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Federal Government Reform: Lessons from Clinton's "Reinventing Government" and Bush's "Management Agenda" Initiatives

Newly elected presidents oftentimes set out to reform the executive branch. This has been the norm for more than 100 years, and indications are that the next president will follow this pattern. The authors have had firsthand experience over the past 15 years with White House–led government reform efforts. They provide their insights on President Bill Clinton's reinventing government initiative and President George W. Bush's management agenda efforts. Based on their experience, they offer lessons to the next president's team on what they might do to get a reform effort started successfully and how to get reform initiatives implemented and sustained.

"Government reform" has been a rallying cry for advocates of good government for more than 100 years, starting with Teddy Roosevelt's Keep Commission in 1905 in its efforts to reduce red tape (*New York Times* 1906). And this interest does not seem to be abating. During the early stages of the 2008 presidential campaign, there were campaign proposals to do the following:

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- Cut the size of the federal workforce—or the size of the contracting workforce
- Create a public service academy to train future leaders in government
- Stop replacing all retiring civil servants
- Create chief management officers in each department (Fels n.d.)

So it is likely that the next president will also sponsor some form of government reform effort. The two most immediate questions his advisors will have are (1) how do you get a reform effort started, and (2) once started, how do you keep it going and get things implemented?

Over the past 15 years, the authors have either worked on or advised the management reform efforts initiated by Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. We share our insights into the context of those initiatives and offer some lessons on how the next president might want to approach government-wide reform efforts—whatever they might be—based on our combined experiences with White House–led government reform efforts.

Lessons for Reforming Government

On Getting Started

Presidents do not come into office to reform the management of the government. But oftentimes they quickly find that they have to address the way the government operates if they want to achieve their policy goals. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) and other organizations have identified managerial shortcomings that can stymie policy initiatives if they are left unaddressed. Given this, we suggest that the next president do the following:

Put management issues on the front burner early. Three things seem to matter to the success of any management reform effort. The first is to start on a firm footing. Many times commitments are made during a campaign that can undermine responsible reform efforts, so campaign staff need to be aware that what they say can come back to haunt their future president. The second is to start early. Most successful reform efforts are begun within weeks after a new president takes office, in part because acting on the resulting initiatives can take years of effort. And third, and most important, the president must secure and maintain top-level support for the effort. Absent evidence of the president's personal interest and time, reform efforts quickly become paperwork compliance exercises.

Clearly define the scope of the effort in advance. There are many approaches, but any

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Note: Web sites linked to a particular administration are archived at the end of each administration; therefore, Web addresses for President Bush's initiatives will change on January 20, 2009.

successful approach has to reflect the values and priorities of the president and his or her team. For example, should the emphasis be on cost savings and reducing waste, fraud, and abuse, or should the emphasis be on improving services to citizens and delivering effective programs? The military calls this clarity of definition the "commander's intent," which establishes a "common operating picture." Without it, a reform effort can quickly lose focus at the hands of competing agendas of lower-level staff.

Come to agreement on an initiative development and selection process. Decide up front whether you want to use a top-down, closed process or a bottom-up, open process for developing reform initiatives. The approach, or mixture of approaches, can have a long-term effect on the implementation of the resulting initiatives. For example, President Clinton relied on temporary staff assigned to a task force under the direction of the vice president to develop his initiatives with agency-level teams, whereas President Bush used the permanent career staff of the Office of Management and Budget to develop his. Both approaches worked, but they led to different emphases in the implementation phase.

On Getting Action

The initiative development process is probably 5 percent to 10 percent of the effort. The remainder is getting something to actually change. There are many ways to take action on initiatives developed, and there are many ways to sustain momentum. To do this requires long-term commitment by the president and his or her team. Elements that seem to best contribute to success include the following:

- Creating a dedicated focal point for action
- Appointing leaders who "get it"
- Developing a road map for action
- Obtaining support from Congress
- Using the president's power strategically
- Effectively coordinating and collaborating with agencies
- Developing a means to keep agencies and employees focused

The remainder of this article addresses these two elements: getting started and getting action. But it is helpful to begin with some context on the pressure to continue reform efforts.

Some Background on Federal Government Reform Efforts

There have been at least 14 government-wide reform efforts in the federal government over the past century (Arnold 1998). There will likely be pressure on the next president to continue reform efforts. One of the most prominent sets of recommendations for continued action comes from GAO. Its former leader, ex–Comptroller General David Walker, urged the Congress and president to reexamine the "base" of the federal government (GAO 2005). By this he meant the programs and commitments that the government has made, in the context of the growing fiscal imbalance the country faces. His proposal primarily addresses "what" government does. However, his report also addresses the need to reexamine "how" the government is managed. Addressing "how" government is effectively managed is the focal point of this article.

In addition to the GAO's concerns, which are rooted in the fiscal position of the country, there is a continuing shift in how large organizations are organized and managed. Professor Donald F. Kettl notes that "[t]he current conduct of American government is a poor match for the problems it must solve… . American governments increasingly face problems that pay little attention to the boundaries created to manage them" (Kettl and Kelman 2007, 9–10). Addressing these concerns is also of interest to public executives.

The approach to government reform over the past two decades has been different from what preceded. The traditional approach to management reform had been to use a blue ribbon commission—bring in outside experts to study the problem and recommend reforms (Sistare 2004). Action on the recommendations was left to others. The use of this approach essentially died in 1992 when President George H. W. Bush declined to appoint members to a congressionally established reform commission.[1] When President Bill Clinton took office, he took a different approach. He tasked Vice President Al Gore with the responsibility of "reinventing" the government. Gore's task force of career federal employees developed a set of recommendations after a six-month study, but the implementation effort spanned the full eight years of Clinton's presidency. Clinton's successor, President George W. Bush, created his own reform initiative and staffed it through the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). His implementation effort also lasted the length of his administration. Both Clinton and Bush made strong commitments to implementing, not just creating, reform initiatives.

President Clinton's "Reinventing Government" Initiative

President Clinton entered office in 1993 with a commitment to "fix the government." He had championed total quality management while governor of Arkansas and was an admirer of the 1992 book *Reinventing Government* by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler. After his election, his transition team advisor on government operations, Al From,[2] held several brainstorming sessions to discuss what government reform initiatives might be undertaken. He invited John Sharp, comptroller for the state of Texas, to describe his successful Texas Performance Review, which was a state government-wide reform effort (Texas Performance

Review 1991). From also outlined several Clinton campaign promises, such as cutting 100,000 employees, cutting White House staff by 25 percent, and reducing agency administrative expenses. Options for a federal government-wide reform effort were discussed, but no immediate action was taken during the transition.

Launching the Initiative

Clinton launched his reform initiative six weeks after taking office. In a March 3, 1993, White House announcement—flanked by David Osborne, Al From, Vice President Al Gore, and the deputy director for management in the OMB, Phil Lader—Clinton declared, "Our goal is to make the entire federal government less expensive and more efficient, and to change the culture of our national bureaucracy away from complacency and entitlement toward initiative and empowerment."[3]

He charged Vice President Gore with leading the effort and gave him a six-month deadline to submit recommendations to him to act on. Gore formed a task force of career government employees that was initially called the National Performance Review (NPR). In Clinton's second term in office, it was renamed the National Partnership for Reinventing Government.

Vice President Gore asked his newly appointed senior policy advisor, Elaine Kamarck, to oversee the effort. She helped the vice president recruit a task force that comprised a central team of about 250 staff, with each major agency creating its own internal teams. The vice president also created a small advisory group, composed of several outsiders such as Sharp and From, to advise him. The group reportedly met only once.

Kamarck recruited a small cadre of federal employees to run the initiative, led by a well-known reformer in the Defense Department, Bob Stone. She also recruited senior staffers from John Sharp's team who had run the Texas Performance Review. The federal employees worked with the Texas staff to develop a plan of action that resulted in two sets of teams—one set reviewed the major federal agencies, while the other set reviewed the major administrative systems of the government, such has human resources, budget, and finance (Stone 2004). The cadre also developed a core set of operating principles, influenced by Osborne and Gaebler's book, which were endorsed by the vice president.[4]

Crafting the Recommendations

The NPR's leadership cadre quickly recruited team members from across the government, eventually totaling about 250 temporary staff on assignment. The broader effort kicked off with an orientation and training session in mid-April. The teams then set out to review the agencies and systems to which they had been assigned. Periodic "tollgate" meetings were held between the teams and the leadership cadre. Parallel to the teams' work, the vice president reached out to the public and the broader federal career workforce for stories of what was wrong and what needed to be fixed. He eventually received more than 50,000 letters, and he went to listening sessions in several dozen federal agencies and around the country. This personal engagement helped frame his views on recommendations to be made. In addition, it created a strong personal commitment to follow through with the implementation of those recommendations.

Once the teams developed their findings and recommendations, the teams presented them, one by one, to the vice president and the NPR leadership cadre, beginning in late June. At this point, David Osborne was brought in to help craft the final report; he, in turn, recruited several talented writers to help. As the vice president completed his review of the team reports—totaling nearly 2,000 pages—the writing team took the team reports and distilled them down to a succinct, readable final report that told a compelling story and offered crisp recommendations for action.

In the end, there was a series of recommendations that the vice president wanted to ensure the president would support, so in early August, he held a series of meetings with the president and his key staff to review options and make choices. Once this was done, drafts of the recommendations were circulated more broadly within the government, including one-on-one meetings between the vice president and the cabinet secretaries to ensure they would support the recommendations being made to their respective agencies.

The title of the final report reflected a tension built into the review: *From Red Tape to Results: Creating a Government That Works Better and Costs Less* (Gore 1993).[5] The report contained more than 1,200 recommendations. One set of recommendations focused on improvements to the way the government worked—streamlining procurement, setting customer service standards, and so forth. Another set of recommendations touted more than $100 billion in cost reductions—decreasing the number of employees by more than 250,000, eliminating a range of programs such as the wool and mohair subsidy, and so on.

The first set of recommendations appealed to employees, while the second set was targeted to appeal to the general public. The tension, though, created challenges around employee buy-in to recommendations when it came time to implement them (Kettl 1994).

The report was released with fanfare in early September 1993 on the White House lawn before an audience of cabinet members, congressional leadership, and the media. The president used the occasion to launch the implementation phase when he noted, "There are a lot of places in this report where it says 'the President should,' 'the President should,' 'the President should.' Well, let me tell you something, I've read it, and where it says 'the President should,' the President WILL."[6] This was the first step in the implementation phase.

At that point, the Texas staff—on loan from Texas comptroller John Sharp—and most of the federal employee task force members returned to their home agencies. A small group remained to help launch the implementation effort by drafting executive orders and legislation.

Evolution of the NPR's Implementation Strategies

The implementation strategy for the NPR's recommendations was developed from the start when the vice president told the NPR leadership cadre that he did not want recommendations "to move the boxes in government organization charts. I want to fix what's inside the boxes." He also said that he wanted recommendations that were actionable, preferably through executive branch action rather than congressional action, and that he did not want recommendations recommending further studies. This early guidance influenced the approach taken by the review teams during the recommendation development phase.

The NPR task force was initially envisioned to be temporary, ending with the issuance of the final report in September 1993. The final report recommended the creation of a President's Management Council (PMC), composed of the chief operating officers of the departments and major agencies, to provide leadership in implementing the report's recommendations. However, the president and vice president decided to extend the NPR's life on an ad hoc basis during the remainder of President Clinton's first term. This uncertainty over how long the task force would continue in existence led the NPR leadership cadre to resort to a series of short-term initiatives during the initial implementation phase. Because the NPR was an interagency task force whose members were generally limited to three- to six-month assignments by their agencies, it led to a constant rotation of staff.[7] The implementation initiatives undertaken by the NPR staff oftentimes reached far beyond the formal recommendations in the report and have largely not been explored to date by academic observers.

The implementation efforts of the reinvention initiative comprised three different strategies:

- Acting on the formal recommendations in the initial and subsequent reports.
- Supporting a government-wide campaign to spread the principles of reinvention at the grassroots level, in an effort to change the bureaucratic culture on the front line.
- Engaging bureau-level agencies and their leaders in embracing reinvention principles and developing their own agency-wide reinvention initiatives.

The emphasis on these different strategies shifted over the course of the Clinton administration, largely in response to changes in the political environment and the personalities involved. The overall implementation approach was highly entrepreneurial and opportunistic in approach. This approach suited the tempo of the NPR, in part because of the continuing rotation of staff every three to six months over the life of the initiative.

By the beginning of the second term, the task force's continuation seemed politically assured—it was widely assumed that the vice president was going to run for president and that the NPR would be one of his signature efforts—so it began to develop and implement longer-term projects in collaboration with bureau-level agencies.

Implementing the NPR's Formal Recommendations

The most visible implementation effort was around the initial report, subsequent reports, and their associated recommendations. This strategy was fairly traditional and relied on the traditional bureaucratic hierarchy for action. The initial 1,200 recommendations were categorized as to whether they required legislation, presidential action, or agency action to be implemented. They were detailed in 35 accompanying reports, totaling nearly 2,000 pages, which provided the specifics behind each recommendation.

The OMB was involved in drafting and clearing executive orders and proposed legislation. The NPR staff developed a tracking system for each recommendation, with points of contacts for each item. Departments designated points of contact and established liaisons with the NPR, and they met monthly. For the first four years after its "final" report was released, the NPR released an annual report, documenting progress (Gore 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997). These reports occasionally included new recommendations and initiatives. The emphasis of this strategy was on recommendations related to cost savings, progress on personnel reductions, the development of customer service standards, and regulatory streamlining.

The strategy for progress on recommendations requiring legislation was to rely on the regular ebb and flow of authorizing and appropriation legislation and to integrate individual recommendations into that flow. But there was early pressure to create a "reinventing government" bill and send it to Congress. That was done, and the bill contained about 40 NPR recommendations.[8] The bill passed the Democratic House but was stripped down and largely killed in the Democratic Senate. Afterward the original strategy was used, and it was more successful. More than 90 pieces of legislation were adopted to implement a range of NPR recommendations.

Two other elements of the implementation strategy were personally defined by Vice President Gore: first, a focus on getting things done and not worrying about claiming credit. For example, a recommendation to reduce the size of the federal government's field structure was largely accomplished but never announced. The second element was to focus attention on those agencies that wanted to reinvent and ignore those that resisted. Both of these elements were counterintuitive to traditional approaches but were largely effective.[9]

When the Republicans took control of Congress in 1994, President Clinton asked Vice President Gore to conduct a second review, with more recommendations. These, too, were tracked. In this second phase of the NPR, the intended emphasis was more on "what" agencies did rather than "how" agencies did their work. This effort was not well received by agencies and did not make much progress. However, a parallel effort to reexamine the work of the 60 regulatory agencies led to a series of recommendations to reform the way regulatory agencies worked. For example, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration shifted its emphasis from conducting inspections and levying fines to reducing workplace injuries.[10]

Under the implementation strategy for the reports and recommendations, the metrics for success included the number of recommendations implemented, dollars saved, reduction in the number of employees, and number of customer service standards. The GAO confirmed initial progress on the recommendations (GAO 1994). However, these metrics were criticized by academics as a "counting exercise" (Kettl 1994).

Creating a Reinvention Campaign

The NPR report also conveyed a set of principles: "put customers first," "cut red tape," "empower employees to get results," and "cut back to basics." These four principles served as the foundation for the second implementation strategy—reaching out to teams of individual employees to change the bureaucratic culture by embracing the principles of reinvention in their day-to-day work. Unlike the first strategy, which relied on the traditional hierarchy for implementation, this strategy was based on the development of informal networks of teams of employees across the government. This campaign was variously characterized as "letting 1,000 flowers bloom" and "fanning the flames." This approach had never been attempted before in the government.

This strategy was not explicitly envisioned in the report or the initial implementation strategy developed around the report's recommendations. It was created in the weeks after the report was released, by NPR project director Bob Stone, when it became clear that a subset of the original team would be allowed to continue on to staff the implementation of the report's recommendations. Prior to the NPR, Stone had conducted a successful campaign to reduce bureaucracy in the Defense Department, and he saw this as an opportunity to spread this effort across the entire government. He recommended to the vice president a government-wide campaign to engage teams of individual federal employees around the principles of reinvention. This appealed to Gore, who was taken by the enthusiasm and passion of the federal workers he met during the course of his many town hall meetings.

The NPR launched a broad effort to encourage frontline staff to incorporate the principles of reinvention into their day-to-day work: putting customers first, cutting red tape, empowering employees, and cutting back to basics. This became a broader movement in the federal workforce to reshape the governmental bureaucratic culture to be more entrepreneurial and less rule driven.

To do this, the NPR staff sponsored reinvention labs,[11] Hammer Awards,[12] and a series of workshops to promote these principles with the workforce. It accompanied these initiatives with a communications campaign that included a network of federal agency communicators and a "reinvention" video (NPR 1994) that provided examples of how federal workers were applying the principles in their work.[13] This implementation strategy made the traditional bureaucracy in the OMB and the upper reaches of agencies nervous because they could not control what was evolving. Political leaders had not consistently "bought in" to the campaign because it was largely driven from the grassroots, and they were seen as part of the problem. Interestingly, this further inspired both Gore and the NPR staff to push forward, treating it as a guerilla campaign. This led to additional efforts to embed reinvention principles, such as the presidential memo that encouraged waivers of agency rules by frontline teams and "best practices" on how to be more entrepreneurial.[14]

Under the reinvention campaign implementation strategy, the metrics for success included the number of people involved in reinvention labs, number of Hammer Awards, and level of engagement by frontline employees, as measured by a government-wide survey.

When the initial reinvention effort was launched, agencies were encouraged to develop their own internal reinvention teams. After the initial report was released, some continued while others disappeared.

Supporting Agency Reinvention Efforts

When the initial reinvention effort was launched, agencies were encouraged to develop their own internal reinvention teams. After the initial report was released, some continued while others disappeared. Around the time of the second Clinton term, a self-assessment of progress led to several changes in the NPR's strategic approach. Also, Kamarck stepped down from her role as the vice president's senior advisor and was replaced by Morley Winograd, who deemphasized the "review and recommend" role of the NPR and shifted the NPR to a "support agencies in achieving their reinvention goals" role.[15]

While the NPR continued to advocate the implementation of earlier recommendations and support the frontline reinvention campaign, it developed a new thrust to support a subset of bureau-level agencies in delivering on their mission in ways that mattered to citizens, such as increasing tornado warning times, expanding Internal Revenue Service (IRS) phone service to 24/7 during tax season, putting student loans on the Internet, and cutting the review cycle of new drugs. To reflect this change in emphasis, the NPR was renamed the National Partnership for Reinventing Government.

The new strategy focused on helping about 30 bureau-level agencies that had the most interaction with the public, such as the National Park Service and the IRS. These agencies developed specific, citizen-facing initiatives that would make a difference in services to the public (Clinton and Gore 1997).

The NPR also attempted to influence a culture change across government—but mainly in these agencies—by changing the rating standards for career senior executives to be more results-oriented, sponsoring customer satisfaction and employee surveys, and promoting the reporting of agency-level performance information via the implementation of the Government Performance and Results Act. Red, green, and yellow "traffic light" scorecards were developed for each agency, but they were used only internally to track progress.

As a result, the NPR shifted its measures of success from dollars saved and reductions in personnel to measures of employee and customer satisfaction and increases in citizen trust in government.

Opportunistic Initiatives

In addition to the three implementation strategies—which were more evolutionary than planned—the NPR served as a platform for a series of related government reform initiatives. The NPR was seen by the president and vice president as both an innovation platform to test new ideas as well as a White House unit that could act on small, targeted initiatives faster and more effectively than the traditional bureaucracy. As a result, a segment of the NPR's work was event driven. It became a convening authority and a neutral meeting place for cross-agency efforts.

In this role, the NPR piloted the use of communities of practice around child health insurance, safe cities, and the twenty-first century workforce. It piloted the development of performance-based organizations and sponsored the Plain Language initiative and the Welfare to Work initiative. It also staffed early IRS reform efforts, expansion of the use of NOAA weather radios, and preparations for the 2000 Census. These efforts made the NPR team relevant to the president and vice president but, at the same time, reduced its focus on government-wide reform initiatives.

Accomplishments

The reinvention effort claimed a number of accomplishments that reflected the dual nature of the effort.

Costs less. On the "costs less" front, the NPR claimed that its efforts had led to a reduction in the size of the federal workforce of 426,200, the passage of 90 pieces of legislation, the elimination of 250 obsolete programs, the reduction of 640,000 pages of unnecessary internal regulations, and the elimination of another 16,000 pages of regulations affecting the public and businesses. The NPR also claimed more than $136 billion in savings from its efforts.[16] However, in response to congressional requests to substantiate these figures, the Government Accountability Office found that the relationship between the NPR recommendations and the savings claims was not at all clear (GAO 1999). Like so many efforts before, the political need to claim substantial costs savings was unable to be supported by analytical rigor. Nevertheless, there was a clear sense that the initiative did contribute to government-wide savings, even though the precise amount could not be calculated.

Works better. On the "works better" front, the reinvention effort claimed that in surveys of citizen trust in the federal government, results had more than doubled during the course of the Clinton administration—from 21 percent to 44 percent—as measured by a long-standing survey conducted by the University of Michigan.[17] In addition, the NPR's annual workforce survey suggested that more than one-third of the workforce felt the effort had made a difference in their workplace. Employees in organizations where employees felt reinvention had taken hold were twice as satisfied with their jobs (84 percent) than those who did not believe reinvention was a priority in their workplace. In terms of customer satisfaction, surveys by the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index showed satisfaction with services increased and were nearly comparable to similar private sector surveys.[18]

Initiatives That Continued Beyond the Clinton Administration

While some observers say the results of the reinvention effort were largely symbolic and ephemeral, a number of changes that it sponsored have endured. For example, the emphasis on better "managing for results" has taken hold in agencies, largely as a consequence of the foundation created by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. Other continuing institutional changes include the following:

Chief operating officers. The reinvention effort recommended the designation of chief operating officers to have responsibility for the day-to-day operations of departments and agencies. President Clinton directed agency heads to designate such positions, and this was seen as a successful approach. These positions were continued administratively under the Bush administration as well.

President's Management Council. The reinvention effort also recommended that the president establish a President's Management Council to coordinate government-wide implementation of the recommendations of the NPR. The council was chaired by the OMB's deputy director for management and consisted of the chief operating officer from the cabinet departments and selected major agencies. The council led a series of government-wide efforts—for example, it coordinated quick responses to the Y2K and government shutdown crises. The role was seen as a successful approach and was continued administratively by the Bush administration to coordinate its own management improvement initiatives.

Employee survey. The partnership sponsored three annual employee surveys and shared the results publicly with both agencies and employees to encourage improvement. The use of annual employee surveys was continued administratively by the Bush administration and was incorporated into law in 2003. The surveys provided useful benchmarks and were a source of improvement initiatives, both at the agency level as well as government-wide.

Senior executive performance standards. The partnership worked with the Office of Personnel Management to update the performance appraisal standards for career senior executives to be more results oriented. This was extended by the Bush administration by linking the standards to executive pay, and this was also incorporated into law in 2003.

Government-wide Web portal. The NPR and the PMC cosponsored the creation of the first federal government-wide one-stop portal, then called FirstGov. It was continued by the Bush administration and renamed USA.gov. It has been recognized with a Harvard Innovation Award and was declared by *Time* magazine in June 2007 one of the top 25 Web sites "we can't live without."[19]

In addition, legislation is pending before Congress to require all agencies to set customer service standards and link them to employee appraisals as of mid-2008.[20] Legislation has passed both House and Senate committees to require the use of plain language in government documents.[21]

President George W. Bush's Management Agenda

As the first "MBA president," George W. Bush made better management and performance of the federal government a plank in his campaign platform. He acted on it early in his administration by developing a targeted agenda to improve agency-level management capacity and program-level performance and results. He maintained a consistent focus on the core elements of this agenda over the course of his entire administration.

His management initiatives were run out of the OMB, and the deputy director for management reported directly to him on the progress of these initiatives. The initial agenda was developed by a small team in the OMB and implemented systematically over the entire eight-year period. His key initiatives included an agenda to improve agency management capacity, a tracking system for following the implementation of the agenda, and a program-by-program assessment process to rate the effectiveness of individual programs.

Launching the Initiative

On February 28, 2001, a month following his inauguration, President Bush presented to Congress a budget plan titled *A Blueprint for New Beginnings* (Bush 2001a, 3). In a section titled "Government Reform," the president called for an "active, but limited" government that "empowers States, cities, and citizens to make decisions; ensures results through accountability; and promotes innovation through competition" (Bush 2001a, 179–81). He went on to explain, in words that echoed a campaign speech in Philadelphia the summer before, that "if reform is to help the Federal Government adapt to a rapidly changing world, its primary objectives must be a Government that is:

- Citizen-centered—not bureaucracy-centered;
- Results-centered—not process-oriented; and
- Market-based—actively promoting, not stifling, innovation and competition" (Bush 2001a, 179).

Later that spring, on April 8, 2001, the president submitted more details on his proposed fiscal year 2002 budget (Bush 2001b). Section 1, titled "Improving Government Performance," promised that the administration would "reform and modernize" government on the basis of the three objectives described in *The Blueprint for New Beginnings.* Foreshadowing what later would become the President's Management Agenda (PMA), the budget said that the agenda outlined in the president's budget was just a first step.

It promised that in just a few months, the administration would announce a more comprehensive reform and management plan (Bush 2001b, 11). Finally, the section on "Improving Government Performance" included three sentences that were to be repeated many times throughout the president's tenure:

> Good beginnings are not the measure of success in Government or any other pursuit. What matters in the end is performance. Not just making promises, but making good on promises. This will be the standard for this Administration—from the farthest field office to the highest office in the land—as we begin the process of getting results from Government. (Bush 2001b, 11)

Crafting the Strategy

OMB director Mitch Daniels kicked off the work to craft the details of the PMA. On Saturday, March 15, the director convened the OMB's senior cadre across the courtyard behind the OMB in the White House Conference Center. He asked them all to suggest the top most important issues needing attention. The meeting generated more than 100 policy, program, and management issues. In addition, OMB deputy director Sean O'Keefe called for an inventory of the top 10 management recommendations by the inspectors general, the Government Accountability Office's high-risk list, and the encyclopedic listing of management problems assembled the year before when Senator Fred Thompson chaired the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs. Director Daniels also reached outside to the National Academy of Public Administration for help, recruiting its president, Bob O'Neill, to come to the OMB on a six-month Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignment to advise him on management issues and the development of an agenda to fix them.

President's Management Council. Anticipating the release of a management agenda later that summer, in July 2001, the president issued a memorandum directing department and agency heads to designate chief operating officers, and he reestablished the PMC consisting of those officers.[22] The PMC provided an integrating mechanism for policy implementation within agencies and across government. Importantly, the PMC was a way for the departments and agencies to support the president's government-wide priorities and to build a community of management leadership that could work together.

President's Management Agenda. In August 2001, the president issued his President's Management Agenda (Bush 2001c). Rather than pursue a lengthy array of initiatives, the president focused attention on five chronic, core management problems: (1) strategic management of human capital, (2) competitive sourcing, (3) improvement of financial performance, (4) expansion of e-government, and (5) budget and performance integration. These five core management problems were targeted because they were "the most apparent deficiencies where the opportunity to improve performance is the greatest." Each of the five elements of the PMA were further defined by 8 to 10 "standards of success" that were measurable. The PMA focused on remedies to problems generally agreed to be serious, and the PMC committed to implement these remedies fully.

Rolling out the management agenda. One month after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President Bush met with a number of members of his cabinet and the career Senior Executive Service at Constitution Hall in Washington, DC, to honor the recipients of the 2001 Presidential Rank Awards. The event was only the second time a sitting president had addressed the members of the Senior Executive Service; President George H. W. Bush had spoken to them in 1989. The president began by recognizing that "[t]hese are extraordinary time, times of testing for our government and nation." He closed by referring to the August release of his President's Management Agenda and the need to "manage more efficiently and serve the public in better fashion" (Bush 2001d).

In the fall of 2001, Clay Johnson, assistant to the president for presidential personnel and deputy to the chief of staff, formed a steering committee to guide a presidential appointee program. The committee included representatives of the Office of Personnel Management, Office of Management and Budget, General Services Administration, and several subcabinet appointees to ensure that the needs of the program participants would be met.[23] The White House asked the Council for Excellence in Government, under the authority of the Presidential Transition Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-293), to assist with the development and implementation of a leadership program for presidential appointees.

The program began with the speech to executives at Constitution Hall and subsequent sessions with appointees that were organized around the implementation of the elements in the PMA. In December 2001, the Council for Excellence in Government held overview sessions on leadership and management for subcabinet appointees. The sessions provided an overview of the PMA. Speakers included Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill, Office of Personnel Management director Kay Coles James, and the OMB's O'Keefe.

Early in 2002, the Council for Excellence in Government helped organize four interactive workshops for political appointees, created to help appointees achieve results:

- February 2002—Expanded Electronic Government
- March 2002—Budget and Performance Integration
- March 2002—Strategic Management of Human Capital
- May 2002—Competitive Sourcing

Implementing the Management Agenda

The administration assigned four political appointees in the OMB and one in the Office of Personnel Management to act as government-wide "owners" for each initiative—holding them personally responsible for leading government-wide implementation. These assignments gave a clear signal to other political appointees, as well as to the career staff, of the administration's commitment and strong interest in achieving management reform. The assignments also underscored the importance the president placed on disciplined, ongoing attention to these government-wide priorities.

The administration assigned four political appointees in OMB and one in the Office of Personnel Management as government-wide "owners" for each initiative—holding them personally responsible for leading government-wide implementation.

Indeed, during his tenure, OMB director Daniels reestablished his agency as the focal point of management improvement efforts in the executive branch, applying what he called "relentless follow-up" (Friel 2003). Agencies were expected to develop plans, identify the responsible officials, and apply resources to achieve these improvement goals within their own organization. The administration relied on OMB career program examiners to track agency implementation, forging a stronger link between management and budget than has been present in prior reform initiatives.

"Traffic light" scorecard. The administration developed an executive branch management scorecard to track the implementation of the PMA. The scorecard employs a simple "traffic light" grading system to track the status as well as the progress of each department and major agency. Scores for status are based on a government-wide standard for success for each initiative. The standards were developed by the PMC and discussed with experts throughout government and academe, including the National Academy of Public Administration. In terms of status, a green score means that the agency has met all of the elements of the standard for success; yellow means that the agency has achieved intermediate levels of performance in all the criteria; and red means that the agency has any one of a number of serious flaws.

When the PMA was launched in 2001, 110 of the 130 "scores" (26 agencies each working on five separate initiatives) were red; almost none of the agencies were satisfactorily managing their people, programs, costs, and investments in information technology. As of March 31, 2008, the Department of Labor, Social Security Administration, and Environment Protection Agency had been most successful at installing the management disciplines and habits making up the President's Management Agenda, with five green scores for status.

The OMB also assesses agency progress on a case-by-case basis against the deliverables and time lines established for the five initiatives that have been negotiated with each agency. Green on this segment of the scorecard means that implementation is proceeding according to the plans agreed upon with the OMB; yellow means that there has been slippage in the implementation schedule, quantity of deliverables, or other issues requiring adjustment by the agency in order to achieve the initiative on a timely basis; and red means that the initiative is in serious jeopardy, unlikely to realize its objectives absent significant management intervention.

Departments and agencies devote significant attention to the President's Management Agenda. Every 90 days, OMB program examiners reassess status and progress and publish updated scores. Not only does the OMB's deputy director for management meet regularly with agency officials to review and critique their scorecards, but the president is reported to have discussed the scores with cabinet members. It also has been reported that at some cabinet meetings, department heads fight over bragging rights. The OMB's Clay Johnson is reported to have met with the president at least once a year to show him the scorecard (Frank 2003).

Program Assessment Rating Tool. In addition to the PMA scorecard, which was targeted to improving the management capacity of agencies, the administration launched a separate but related effort in 2002 to improve the performance of individual programs within agencies by linking resources to program results. This effort, called the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART), was intended to explicitly fuse performance information with the budget formulation process at a funding decision level. The PART took the form of a diagnostic questionnaire with 25 to 30 questions about (1) program purpose and design, (2) strategic planning, (3) program management, and (4) program results (i.e., whether a program was achieving its long-term and annual goals).

The PART instrument builds on the supply of performance information that federal agencies have been generating as a result of the Government Performance and Results Act. The PART goes beyond GPRA in two important ways. First, the PART renders a *judgment* about whether programs are effective by systematically and transparently assessing program management and actual results (what happened). Second, the PART enables decision makers to attach budgetary and management *consequences* to those programs that cannot demonstrate their effectiveness.

The PART questions are divided into four sections. The first section gauges whether a program has a clear purpose and is well designed to achieve its objectives. The second section evaluates strategic planning and weighs whether the agency establishes outcome-oriented annual and long-term goals. The third section rates the management of an agency's program, including the quality of efforts to improve efficiency. The fourth section assesses the results programs can report with accuracy and consistency. The PART's 25 basic questions are supplemented with additional questions tailored to different program types.

The answers to the questions in each of the four sections result in a numerical score from 0 to 100 (100 being the best score). The numerical scores are combined and translated into qualitative ratings: "Effective" programs are those that score 85–100; "moderately effective" score 70–84; "adequate" score 50–69; and "ineffective" score from 0–49. Regardless of the overall score, programs that do not have acceptable performance measures or have not yet collected performance data receive a rating of "results not demonstrated."

The PART ratings do not result in automatic decisions about funding. In some cases, a PART rating of "ineffective" or "results not demonstrated" may suggest the need for greater funding to overcome identified shortcomings, whereas a funding decrease may be warranted for a program rated "effective" if it is not a priority or has completed its mission. Being marked "results not demonstrated" does not necessarily mean that a program is ineffective or effective, but rather that it does not have adequate performance measures and is unable to provide credible evidence one way or the other. However, an "ineffective" rating means just that—the program is not working as intended. It is expected, however, that over time, funding should be targeted to programs that can prove they achieve measurable results.

The president's fiscal year 2009 budget was the sixth in which the PART was used to assess program performance. Through February 2008, the administration had assessed more than 1,000 programs, representing 98 percent of the federal budget. Throughout the rest of the year, the administration planned to use the PART to assess the performance and management of the remaining federal programs.

Shift in Leadership and Implementation Strategy

OMB director Mitch Daniels maintained a keen interest in ensuring that the management agenda was a top priority in the administration until his departure in the spring of 2003. Yet there was no loss of attention because the president had earlier in the year nominated Clay Johnson to be deputy director for management. Johnson's close relationship with the president brought a deeper and much more powerful push behind the agenda (Weinstock 2003).

"Proud to Be" memos. One of Johnson's first efforts was to better engage agency political appointees in the PMA effort. He did this by asking each of the five owners of the government-wide initiatives to work with their agency counterparts to develop targets of where they would be "proud to be" by July 1, 2004. Each of the champions developed agreements with their agency counterparts on specific targets, and these were then used to track their progress. This implementation approach was seen as successful and was repeated annually thereafter through the end of the administration (Johnson 2003).

Results.gov Web site. Late in 2002, the administration launched Results.gov, a Web portal for the management agenda and management issues. It was designed for political appointees of the Bush administration, but it was deliberately left open so that career employees and the public could better understand the management agenda and how it was being implemented across the government in the various departments and agencies. Johnson is reported to have said that White House chief of staff Andrew Card initially was surprised to learn that the OMB planned to publish the scorecard ratings—which publicly criticize some agencies—but OMB director Daniels explained that the scorecard would goad agencies into action (Peckenpaugh 2003), what Johnson would later refer to as "shame and humiliation."

Results.gov serves as the homepage for the President's Management Agenda. The OMB posts not only the standards for success but also the results of the quarterly scorecard on Results.gov for everyone in government and the public to see. It now includes a feedback option to allow citizens and federal employees to provide advice for improving government management (Johnson 2007).

ExpectMore.gov Web site. A parallel Web site, ExpectMore.gov, was set up in 2006 to create both accountability and transparency in government operations by posting the questions, answers, evidence, and scores from the PART reviews. While this information was already publicly available, it was presented in technical language. ExpectMore.gov reformatted this information in a far more useful, searchable, and readable format. In an effort to have agency personnel pay more attention to whether a program works or not, the OMB makes all of the information from the PART assessments public—in effect, a citizen's window into agency program effectiveness.

Institutionalizing results-based management reform. The administration sought to have the focus on result-based management carry over to the next administration. In November 2007, President Bush issued Executive Order 13450, mandating that agencies appoint performance improvement officers. Their task is to coordinate performance plans and reports; make sure that program goals are aggressive, realistic, and accurately measured; and meet regularly with managers to assess their performance. The executive order also called for the establishment of a Performance Improvement Council composed of performance improvement officers and headed by the OMB's deputy director for management. The council is charged with setting performance standards and evaluation criteria and facilitating the exchange of information among agencies.

Accomplishments

The Bush administration's management improvement initiatives have made important progress in improving the fundamental management capacity of departments and agencies.

Audited financial statements. Agencies have accelerated the preparation of their financial statements from six months after the end of the fiscal year to six weeks after the end of the fiscal year. This makes financial data available during the president's budget decision-making process and contributes to the early stages of the congressional appropriation process. Agencies also made progress in getting unqualified, or "clean," opinions from the audit of their financial statements. In 2007, 19 of the 24 major agencies received clean audit opinions.

Performance-budget integration. The Bush administration placed considerable priority on ensuring that performance information is routinely considered in funding and management decisions and that programs achieve expected results and work toward continual improvement. The administration's Budget Performance Integration initiative required agencies to identify opportunities to improve program management and design and then develop and implement clear, aggressive plans to improve program performance and place greater investment in successful programs. Agencies have significantly restructured their budget justifications to the OMB to include past and projected performance information.

Comprehensive assessments of program performance. In conjunction with its performance budgeting initiative, the administration built on the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act by creating the Program Assessment Rating Tool. The OMB used this questionnaire to assess the performance of nearly 1,000 programs and concluded that 80 percent of federal programs were achieving their intended goals. The results of this assessment process contributed to OMB budget decisions, but it was also used to provide more transparency in government operations.

The OMB launched a Web site—ExpectMore.gov—in 2006 that provides program-level information about the performance of nearly 1,000 federal programs representing about 98 percent of program dollars and nearly $2.5 trillion of federal spending.

Foundation for e-government services and cross-agency lines of business. Early in the Bush administration, the OMB and federal agencies identified 24 high-impact e-government initiatives through which agencies would jointly provide common services. These included electronic tax filing for citizens, online rulemaking for businesses, and electronic training for federal employees. In the spring of 2004, the OMB announced the formation of five "line of business" task forces (later expanded to nine), which would identify common solutions and methodologies that allow agencies to share in the use of common administrative functions. Instead of expensive "stovepiped" operations, agencies were encouraged to adopt a shared services approach which will significantly reduce costs and improve services. For example, the e-rulemaking initiative is replacing 20 existing individual agency electronic regulatory systems and more than 150 paper-based docket systems with a common system.

Reduction in improper payments. The Bush administration took a number of steps to eliminate improper payments by government programs. In fiscal year 2005, federal agencies completed a risk assessment of all programs and dollars spent and determined that nearly 60 percent of government outlays (or $1.5 trillion) were highly susceptible to improper payments. The overall dollar amount of improper payments for 30 major programs reported in fiscal year 2004 decreased 17 percent—from $45.1 billion to $37.2 billion—by the end of fiscal year 2007 (OMB 2008, i).

Savings of $7 billion by competitive sourcing. The administration aggressively pushed the use of competitive sourcing (i.e., public–private competition) as a management tool for improving mission performance and lowering costs for taxpayers. The initial goal was to submit to competition at least half of the government's 640,000 positions that had been defined as commercial in nature. Although this was ambitious and controversial, agencies made progress. Prior to the Bush administration, competitive sourcing competitions were rare in civilian agencies. By the end of fiscal year 2006, agencies had conducted 1,243 competitions involving a total of 46,825 full-time-equivalent employees, which represents approximately 12 percent of the commercial activities identified as suitable for competition by agencies in their workforce inventories. While government employees won nearly 90 percent of the competitions, the OMB estimated that the competitions will save taxpayers $6.9 billion, with the majority of savings to be realized over the next five years. Agencies reported they have already achieved almost $1 billion in savings and cost avoidances form these efforts (OMB 2007b).

Performance pay initiatives. In August 2004, the Office of Personnel Management and the OMB issued regulations establishing rules for a new pay-for-performance system for senior executives. Pay levels and pay adjustments for thousands of executives are now determined by the evaluations earned under appraisal systems that make meaningful distinction based on relative performance. In parallel, nearly 60 percent of the federal civilian workforce was authorized by law to be subjected to similar links between pay and individual performance. The Homeland Security Act of 2002, which created the Department of Homeland Security, also granted the authority to establish a new personnel system that would base all individual pay increases on performance. Similar changes were adopted by the Department of Defense under the National Security Personnel System. As of early 2008, nearly 300,000 employees were covered by a performance pay system (OMB 2007a).

The Homeland Security Act of 2002, which created the Department of Homeland Security, also granted the authority to establish a new personnel system that would base all individual pay increases on performance.

Contrasting the Clinton and Bush Approaches

The Clinton and Bush administration management reforms each displayed highly visible, top-level commitment and support. President Clinton announced the NPR and Vice President Gore personally led it. President Bush led the PMA.

Similarities

Both efforts did the following:

- **Had similar emphases on citizen/customer focus and greater use of electronic government**. The Clinton effort created customer service standards and customer satisfaction surveys. Clinton's electronic government effort spawned the Government Paperwork Elimination Act and hundreds of innovative Web projects. The Bush effort winnowed those efforts down to 24 that had the potential for significant changes in government (such as an electronic travel system), for citizens (such as a common portal for federal benefits), and for businesses (such as a common portal for all regulations affecting businesses). It extended its efforts through the E-Government Act of 2002.
- **Placed similar attention on improving program performance and obtaining results**. While the Clinton reform effort undertook the initial implementation of the Government Performance and Results Act, which created a new supply of performance information, the Bush administration systematically attempted to leverage that information to improve agency performance and increase accountability for results.
- **Had similar shifts in implementation strategy**, starting with top-down recommendations and initiatives, then shifting to more of a support role where they worked with senior agency leaders to develop initiatives and performance targets jointly. This led to greater ownership by agency-level political appointees.
- **Had similar recommendations on improving financial management, strengthening human capital, and achieving budget reform**. Efforts begun under Clinton were more concretely implemented under Bush. Interestingly, both also encountered challenges in explaining the results and value their effort to the public. As a result, the two efforts received relatively little public recognition.
- **Could not successfully engage members of Congress and their staff**. In each case, executive branch efforts to reform management were viewed with skepticism. As a consequence, few pieces of significant legislation were enacted. A major exception in the Clinton administration was the NPR's procurement reforms—the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994, the Federal Acquisition Reform Act of 1995, and the Clinger-Cohen Act in 1996. The major exceptions during the Bush administration were the civil service reforms in the legislation creating the Department of Homeland Security and the subsequent authority given to the Department of Defense to create a national security personnel system. In each case, the legislative reforms had their roots in earlier work developed under a prior administration.

Differences

Despite these similarities, the Clinton and Bush reforms displayed a number of important differences, especially in their implementation.

- **Differences in scope**. Clinton's initial six-month performance review generated more than 1,200 recommendations. By sheer volume, some thought it discredited itself. There were enough idealistic (some say naive) ideas in the initial set of recommendations that those naturally opposed to real reform used them to impugn the credibility of the entire effort. In addition, the Clinton effort continued to generate initiatives and recommendations during the course of the entire eight-year effort. It issued more than 100 reports and publications. In contrast, Bush's President's Management Agenda focused on a few large ideas that represented long-standing, well-known, management challenges. The Bush administration doggedly focused on the implementation of these core elements for its entire eights years and added or deleted relatively few items from its management agenda.
- **Differences in implementation strategy**. The NPR attempted to go around central control agencies, often shunning help from the OMB and Office of Personnel Management. The NPR felt those agencies had discredited themselves in prior reform efforts by their command and control, one-size-fits-all approaches. In contrast, the Bush administration relied heavily on each of these agencies, particularly for implementation and follow-up.
- **Differences in staffing**. The NPR formed on its own a team of temporary, dedicated staff and agency-based teams, while the Bush administration turned to the OMB's permanent career staff as well as permanent staff in the departments and agencies.
- **Differences in engagement**. As a matter of strategy, the NPR attempted to directly engage frontline employees. It did this through its awards program, its reinvention lab initiative, and e-mail networks. The Bush administration, on the other hand, made a concerted effort to systematically engage agency political leaders in much more of top-down, chain of command manner. For example, all new incoming political appointees were briefed on the elements of the President's Management Agenda and were told to make them part of their agencies' agendas.
- **Differences in recognition for progress**. The NPR focused on recognizing individual cases of success. The NPR gave out "Hammer Awards" to teams of federal employees who demonstrated the principles of reinvention in their workplace (e.g., putting customers first or cutting red tape). The NPR recognized nearly 1,400 teams with more than 60,000 employees. In contrast, the Bush administration relied, according to OMB deputy director for management Clay Johnson, on the "shame and humiliation" of publicly releasing quarterly scorecards comparing progress and status across all departments and major agencies.
- **Differences in labor–management approaches**. The NPR made an extensive effort to engage employee unions via labor-management partnership councils in each agency. An early Bush administration directive curtailed their role and sought to expose the delivery of government services to competition with the private sector.

Both the Clinton and Bush administrations employed the use of public–private competition for delivering selected services because studies found that, whoever won, the government generally experienced an average savings of 35 percent. However, its use became more politically charged under the Bush administration and was curtailed substantially by Congress. Like Clinton's workforce downsizing efforts, competitive sourcing became a source of ill will with employees.

Lessons Learned from the Two Reform Initiatives

Based on the experiences of both the NPR and PMA reform efforts, there are several lessons that may benefit future reformers.

Three lessons stand out for launching a government-wide reform initiative:

Lesson 1: Put Management Issues on the Front Burner Early

Start on a firm footing. While some presidential candidates have raised management issues even earlier, during the campaign, it is important to make sure rash promises are not made that might have to actually be implemented. For example, candidate Bill Clinton promised to reduce the White House staff by 25 percent, and he was held to that promise. By doing this, observers believed he inadvertently crippled his policy-making abilities by being understaffed during his first term in office.

Start early. The right time to devise and implement a president's responses to government management and performance challenges is at the start of the administration, at the same time he is defining legislative, budget, and policy strategies. While many of the president's appointees will not yet be confirmed, management and performance issues cannot wait. How soon the administration begins its management initiatives will likely determine how successful the initiatives will be. President Clinton announced his National Performance Review in March 1993; President Bush released his President's Management Agenda in August 2001.

Secure and maintain top-level support. This has to be done throughout the White House and within the Office of Management and Budget. In the absence of such strong leadership at the highest levels, management reform initiatives will a have limited impact. The natural tendency is to focus on policy and assume that the bureaucracy will run itself. Indeed, a management initiative may well be counterproductive in the absence of support and unequivocal commitment at the level of senior White House officials and cabinet officers. The president has to personally care and spend some strategic time using the power, prestige, and symbols of the office to express that support concretely to other political leaders, civil servants, and the public. President Clinton asked Vice President Al Gore to lead his effort, yet he maintained "hands-on" involvement throughout his administration. President Bush, the first "MBA president," took an active role in pushing his management agenda and is reported to have regularly discussed departmental and agency scorecards with cabinet members. In both the NPR and the PMA, the champion for reform, who reported directly to the president, had to be engaged and excited. It cannot be a part-time assignment.

Lesson 2: Clearly Define the Scope of the Effort in Advance

A clear set of overarching principles and values is needed to build and sustain the support necessary to further a president's management program and agenda. It is essential that a president and his immediate White House team articulate the direction they want to take. The military calls it the "commander's intent," which establishes a "common operating picture."

For example, is an emphasis placed on efficiency and cost savings, or is it on improved performance and customer satisfaction? Is the focus on overhauling government-wide governance and management systems, on improving departmental management capacity, or on transforming program or frontline service delivery approaches? Each of these emphases implies different strategies and different players in different parts of the government. In any case, the emphasis is derived on the values that the president-elect brings to the office.

Presidents Clinton and Bush each articulated a set of principles and effectively communicated them to both political and career employees throughout government. For example, Clinton's effort advocated "putting customers first, cutting red tape, empowering employees, and cutting back to basics." Bush placed an emphasis on improving management capacity in departments and the major agencies, and used a shared services approach to streamline cross-agency back-office functions.

Lesson 3: Come to Agreement on an Initiative Development and Selection Process

When starting a reform effort, spend time early on thinking about the process for developing and agreeing on initiatives.

Start with what's there or start over? Typically, each new administration believes that it is starting with a clean slate. The advantage is the opportunity for new ideas. The disadvantage is that it stops or delays long-term efforts. For example, the Clinton administration discarded an Agriculture Department plan to streamline its field office structure, and then set about redesigning the effort through its NPR effort. The results were the same, but the effort was delayed by about three years. Similarly, the Bush administration discarded the Clinton administration's employee survey results only to re-create its own, with largely the same questions and results a year later.

The Bush administration hopes to put in place a foundation of information in each agency regarding performance and progress. The question for the new president will be: How much should be leveraged to get a quick start on his or her priorities? In addition, there will be new laws on the books that the new president will have to implement. For example, while the Coburn-Obama law to increase transparency in government spending was adopted in 2006, its implementation at the agency level will still be a factor for the new president to deal with.

Top-down or bottom-up? There will be a series of design options that should be considered up front. These will likely be based on the new president's values as well as the political environment and will involve questions such as the following:

- Do you engage employees and customers, or do you use an expert-driven approach?
- Do you engage non–executive branch stakeholders such as Congress, unions, and think tanks, or do you keep it "in house"?
- Do you use a formal commission composed of external experts, or an internal taskforce composed of temporarily assigned employees?

The Clinton effort used both a top-down approach in developing its initial recommendations and a bottom-up approach by appealing to frontline employees and citizens to bring forth their ideas. The Bush effort was largely driven top-down by engaging OMB staff in designing the approach and driving its implementation. Both have advantages and disadvantages. Clinton's effort was seen as more inclusive; Bush's was seen as more integrated and coherent.

Getting action. Developing initiatives may seem exhausting to those working on them, however the key to success is implementation. Following are some insights for the last lesson—how to get action and results.

Lesson 4: Invest in Implementation and Follow Through

A hallmark of both the Clinton and Bush efforts was their long-term commitment to implementation of the recommendations, and the ability to recalibrate efforts over time to recognize political realities. What were some of the approaches used that contributed to success?

Create a dedicated focal point for action. Having a small core team responsible for implementation is essential. In the Clinton administration, it was the NPR. In the Bush administration, it was a set of "champions" designated for each of the five major management initiatives, who were largely located in OMB and were responsible to the deputy director for management. Clay Johnson, who held that role at the end of the Bush administration, said his job was focused on three things: setting clear expectations, creating clear measures, and ensuring that a single person was held accountable for action for each agenda item.

Select agency executives who "get it." All relevant research and experience indicates that any attempt to achieve change and improve results will not succeed without leaders at the top who are personally committed to change and who understand what is required in order to improve operating performance against mission. That means picking people who care and know how to undertake change in a disciplined, systematic, and sustained way.

The Bush administration was particularly noted for its CEO-style of management with clear lines of responsibility and accountability assigned for particular tasks.

Agency executives should have successful experience leading, or helping lead, a change effort in a large public or private organization. The Bush administration was particularly noted for its CEO-style of management with clear lines of responsibility and accountability assigned for particular tasks. At the beginning of the Bush administration, Clay Johnson was the White House personnel director, responsible for filling key appointments. He said it was important to know what you wanted the top 300 to 350 positions in the government to do, then go out and recruit people who had the qualifications to deliver on those goals.

When the Bush administration first took office, it took advantage of a new law that appropriated monies to help new political appointees be trained and oriented into their jobs. A portion of these funds was set aside to ensure training focused on the management improvement expectations being set by the new president. The Clinton administration did not do as good a job of enrolling its political appointees in its reinvention efforts. In fact, a number of appointees publicly disagreed with some of the reinvention efforts.

Develop a road map for action. Setting priorities and developing some strategic approaches helps. For example, it is important to link management improvement initiatives to improvements in mission and operating performance. Leaders must understand the need and importance of using a president's management reform agenda to improve the operating performance of their department or agency against its mission.

One approach for ensuring attention is to link management improvement efforts to the budget. Strong linkage with the budget formulation process is a key factor in gaining serious attention for management and performance initiatives throughout the government. Under President Bush, agencies took notice when program budgets were linked to progress on their management reforms.

While the Clinton administration did not tie its improvement efforts to agency budgets, it did attempt to provide higher visibility to agencies and agency leaders who demonstrated significant improvements in services to the public. For example, the NPR publicly recognized efforts by the Weather Service to increase the notice time for pending tornados and efforts by the Food and Drug Administration to speed new drug approvals for patients.

Both Clinton and Bush used the power of transparency in reporting progress on their management improvement initiatives. Clinton's NPR published agency employee survey results on the Internet, by agency. It also publicly recognized successes through an awards program—"Hammer Awards"—to teams of employees. Bush's OMB published a "red, yellow, green" scorecard on each agency's progress toward its agenda, noting that "shame works."

Obtain support from Congress. Without support from Congress, agencies may become distracted by competing signals, or even worse, denied the funding or flexibility necessary to implement a president's management agenda. No recent president has been able to garner much interest or support from Congress for his management initiatives. Indeed, the lack of congressional support has been a chronic limitation to gaining the full acceptance by the agencies or to maintaining continuity beyond a particular administration. Efforts to send up "stand-alone" reform bills typically failed. Both Clinton and Bush learned that sending up specific fixes, woven into the traditional authorizing and appropriating process, tended to be more successful. The NPR recommendations, for example, were woven into more than 90 bills passed by Congress and signed by the president. The advantage of this approach is its success. The disadvantage is that the low visibility reduces the opportunity for the public to see progress, or for the political ability to point to "success."

Use the presidency strategically. The "bully pulpit" of the presidency is powerful. The president can effectively use the symbols of power to further his or her reform agenda. Bush convened a meeting of all of the career senior executives early in his administration and told them that they were important members of his team. He also met with cabinet members about his management agenda and made a point to know where each agency stood in terms of progress. Clinton relied on Vice President Gore, who participated in town hall meetings with employees, recognized teams of employees with Hammer Awards, and promoted procurement reform legislation by breaking an ashtray on the David Letterman show. Clinton wove the reform message into his speeches to small business groups as well as international leaders.

A careful balance needs to be struck, however, so the reform efforts are not caught up in the political crossfire. If reform initiatives are seen as partisan, then they become "fair game" for attacks. They also stand a higher chance of failure in the long term because career employees will tend to not want to be associated with them. For example, the Bush strategic sourcing initiative was seen as a partisan attack on federal employees and was closely associated with President Bush. Congress has subsequently limited its use as a management tool. Likewise, Clinton's NPR cost savings claims were strongly criticized, in part because they were seen as political in nature. The Bush reform effort consciously avoided that pitfall.

Effectively coordinate and collaborate with the agencies. The real responsibility for addressing management and performance rests with the departments and agencies and the networks of third parties they rely upon to deliver program services. Task forces and interagency councils have emerged as an important leadership strategy both in developing policies that are sensitive to implementation concerns as well as gaining consensus and consistent follow-through within the executive branch. Vice President Gore's NPR probably made the most extensive and sustained use of interagency collaboration and coordination.

Developing a means to keep agencies and employees focused. Once a set of initiatives has been announced and executive orders, laws, and directives have been drafted, how do you keep agencies and employees focused? Other new priorities can easily distract. Persistence is important. In the case of both the NPR and the PMA, they developed periodic public reports. The NPR issued an annual report and later developed confidential scorecards. The PMA developed quarterly scorecards on progress and made them publicly available. The Bush administration also developed measures of program performance and made those publicly available, as well. The NPR continued to develop new initiatives during the course of the Clinton administration—which kept agencies engaged—and had a well-publicized awards program that was intended to keep frontline employees engaged.

Notes

1. Legislation introduced by Senator William Roth (S. 2531, 102nd Cong., 2nd sess.) was incorporated into an omnibus budget bill that was enacted, but the commission was never convened because President George H. W. Bush refused to appoint members.
2. At the time, From was president of the Progressive Policy Institute, a think tank that supports the Democratic Leadership Council, a progressive element within the Democratic Party then led by Governor Clinton, Senator Gore, and others.
3. Remarks by President Clinton Announcing the Initiative to Streamline Government, March 3, 1993, http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/speeches/030393.html [accessed July 27, 2008].
4. "Reinvention Principles," from archived NPR Web site, http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/papers/bkgrd/princip.html [accessed July 27, 2008].
5. Though this report has often been referred to as the "final" report, in reality, it was the first of nearly 100 reports published by the NPR over the next eight years.
6. Statement of President Clinton, *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents,* September 7, 1993.
7. In the initial review phase, about 250 staff were involved. During the remaining seven and a half years, there were 35 to 60 staff assigned. Over the course of the eight years, about 1,400 staff rotated through the NPR. In addition, agency-level reinvention teams were formed and staff rotated through them as well. The advantage of this approach was that staff were trained and returned to their frontline offices so that they could practice the new reinvention behaviors. The disadvantage was the lack of continuity and commitment on longer-term initiatives.
8. H.R. 3400, "A Bill to Provide a More Effective, Efficient, and Responsive Government," introduced October 28, 1993, 103 Cong., 1st session.
9. Vice President Gore's political advisors were uncomfortable with not publicly claiming success. The OMB staff questioned the wisdom of not pursuing those who resisted. Still, Gore felt that these strategies were important for the tone of the overall implementation effort.
10. See "High Impact Agencies," archived Web site of the National Partnership for Reinventing Government,

http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/announc/hiapage3.html [accessed July 27, 2008].

11. Reinvention labs were largely self-directed teams of frontline employees piloting a new innovation. See Ingraham, Thompson, and Sanders (1998) for examples.
12. Vice President Gore's Hammer Awards were part of a program to recognize teams of federal employees who reflected the principles of reinvention in their work. Nearly 1,400 awards were presented. See the archived NPR Web site for details: http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/awards/hammer/index.htm [accessed July 27, 2008].
13. See, e.g., an early electronic newsletter developed to share among the Federal Communicators Network: http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/rtable.html [accessed July 27, 2008].
14. See President Clinton's Memorandum to Heads of Departments and Agencies, Re: Streamlining the Granting of Waivers, April 21, 1998, http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/direct/memos/waivers.html [accessed July 27, 2008].
15. See archived "History of the National Partnership for Reinventing Government" at http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/whoweare/historypart4.html [accessed July 27, 2008].
16. "NPR Accomplishments, 1993–2000," archived NPR Web site, http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/whoweare/appendixf.html [accessed July 27, 2008].
17. "Restoring Trust in Government," archived NPR Web site for period 1961–98, http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/announc/122900.html [accessed July 27, 2008]. For 2000 data (44 percent), see the University of Michigan American National Election Study 2000, http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/announc/122900.html [accessed July 27, 2008].
18. "NPR Accomplishments, 1993–2000," archived NPR Web site, http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/whoweare/appendixf.html [accessed July 27, 2008].
19. General Services Administration, Federal Citizen Information Center, http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/press/mentions/index.htm#time060107 [accessed July 27, 2008].
20. Federal Customer Service Enhancement Act, H.R. 404, 110th Cong., 1st sess.
21. Plain Language in Government Communications Act of 2008, S. 2291, H.R. 3548, 110th Cong., 1st sess.
22. See President Bush's Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, Re: Implementing Government Reform, July 11, 2001, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/07/20010711-5.html [accessed July 27, 2008].
23. See the Council for Excellence in Government, Government Performance Projects Web site at http://www.excelgov.org/index.php?keyword=a43294f4726840 [accessed July 27, 2008].

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