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EXECUTION: The Third Pillar of Public Management

by JOHN DINGWALL IN COLLABORATION WITH OLE INGSTRUP AND PAUL CROOKALL

This is the third of three articles on the study *The Three Pillars of Public Management* by Ole Ingstrup and Paul Crookall. Key points related to Aim and Character were summarized in previous issues. In this article, the focus is on Execution (or implementation), and on the extent to which management techniques and approaches can be transferred between the public sector and the private sector.

KEY POINTS OF EXECUTION

4 MANAGEMENT TOOLS

High-performing organizations recognize and realize the potential for management tools to improve performance. However, they are selective about which management tools, and apply them on the basis of experience with a keen sense of what will work for their organization.

High-performing organizations do not place all their bets with one guru or one tool: they avoid fads. Instead, they assess what is available and what fits for them and their needs.

High-performing public organizations know that management tools developed in the private sector must be modified both for the public sector in general and the specific agency in particular. When they apply a technique, they also apply common sense.

Some questions:

\$ Updating your inventory and your skills: How long has it been since you inventoried your management tool box? What should be discarded, tuned up, or added? How do you stay sharp?

\$ New tools and appropriate tools: What problems in your organization need new tools? How would you bring the best tools on-stream? For each problem what might be some appropriate tools?

4 TEAMWORK

Every one of the agencies which were studied displayed a clear and ever-present sense of teamwork. They expressed support for team-work through their mission and value statements, their leadership style and their daily actions. They used teams for a wide variety of tasks and they expressed an intention to use teams more.

They were consistently collegial both inside and outside of teams. Managers were expected to be team players.

Questions include:

\$ Role and type of teams: What work in your agency is better done in teams or by individuals? What model of teamwork would best suit the situation: simple, empowered, or self-directed?

\$ Support for teams: Do the mission and values support teamwork? Do the leadership and accountability systems promote teamwork? Are employees supportive of teamwork? What roadblocks to teams exist and how can they be removed?

4 CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Change is ongoing: it is a fact of life and a way of life. Changes come in wave after wave, and cannot be managed as an event at one point in time. Change needs to be treated as an ally, not an opponent. At the same time, it is important to manage any negative impacts from the change and to make the necessary adjustments.

Sample question:

§ Change management principles: What change management principles does your organization use? What new ones might it be useful to add, and how might they best be introduced?

Government and

the Private Sector

More and more, it is important to share best practices between the public and private sectors. They need to work together to improve economic and social conditions.

Usually, the focus is on how techniques and approaches can be transferred from the private sector to the public sector. However, the private sector can also learn from the public sector. It cannot, or should not, be assumed that in the private sector, people simply seek to maximize profit, power, and personal gain..

In point of fact, many successful companies have adopted multiple goals that include making a long-term contribution to society and achieving a mission, as well as making a good profit and building an organization to last. The private sector can learn something from the public sector in terms of managing multiple goals and competing priorities.

The public sector has considerable expertise in dealing with issues involving: managing networks and information,; building consensus; maintaining strategic alliances; and managing conflicting objectives and different types of service.

The relationship between citizens and public service is much more complicated than between private sector service providers and customers.

For example, in the public service, different customers may demand different results from the same service, so you cannot possibly satisfy both in areas involving regulations and permits.

There may also be a distinction between the ultimate customer and the proximate customer.

In some cases it may be unrealistic to speak of a customer satisfaction@. For example, revenue agencies do not try to please the customer by not collecting taxes; instead they try to be as polite, efficient and fair-minded as possible B to earn respect and to be trusted.

Even citizens who fail to get what they want (e.g., a construction permit) should leave the transaction knowing they have been dealt with fairly and that the agency is accomplishing something worthwhile.

The key point here is that the focus of public servants should be not so much on satisfying customers as on achieving the mission.

Through focusing on achieving the mission, citizen satisfaction (in the aggregate) comes as a natural consequence. In all of this, the citizens should, wherever possible, be involved as partners in providing the service. For example, environmental protection is everyone's business.

Execution: An Example

Organizations and leaders which are strong on Execution (or Implementation) get things done. Under Commissioner Philip Murray, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has been transformed B using Management Tools, Teamwork and Change Management B with a view to enabling it to do the best possible job of community policing.

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