

Hi All,

This message is going to ED senior fellows, "Senior Fellows and Friends" dinner participants, and others who are interested in improving government. If you would prefer not to receive messages on this topic, please ask me to take you off the mailing list.

The 23 of us had an exciting time last Thursday night! We'd barely ordered when Jim focused our attention on a typical management problem. Solutions varied by table and included private sector and union perspectives. We had a remarkably robust discussion for such a short period of time, and the energy level remained high throughout the evening.

For the past few years, Jim Trinka has documented discoveries made during survey work involving large samples of IRS managers, Council for Excellence in Government senior fellows, and others. A fundamental question was whether it's more effective to "fix" people or to leverage their strengths. The results for each group led Jim to conclude that an organization not only derives substantially more benefit from focusing on strengths, but that "a vital few" strengths differentiate the best managers in an organization. As you walk through the attached collection of handouts, you will get a sense of the direction of Jim's new work with FBI managers.

Jim was very clear that his conclusion is not new, although his evidence is. In The Effective Executive (1964), Peter Drucker talks about "gathering strengths together, and making their weaknesses irrelevant." What's new is the IRS's (and now the FBI's) commitment to determining and then developing employee strengths in order to improve individual and agency performance. As someone observed, it's a little counterintuitive - our upbringing and schooling tend to focus on bringing areas of weakness up to par. However, see Jim's bio for the payoffs up to this point.

During dinner, Bob Tobias gave our table additional perspective on the "Extreme Hiring Makeover" now in progress at three agencies. Also, he explained the "Best Places to Work in the Federal Government" study that was co-sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation and the Partnership for Public Service. If you haven't been to that site, go look at <http://www.bestplacestowork.org/>. One participant already has "been there" and is planning a benchmarking visit. Perhaps we'll hear more about that next time.

A list of participant affiliations follows:

- Census Bureau
- Department of Education
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Homeland Security (TSA and FEMA)
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of State
- Department of Transportation
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Library of Congress
- Acquisition Solutions
- American University (former: NTEU)
- Learning Content eXchange
- MITRE (former: Federal Reserve)

Pacific Consulting Group

Work experience levels ranged from intern to senior executive. Please consider joining us in the future.

Warm regards,

Kitty Wooley
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