

**AN APPROACH
TO THE
IMPROVEMENT OF EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT
IN THE
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The attached report reflects only about one hundred hours of time spent by the writer. This time was about evenly divided among (1) reading previous reports on this subject, (2) discussions with present and former government employees, and (3) general cogitation and reduction of same to words.

At this point, the writer does not pretend to be an authority on the subject. At the same time, he does feel that there is no more important area in our government than the hiring, caring for and feeding of our Federal executives.

The following is an attempt to point a possible way to increase our understanding of the problems of our Federal executive personnel and to, as a result of better understanding, blueprint steps to be taken to improve performance.

Officers (Grade I), employees of such agencies as TVA and AEC, and many scientists and technicians appointed under Public Law 313.

What Do They Do?

It has been estimated that roughly one-third of these executives are line managers, one-third supporting staff specialists and one-third scientists and technicians. A few words about what these classifications mean is probably in order, although it is doubtful that many jobs can be pigeon-holed into such a neat framework.

A line manager has specific responsibility for the operations of one or more units or programs. He makes important decisions on the spot working under general policy set by his superiors.

A staff specialist provides services to management. He may be an "assistant-to" or a deputy, or in charge of an EDP installation, or budgetary control, or personnel or a host of other activities.

A scientist or technician provides professional services, often based upon his own individual contributions in scientific or technical areas.

Once again, there are bound to be many overlapping functions, but it may be useful to consider these three functions as valid groupings for study purposes.

What Makes Sammy Run?

Much has been written and said about the importance of the profit motive in American business. Recent motivational studies indicate that, while this is a factor, it may not be the predominant factor in assuring executive performance that many people seem to think it is.

Obviously, United States Government executives cannot be motivated by profit. It would appear, however, that given appropriate research, other motivations can be uncovered which will produce the desire and effort for Federal executives to perform in an outstanding manner.

What Has Been Done in Recent Years?

In addition to the previously mentioned increases in compensation levels for Federal executives, an Executive Order of November 11, 1966 created the Executive Assignment System, under which all GS-15's (possible future super-grade people), GS-16's, 17's and 18's (present super-grades) plus some outsiders - a total of 28,000 - are listed on computer tapes under the custody of the Bureau of Executive Manpower. Time limitations have not allowed the writer to ascertain the depth of information or potential usefulness of this listing.

Certainly other progressive steps have been taken in this broad area of improving executive performance which have not come to the writer's attention in his brief study of the problem. These should all be brought to light by further investigation.

IV. A SUGGESTED APPROACH

While it is trite to say, it is nonetheless true that almost all organization problems are best solved by a four-phase approach:

1. Get the facts,
2. Analyze them,
3. Recommend changes, and
4. Implement the recommendations.

It would seem appropriate that different levels of people be brought into this project as it progresses.

In Phase 1, it is suggested that five or six knowledgeable government employees might work on a special assignment basis under the direction of someone who has a proven "track record" from outside the government. This would bring into play the objective outside viewpoint and still produce the facts necessary intelligently and at minimum effort and cost. As examples of the types of people who might be drawn from government ranks, we cite (1) James Marsh, now with F.D.I.C., who had valuable experience as assistant to John W. Macy as a talent scout for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson - a young, intelligent, dedicated man and (2) Edward Rouhana, now with the S.B.A., who is in his late 50's, has spent the bulk of his life in government service and has worked for a number of departments and agencies - a seasoned veteran super-grade employee who knows his way around. Of course nobody has spoken to these people about working on this project. They are mentioned specifically as an indication of the range of individuals who might be most useful in Phase I. It is also conceivable that consultants might be brought into the picture once this phase is under way - more on this in the next chapter of this report.

In Phase 2, it would seem appropriate to broaden and upgrade the task force to bring into the picture some "powers behind the thrones", including committee staff members from a couple of key Congressional committees, and representatives from the Office of the President, Civil Service Commission and the Budget Bureau. At this point some of these people who can later be helpful in implementing recommendations should be brought close enough to the subject to feel that they are playing a significant part in shaping the study.

In Phase 3, when firm recommendations are developed, a really prestigious group should be named, including representatives from business, labor, academe, and such organizations as CED and Brookings.

Phase 4 would have to be played by ear, but the combination of solid research, hoped-for acceptance from within and prestigious backing from without government should give suggested legislative changes a fighting chance.

V. DETAILED ORGANIZATION OF PHASE I

If we can detach five or six people from their present jobs, as outlined in the previous chapter, their immediate efforts should be devoted to:

(1) The construction of detailed inventory of Federal executive positions, to be put on computer tape. The kinds of information to be obtained with regard to presently authorized jobs should include:

- (a) Description of the position - duties and responsibilities,
- (b) Classification of position - line, staff, scientist, or combination,
- (c) Experience and education needed to perform,
- (d) How appointments are made - by President, with or without Senate confirmation; by department or agency head; with or without Civil Service status; with or without veterans' preference, etc., and
- (e) Present status of job - filled or open - needed or not needed.

(2) An analysis of past recruiting efforts, including:

- (a) What sort of formal evaluation process of candidates has been used?
- (b) How much help has been given department and agency heads in finding key people for them?
- (c) Are detailed job descriptions available, including background and experience necessary to perform?
- (d) What role does Civil Service play in producing the right man for the key job when needed?
- (e) How much is being done in recruiting our ablest college and graduate school people for long-range top government service?
- (f) What are we doing to train young people to advance as rapidly as their capabilities indicate?

(3) A study of which are the best-run departments and agencies and why. This type of conclusion can be reached by fairly objective means, but to reach such conclusions a set of criteria must be established which may vary among the various operations. Among some of these criteria, which should be developed in detail early in the study, are:

- (a) Where do the outstanding people want to work?
- (b) What organizations are most highly thought of within and without the government? - and
- (c) What organizations have brought along the best people?

At this point the writer cannot set a definite performance timetable for the work proposed in Phase I because of his limited

knowledge of how much of what is being asked for is now available. Within 30 days of starting this assignment, however, the following should be clear:

1. How long it will take to conclude Phase 1.
2. To what extent Phase 1 should be delimited. For example, it already appears that military officers and foreign service officers have such different backgrounds and problems that they should be excluded from this study. It may be this same situation is true of other groups of executives.
3. Some conclusion as to the use of outside consultants in the area of motivation. If we can quickly determine which departments are operated at the highest rate of efficiency, consultants might be brought in to determine what the difference is between the make-up of these departments and the low-ranked areas.

As ever, in any fact-finding situation, need for new facts will arise as a result of what is established in the first attempt. The foregoing represents the writer's thoughts as to some good starting points.

VI. SOME PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS FOR EXPLORATION

As a result of a fair amount of reading, plus discussions with a number of present and former government employees, all performed in obtaining background for this paper, a number of questions have come to mind which should be answered by the study proposed. It should be stressed that the writer, by posing these questions, is not indicating any preconceptions, but rather is suggesting that reasons be found, whether pro or con.

Some of these questions are:

1. Isn't the "people problem" at least as important as the "fiscal problem"? Shouldn't the President's Office have a Director of Executive Personnel who is as important as the Director of the Bureau of the Budget?
2. Are we consistent in the character of the Presidential appointments subject to Senate approval as opposed to those that are not? Need the Senate exercise control over so many appointments in order to exercise its proper function?
3. Can any one man exercise the span of control over the more than eighty departments and agencies that report directly to the President? How can top people in these many areas get adequate counselling as to how to do their jobs better?
4. Is there any need for more than one "super-grade"?
5. Should super-grade personnel have tenure? Oddly enough, the writer's limited experience indicates that tenure seems to result in "playing it safe" or "not rocking the boat". The man with tenure seems frequently to take the department or agency philosophy which he grew up under. It would appear that, at least in industry, some insecurity is essential to get a top job done. Further, executives tend to peak out at different ages. Why wouldn't it be a good idea to have no tenure in super-grades, but let individuals slide back to GS-15 if they cannot "cut the mustard".

These are just a few provocative thoughts that have crossed the writer's mind in preparing this paper. Certainly no action along any of these lines should be taken until we have much more information.

R.F.L.

