

The Business of Government

PROVIDING CUTTING-EDGE
KNOWLEDGE TO
GOVERNMENT LEADERS

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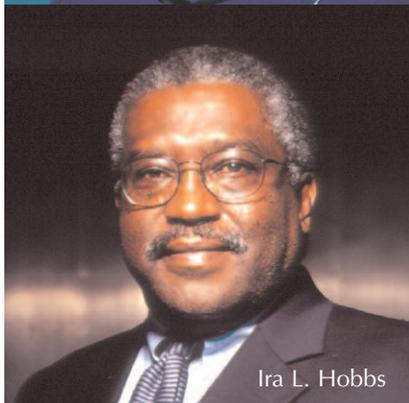
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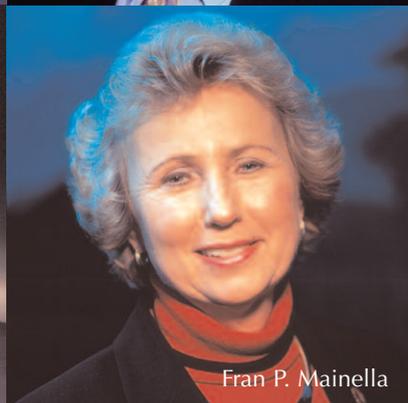
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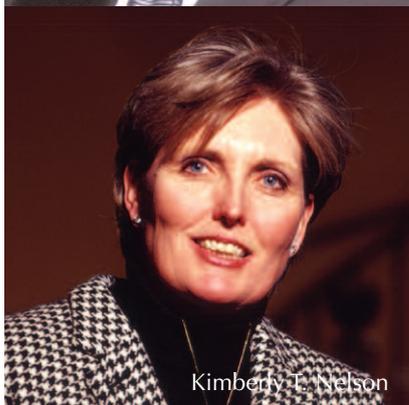
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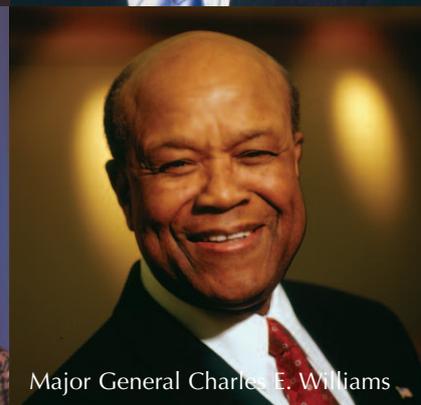
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Public Service at Its Best

In my position as a partner at IBM and partner-in-charge of the IBM Center for The Business of Government, I've had the unique opportunity to meet and talk with many outstanding government leaders about their careers and what they do on behalf of government. Those conversations have taught me a lot about government, its many activities, and public service. When participating in IBM Center for The Business of Government events or taping *The Business of Government Hour* radio program, I frequently recall a conversation with John Koskinen, former deputy mayor of the District of Columbia and deputy director for management at the Office of Management and Budget. He was describing the infamous government shutdown of 1995. Koskinen said that during the shutdown, citizens across the United States finally became aware of the many activities performed by government—what government actually does—and learned that they missed the services of government when they were no longer available.

The variety of government activities is impressive to say the least. Over the last several months, I have had the opportunity to talk with government leaders who are running the National Park Service, keeping track of the Department of Air Force's spending, developing leaders for the Foreign Service of the 21st century, providing disability payments to citizens, securing our embassies overseas, and delivering our mail. No corporation in America delivers as diverse a set of activities as does the United States government.

My conversations and experiences have also led me to be continually impressed with the dedication of the nation's public servants. Admiral James Loy is one such exemplar. After retiring as Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard in 2002, Secretary of Transportation Mineta asked him to continue in public service as chief operating officer of the Transportation Security Administration. He recently concluded his "second" public service career as deputy secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. Major General Charles E. Williams is another outstanding public servant who has served the nation in several capacities. After a distinguished career in the Army Corps of Engineers and a successful career in the private sector, General Williams returned to government service as director of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations in the U.S. Department of State. For Admiral Loy and General Williams, public service clearly did not end upon their "first" retirement from military duty.

In the case of Ken Feinberg, the President and the Attorney General of the United States "recalled" him to public service to serve as Special Master of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund. Feinberg's prior public service career included service as a law clerk, in the Department of Justice as an assistant U.S. attorney, and as a key staff member in the U.S. Senate. As Special Master, within days of his appointment, Feinberg created a small, lean organization from scratch, which then disbursed—on schedule—over \$7 billion to families of the victims of 9/11.

The public servants I have encountered also impressed me with their dedication to improving the delivery of services to the American people. In our radio interview with Bill Gray, he related how he had spent much of his nearly 30 years in the Social Security Administration attempting to improve the disability benefits payment process. In recent years, his efforts have led to an electronic web-based application process for citizens to apply for disability payments. Rebecca Spitzgo described her career in the government "grant business" and her recent efforts to create

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But between doing nothing and doing everything, *something can be done*.

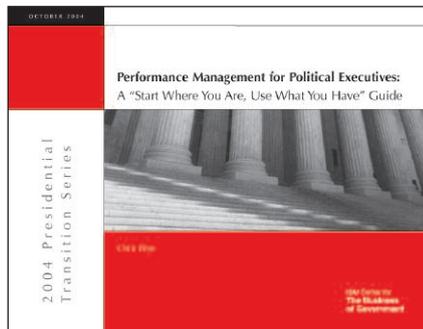
And, even with limited resources, some will do more and better than others. A few will do exceptional things.

Doing nothing or doing something with weak intent is not acceptable.

American citizens deserve your best effort. ■

TO LEARN MORE

The Center report "Performance Management for Political Executives: A 'Start Where You Are, Use What You Have' Guide," by Chris Wye, describes how political executives can overcome common problems in the design, alignment, use, and communication of performance measures and information. It also provides a meaningful rationale as to why political executives should care about performance-based management.



The report can be obtained:

- In .pdf (Acrobat) format at the Center website, www.businessofgovernment.org
- By e-mailing the Center at businessofgovernment@us.ibm.com
- By calling the Center at (202) 515-4504
- By faxing the Center at (202) 515-4375

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a one-stop portal for citizens to both find out about and apply for government grants online. Patrick Donahoe detailed the efforts of the United States Postal Service to make access to postal services easier by creating increased online capability and placing Automated Postal Centers in post offices throughout the United States.

In addition to improving services to citizens, the public servants I have encountered also demonstrate dedication and commitment to investing in government's people. Based on her experiences throughout the world, Ambassador Prudence Bushnell described how she is translating her own experiences into courses aimed at better preparing Foreign Service officers for diplomatic service in the 21st century. Ira Hobbs recounted his efforts in leading the federal Chief Information Officers Council to develop new programs to train future government information technology specialists. Michael Montelongo related how he helped to create an MBA summer internship at Harvard University to provide business students firsthand experience in government and to entice them to consider public service after graduation.

Another valuable lesson that I have learned from my conversations with public servants is the importance of creating partnerships between the public and private sectors, and across levels of government. As director of the National Park Service, Fran Mainella outlined her vision of the future, in which citizens enjoy a seamless network of national, state, and local parks, and private partnerships. Kimberly Nelson described the creation of the National Environmental Information Exchange Network, in which states and municipalities contribute crucial data directly to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

While there is little doubt that there is still much room for improvement in government, I come away from experiences at IBM and the IBM Center for The Business of Government heartened by the quality of our public servants and their dedication to serving the nation. Our nation is well served. ■