



2008 SPRING SYMPOSIUM BUDGET POLICY AND ITS PEOPLE—AT THE CROSSROADS?

SESSION SUMMARY

Forging Your Own Career Path

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In a recent public workforce survey, the Segal Group found that the two most important factors to attracting and retaining younger workers are providing a managed career path and engaging work content. The trend away from traditional concerns of pay and benefits presents unique challenges for the public sector.

At the AABPA 2008 Spring Symposium, **Dr. Pat Mullen**, University of Illinois professor and AABPA Vice President for Communications, convened a panel of four public sector experts to discuss meeting these very challenges. The speakers focused their collective knowledge and experience to offer young analysts a guide to developing a career in public service. Additionally, they highlighted the challenges facing public managers.

Donna McLean, an accomplished public servant and founder of Donna McLean Associates, encouraged young analysts to approach their career development as a private sector company might market a product. Donna offered five key focus areas for career development: education, experience, exposure, contacts, and brand recognition.

Career-minded young analysts should focus on continuing educa-

tion, in virtually any form available. Certainly formal education should remain at the core of their efforts, but Ms. McLean warned that it should not stop when a degree is passed across the podium. Many other chances to learn exist and employees should take the initiative in their own career development. Seek out opportunities to be mentored by, interview, or shadow seasoned workers.

According to Ms. McLean, experience and exposure go hand-in-hand. Remain open to opportunities and aspire to become a hands-on problem solver. Experience is gained through volunteering for assignments, especially ones that no one else is interested in, and by detailing to other offices and assignments outside the assigned specialty areas. As a result of an analyst's quest for experience they are also exposed to other specialties and managers.

An important focus for new analysts is to develop contacts. Ms. McLean recommended joining at least two professional organizations. Additionally, analysts can set up informal meetings with colleagues in other departments. Managers can assist new analysts by developing mentoring programs. Effective contact management requires maintenance. For

this, she recommended that an hour each week be set aside to re-establish communication with contacts to keep the relationships fresh.

How does an analyst develop brand recognition? The answer; like a company would brand a new product. Take on assignments that boost your qualifications and recognition. Find a new and innovative way to solve a tough problem or, invent a new product altogether. Make yourself and your work stand out and sell, sell, sell.

In closing Ms. McLean encouraged new analysts to abandon the idea of a career path as a linear equation and adopt a thinking that embraces career development as a circular path. In the process of using the five areas of focus, the path itself will emerge. The young analyst has but to identify and seize the opportunities that are presented along the way.

Terry Grindstaff, a Senior Budget Policy Advisor with the Environmental Protection Agency, recommended using established core competencies as a career development tool. Mr. Grindstaff noted that an effective way to market yourself is to have a well-formulated individual development plan. Using established core competencies, a new analyst can

formulate a development plan that will ensure greater marketability.

Core competency statements include standards for knowledge, skills, and abilities for subject positions. In addition, these statements should identify learning objectives. Using the statements as a guide for development, an analyst can strengthen their capabilities and enhance their mobility. Managers can use these same core competencies to increase skill transferability and improve recruitment and retention.

Analysts should be proactive in identifying the training and experience gaps in their development plans. Supervisors should be prepared to identify trainings, colleague pairings, and professional organizations that will assist the analyst in accomplishing their development goals.

Jeremy Moon, a Program Examiner at Office of Management and Budget, typifies the young analyst. Like many of the incoming generation of workers, Mr. Moon has worked in five offices in his three years of public service. Along the way, he has collected some observations regarding manager's expectations of new analysts and offered his perspective.

Modern analysis goes beyond numbers. Analysts are increasingly being called upon to manage their inbox by assisting with prioritization of tasks. They need the ability to process data, but must also gather, organize, and distribute data in a meaningful way. Well-developed relationships, program knowledge, and a sense of what information is truly useful are critical to accomplishing tasks and

developing a lasting career path.

Mr. Moon noted that young analysts are expected to go beyond data collection and line analysis. They can prepare by learning to speak knowledgeably about the programs in their area, hone their writing skills, and develop and maintain relationships with colleagues at sister agencies.

Mr. Moon also had advice for managers looking to recruit and retain new analysts. Key to keeping young analysts, he said, is to help them in their quest for continuing education and acquiring marketable skills. Young workers also want a professional work environment. Managers can foster a positive work environment by enforcing common sense and tackling problems responsibly. Critical to both of these tasks for the manager is a mastery of human resource policies and procedures, and their inconsistencies. The use of available benefits and human resource devices will be key to assisting with the development of analysts.

Laura Howes, an Associate Manager at the Annenberg Leadership Institute, continued the discussion by focusing on how agencies can develop young talent into effective managers. Annenburg's focus is on developing rising leaders to face the impending management challenges.

The Institute seeks to transform the way the government works by helping managers secure the right talent and fuel innovation. Their seven-month leadership course helps accomplish this goal by providing instruction on innovation, leadership, and best management practices

through a 360-degree assessment style of instruction and a 'learn by doing' execution. Current leaders teaching rising leaders, hands-on learning, and one-on-one coaching are used to deliver the instruction.

The course focuses on six core areas:

- Project management,
- Knowledge networking,
- Leading innovation and managing change,
- Managing people and performance,
- Communication and influencing executives, and
- Leading in a crisis.

Ms. Howes explained that the Institute's courses were developed from the best practices of 100 high-performing organizations and a number of effective leadership case studies. The Institute identified five characteristics that foster leadership development:

- Time spent on quality work,
- Assistance in continued education and development,
- Identification of on-the-job development opportunities,
- Candid and regular feedback, and
- Encouragement for development inside and outside the organization.

The age diversity of the workplace is changing and we can expect the needs of workers and managers alike to change with it. Workers are seeking a challenging and professional workplace and a road to continuous learning and development. Effective managers play a role beyond workload accountability; they are also coaches and mentors.