skill sets;
- Reward employees for additional task duty covering employee leave; or
- Enriching jobs by increasing employees' independence, responsibility, and accountability.

Agency leaders should also emphasize to employees the significance of their work and how it contributes to accomplishing goals; supports the organization's mission; and benefits the general public.

Leadership Example

Welcome to the world where project managers are categorized as “dime a dozen”. Project management is really all about “risk management” strategy. I’m sure you’ve heard about “business strategy”, well your PM survival kit must include a PM risk strategy. This is no different than conducting a project benefits analysis (business case) but in the PM’s case, the PM should develop a **Career Risk Strategy** with each employer:

1. Benefits (does this project help or hurt my career- RISK Appetite).
2. Work Load (what’s on your plate and how does that impact your ability to manage successfully).
3. Organizational Maturity & Culture (effective leadership & commitment to project management, project management structure “strategic alignment PMO”, processes & tools).

Download this model to see my point: [ISMM](#)

Project Manager Career Risk Factors:

1. Sponsor (supportive, inconsistent support or directs but won’t take accountability, in-the-weeds distracter).
2. Risk Score (complexity, duration, profile level, budget reality).
3. Team (weak, consistent, strong, in-house/out-source).
4. Gut (how do you feel about your success “listen to it”).

The key to this personal risk assessment is to understand your limitations and accept that you will have to curtail (reduce) your % of commitment to your other projects (portfolio resource balance) which is where the risk can bite you. To have one project go south is one thing but to impact multiple projects negatively for the benefit of one “oh I want this project”, be careful and remember, the bigger you make your plate, the bigger they’ll dish it up! Effective leadership is to lead, delegate and follow.....dish some out on other plates to succeed and stay out of the weeds. Don’t micro-manage, people hate it and it’s counterproductive.







If you're "mind set" is right on track with this approach, stick to those values and "choose-your-battles-wisely" and stick to "your" risk plan. Also remember, in business the rules are clouded by hidden agendas, so professional alignment is critical in any organization, not brown nosing, smart networking. Hard work alone won't get you noticed, you have to get in people's faces "figuratively speaking", to get someone's attention and get on their radar otherwise their perspective perpetuated by single liners by others can kill your career.

Remember, your managing people not projects. That's why it's so challenging. People come in all flavors and some taste really bad, and can poison the well or worst, your job. Sometimes, even when you're right, make sure who the person you're winning against can't hurt you later.

The soft hand of diplomacy only comes with time.

Mike McCormick - 2015

Free Human Resource Templates

Template Title	PDF	Excel File (Zip Format)
<p><u>Employee Performance Review Form:</u> This Excel Form is used to conduct employee/personnel performance and has a built-in Dashboard and rating system; scoring performance, attendance, attendance and supervisory skills.</p>		
<p><u>Position Assessment Model:</u> This Excel Model allows either applicant, HR or Supervisor to conduct a position assessment of the candidate or employee. Provides Dashboard with rating and score and you can change the position description and categories to fit the any position type. This example was setup for an IT Sr. Project Manager.</p>		
<p><u>Skills Gap Assessment Tool:</u> Use this Excel 2003 to assess your project team members required skills.</p>		

Instructions: Press Ctrl+Click on Image to download file.