



TRANSITION TOPIC:

Improving DoD's Transition Process

TASK:

- Review private sector experience to find lessons relevant to DoD during the transition to the new administration
- Review past DoD transition experience to determine actions that should be considered in 2008/09
- Develop proposals for successfully on-boarding and educating new appointees

TASK GROUP:

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ISSUE:

- Transitions over the past 20 years have been slow and ragged with many months required to get the new team in place. Bush's national security team was still not fully in place by 9/11/01. On-boarding has been haphazard and inconsistent.

IMPORTANCE:

- Given the current national security situation (Iraq, Afghanistan, Russian assertiveness, oil and energy, etc.) the next transition must be far smoother and faster.
- There is no room for major errors in a “wartime” transition.
- This will not happen without careful planning, aggressive implementation and Congressional cooperation.
- The next Secretary will face the double challenge of trying to change direction and get control.

We can't afford a “normal” transition



DISCUSSION: (Private Sector Experience)

- 1. Corporate leadership transitions are normally given early and careful attention: planning, orientation, overlap, and coaching**
 - a. Usually just one lead position involved, e.g. CEO, COO, or CFO
 - b. Many are promotions from within, thus the task is easier (but still essential). Always try to have 2 or 3 viable candidates in play
 - c. External hires usually receive careful vetting (references, extensive interviews, head hunter advice)
- 2. The new Leader is often given special support in early days**
 - a. Clear show of support by top management (he/she is our guy)
 - b. Executive coaches and industrial psychologists
- 3. On-boarding is carefully planned and executed**
 - a. Focus on understanding of issues/challenges
 - b. Build relationships with senior team
- 4. The new Leader often builds his/her own team – but usually does this over time (3 to 12 months)**
 - a. This minimizes leadership gaps and eases the transition
 - b. The number of changes is normally limited and a cadre of lower level but experienced executives stay in place
- 5. Leveraged buy-outs are more akin to a Presidential transition.**
 - a. One or several key leaders may be replaced early on
 - b. The new management team (including hold-overs) are identified, briefed, and ready to go on Day 1
 - c. A 100-day plan is often used to drive change



CONTRASTING FOCUS:

Political Transition

- Insert several new leaders, one at a time, over many months
- Usually an outside candidate
- Focus is on “learning” the role / organization
- Limited goals first year
- Second tier leadership in for the duration (goal is 4 years)
- Gaining “control” is key

Corporate transition

- Insert one new leader into a large existing team
- Often an in-house candidate
- Focus is planning for execution
- Aggressive goals for the first 6 to 12 months
- Second tier rotates regularly to prevent going “native”
- Changing direction is key



Defense Business Board

DISCUSSION: (OSD Transition Experience)

- 1. Each recent transition has been longer and more difficult**
 - a. Harder and more time-consuming to attract well-qualified candidates, due to the onerous nature of the selection/confirmation process, the highly political Washington environment, and financial considerations
 - b. White House vetting is a major factor in the extended confirmation process (financial and personal history forms, FBI checks, and political clearance)
 - c. Congressional review is often slow and involves duplicative paperwork
- 2. The outgoing team departs on January 20, leaving serious leadership gaps in most cases**
 - a. Little attention was given to identifying strong “acting” leaders
 - b. Even where the party doesn’t change, the turnover can be high (e.g. Bush 1 transition)
 - c. At most, a handful of new appointees will be in place by January 21 (only SD & DSD were in place 1 May 01)
 - d. Unlike the corporate world, the Secretary doesn’t customarily get to pick his/her entire leadership team
- 3. On-boarding is important but has had uneven success**
 - a. A more structured approach was used in 2001
 - b. Difficult task in 3-5 weeks, but crucial if nominee is new to Washington
- 4. The new Administration is almost always “tested” early on (e.g. Chinese fighter jet collided with Navy EP-3 aircraft; subsequent landing on Hainan Island).**
- 5. Military Department experience somewhat different from OSD**
 - a. Strong cadre of senior military officers make a big difference
 - b. Fewer positions are political and thus turnover is more limited
 - c. Career civil servants traditionally play a bigger role



RECOMMENDATIONS: (Building a strong team to support the SECDEF)

- 1. Develop a slate of “hold-over” candidates for key positions to limit the number of empty chairs on day one**
 - a. Apolitical presidential appointees
 - b. Strong, experienced civil servants
 - c. Senior military officers may be appropriate in some cases
 - d. Goal – no dropped balls or leadership vacuums

- 2. Start the personnel process early**
 - a. Develop an organization plan that spells out the primary responsibilities of the key positions to guide the selection of the right person for each job
 - b. Identify multiple candidates for key jobs before the election. Ensure you have a strong alternative in case problems arise
 - c. Start the clearance process for 30 to 40 people from each party right after the conventions (both transition team members and possible appointees)
 - d. Start the formal vetting process day after election – not necessary to know exactly which jobs they will fill



RECOMMENDATIONS: (Building a strong team to support the SECDEF, cont.)

- 3. Reach out for candidates, don't just settle for those eager for appointments**
- 4. Focus initially on the key positions (10 to 20 across DoD)**
 3. Select preferred candidates
 4. Ensure FBI gives them priority
 5. Target getting names to Hill in 30 days (60 days is the norm)
 6. Drive to get them in place by January 31 (February 15 at the latest)
- 5. Work closely with the FBI and key Hill Committees to get their full cooperation**
- 6. Careful selection of military assistants is very important. Don't just accept those that are nominated. The right ones can be invaluable.**



RECOMMENDATIONS: (On-Boarding new Appointees)

- 1. Carefully structure the on-boarding process and start as early as possible**
 - a. Provide a strategy to guide key changes in policy/programs
 - b. Focus particular attention to early challenges/immediate issues
 - c. Identify potential “land-mines”
- 2. Utilize focused, short briefing papers (no thick books)**
 - a. 1-pagers on key issues requiring early attention/decisions
 - b. Provide background, options, timelines, (no recommendations)
 - c. More in-depth education will take place during the confirmation process
- 3. Outline key responsibilities of the positions**
 - a. Brief Summary of functions and key roles/relationships
 - b. Short Bios of senior career officials
- 4. Carefully select briefers for prospective appointees**
 - a. Independent, creative thinkers – military and civilian
 - b. Don’t be defensive, locked in on prior Administration policies/programs
 - c. Expect suspicion/skepticism from the new appointee

***Reference DBB Report FY04-3
“Civilian Leadership Task Group” for greater detail***