

**“Conducting International Activities”
Global Leadership Consortium Forum
National Academy of Public Administration
Tuesday, June 27, 2006**

Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering of the Boeing and Mr. Gregory F. Treverton of RAND provided their views on the qualities and abilities required for success in international work to representatives of U.S. government agencies. The program was the second in a series arranged by the Global Leadership Consortium of the Federal Executive Institute, the Graduate School, USDA, and the National Academy of Public Administration to provide networking and training opportunities on global issues for U.S. government employees who are not part of the traditional defense or foreign affairs communities. A summary of the proceedings follows.

Mr. Treverton

- RAND surveyed leaders in government, business, and the not-for-profit sector to learn which competencies they thought were necessary for international work.
- Results showed consensus on the need for cognitive ability, interpersonal skills, character, tolerance, adaptability, and teamwork.
- Foreign language and area expertise were somewhat less important for managers, perhaps because many believed they could hire to need.
- Research showed basic distinctions between the public and private sectors, e.g. business has greater flexibility than government in hiring non-citizens.
- In government, respondents noted that middle management, as a consequence of downsizing in the 1990s, had become relatively thin.
- In universities, the international element has become weaker in recent years, with greater global competition for international students, more advanced placement courses, and a less cosmopolitan approach to faculty development.
- Positive trends in government include hiring flexibilities and the encouragement of portfolio careers.
- Political appointees in federal agencies have an important role, but the pendulum has swung too far in that direction.
- Senior jobs in agencies should be reserved for career personnel to ensure depth, experience, continuity, and an incentive for career advancement.

- The ability to work well across agencies is vital, and implementing portfolio careers that allow for meaningful cross-agency assignments provide a way to encourage that skill.
- Globalization of issues and economies should prompt agencies to re-examine certain fundamentals, e.g. the hiring on non-citizens and the fact that government, business, and non-profits are not competitors but collaborators in many areas of endeavor.

Ambassador Pickering

- Be clear on goals, from which tactics follow, and remember the Hippocratic dictum, “first of all, do no harm.”
- In government, political appointments often have extended too deeply in the hierarchy to be helpful.
- The ethnic and cultural diversity of the United States is a potential strength that is difficult for government to exploit.
- Basic skills needed for success in international work include subject mastery; area expertise; cultural sensitivity (i.e. what directs the ideas and actions of foreign actors); and foreign language skills, including the ability to work with translators.
- Practical skills include preparing one’s case, listening to what the other party says, canvassing the range of appropriate experts, and setting objectives.
- Negotiating skills generally are not well-taught. Most negotiations are three-in-one: 1) with your counterpart; 2) with your own side; and 3) your counterpart with his side.
- Establishment of trust is vital, as is knowing when and how to report good news and bad, when to appeal to higher or lower authorities, and how to break deadlocks by broadening or narrowing the terms of discussion.
- A common fault in negotiation is a focus on winning the debate rather than on finding a common goal.
- Developing a sense of how to work together for common purpose across defense and civilian agencies, similar to what the uniformed services enjoy as jointness, is essential to pre- and post-conflict and reconstruction work.
- Personal experience in the private sector highlighted the importance of three elements—people, presence, and process—and the challenge of developing and implementing country strategies, including a balance of local expertise and corporate knowledge in the managers who implement them.

Discussion

The conversation that followed the presentations focused on the unfulfilled promise of the Senior Executive Service in providing responsibility and portability for senior officials, the relative merits of developing the top ranks within agencies themselves or of adopting an approach that encourages, within certain limits, an exchange among agencies at senior levels on the premise that senior managerial skills often are transferable.

Future programs

The consortium plans other programs in this series that will address global leadership from the point of view of business interests, political leaders, and academic authorities whose research includes the competencies for leadership in the contemporary world.