

SENIOR FELLOWS AND FRIENDS

Alert. Relaxed. Collegial.



Recap of 5/25/22 session with John Salamone, House H.R. Director

Dear Senior Fellows and Friends,

Our conversation with John Salamone on May 25th was riveting. In fact, we ran 40 minutes over by consensus. You will need to look at John's slides about the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) organization and the HR transformation – that he was pressed by the CAO to plan immediately after moving to the U.S. House of Representatives in mid-2016 – [HERE](#). The strategic plan he developed consultatively as the foundation of the HR transformation appears on slide 6.

Slide 3 depicts the administrative, technical, and operational services that are provided to a customer base of 10,000 House Members, Officers, and staff by 800 non-legislative, non-partisan CAO employees, 37 of whom are in John's HR organization. (Members = elected Representatives and their staffs, both in DC and back home. Officers, including the position John reports to, are enumerated at <https://www.house.gov/the-house-explained/officers-and-organizations>.) Note that this team of 37 owns a quarter of the 800-person CAO's strategic goals shown on slide 5: "Employee: Cultivate and Unify."

The HR team has progressively implemented a comprehensive strategy to enhance human resource services, encompassing:

- Recruiting and hiring

- Advising new Members on how to recruit and hire their DC and local office staffs, explaining what positions such as the Chief of Staff entail, explaining typical org chart choices, etc.
- Advising on recruiting & hiring within the CAO organization
- Workforce planning
- Performance management
 - Clearly maps to the 4 strategic goals
 - Is simple and understandable and has employee buy-in
- Employee engagement
 - 94% of CAO-HR staff said they feel that their work is appreciated by their immediate supervisor
 - 97% of CAO-HR staff said they have confidence in their supervisor's ability to achieve CAO's goals and objectives
- Labor and employee relations
- Privacy
- Safety

Someone asked about the Safety element. It runs the gamut from promoting on-the-job safety of skilled tradespersons (whose work keeps Member offices in good repair, sometimes involves custom-making furniture and drapes, and even ensures the readiness of the [Lincoln catafalque](#)), to institutionalizing a proactive culture of safety, to implementing risk management within HR. John went on to say that the Office of Employee Assistance (see HR org chart, slide 6) has been working double-time since last year's U.S. Capitol attack on January 6th and is also helping the Capitol Police.

John mentioned that he's seeing more cross-organizational communication within the CAO organization, which was wonderful to hear. However, it stood in troubling contrast to something one of this network's most senior experts said early in the session, that she has been seeing lots of top-down, command and control, one-way communication in her employee engagement consulting within agencies.

Most of us were able to stay later in order to see the CAO's online House H.R. Hub of best practices and the CAO Career Compass Portal. The latter was the most streamlined, useful-looking SharePoint implementation I've seen so far. There were a few gasps as John drilled down to show us, for example, the dynamic and interactive interface that helps CAO employees connect the dots and understand how to bridge gaps between their current jobs and 300 career paths at various levels and in various other parts of the organization. Those career paths, which were newly developed along with a complete rewrite of all the position descriptions, align with an updated CAO general competency model (slide 11).

You'll find it worthwhile to enlarge some of the slides – there is a wealth of detail in the form of key points, accomplishments, and lessons learned that demonstrates purposeful creativity at its finest and may give you ideas. This HR group has done nothing pro forma.

Quotes to Remember

"You never burn a bridge in this town."

"Member focused. Service driven." – the CAO mission and vision in a nutshell.

"'Do the Do-Able' and keep moving." – a saying reminiscent of the late Senator George Voinovich that John has adopted because it takes the pressure off the H.R. staff.

"My team knows that I have their back."

Participant affiliations

Ascent Leadership Networks, LLC
ASPA National Capital Area Chapter
Charlestown, RI Town Council, Retired
City of Providence, Rhode Island
Department of Education/Federal Student Aid
Department of Education, Retired
Department of Health and Human Services
Fulcher Consulting LLC (IT/Cybersecurity Workforce)
GAO Center for Audit Excellence
Old Dominion University
Society for Human Resource Management
U.S. House of Representatives/CAO

Participants joined from the Washington, DC Metro Area ~ Mitchellville, MD ~
Fredericksburg, VA ~ Newton Centre, MA ~ Wickford, RI ~ Johnston, RI ~
Colorado Springs, CO.

Each time, we discover commonalities and warm up the space by beginning with a round of introductions. Please consider joining us in the future.

Sincerely,
Kitty Wooley



HOW WILL YOU CONTRIBUTE?

Cooperating freely, learning on the fly, empowering ourselves, and navigating unknown waters beyond the edge of the comfort zone are the name of the game. We began our public leadership journey in calm harbors, and now we're surrounded by the white water of constant change. Business as usual isn't working well enough. We choose to gather our strengths and lead from wherever we are, applying our best efforts to the challenges of our time. Are you coming?

Header photo: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kayakers_in_Redwood_City,_California.jpg