

HOW TO SURVIVE PUBLIC SERVICE

Caught Between the Dog and the Fireplug



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WORKING WITH POLITICIANS

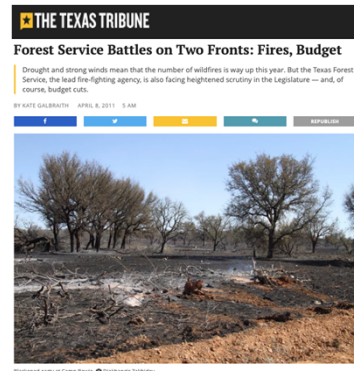
- Stay calm and in control of your emotions
- Show respect and never appear arrogant
- Be responsive and helpful, but keep answers concise
- Never share a divergent personal opinion from your public agency stance
- Be willing to go to the lion's den
- Compromise where needed—it is the lubricant of government
- Don't pander to politicians—speak for those you serve



2

WORKING WITH THE PRESS

- They can help advance your positions
 - Work closely with them
 - Always return calls
 - Keep notes ready on issues of the day
- Know only one or two sound bites may make the cut
 - Go “off the record” to provide background when needed
 - Be “quote conscious”
- Always present as if the media are present
 - Control your own message



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LEARNING FROM YOUR BOSS



“Tell me what I need to know, not what you think I want to hear”

“Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower”

“Don’t be a martyr; martyrs die”

“The task of responsible leadership...is to avoid irreconcilable differences.”



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DEALING WITH UNPLEASANT PEOPLE

- Never be afraid to hire people smarter than you are
- Power and control do not equal leadership
- “No person is ever a son of a bitch to himself”
- Be proactive about seeking feedback
- Handle non-performance firmly
- Acceptable behavior is set from the top down
- “Don’t shoot the messenger”



An Affair to Remember (1957)



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TAKING INITIATIVE OR RISK IN GOV'T

You can't cross a great canyon in two small jumps
David Lloyd George



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PRESSURE AND INFLUENCE

The first consequence of accepting a bribe is to compromise yourself

Whatever your greatest personal desire and need is, there will like your greatest weakness and temptation

When Franklin says 'yes, yes, yes', it doesn't mean he agrees with you. It means he's listening.

There are two sides to every argument, and it helps immeasurably to hear them both before committing yourself to the first one presented to you.



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GOVERNING BOARDS

- Bring the toughest position you can defend
- Instill confidence and trust in your staff
- Don't be the hole in the hourglass and stifle communication
- Communicate your vision
- Study your losses closely and learn from them
- Use your members as an audience for ideas; they can become your advocates
- Maintain formality in public and give them the limelight
- Never say more than you know and allow space for silence in discussion



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BUREAUCRATIC BEHAVIOR

- Focus on program content rather than procedure (be the means, not the end)
- Facilitate ownership by empowering staff to be in control of their work areas
- Know you are going to be scrutinized and stay honest and focused on efficiency
- Regulatory and developmental roles are essential in government, but popularity of the two is not equal
- Remember rules are momentary solutions to recurring problems; they are not inviolable laws
- Recognize that conditional wish-granting leads to “creeping incrementalism”
- Try to influence for the good those small pieces of bureaucracies you touch



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WALKING WITH KINGS

- Practice your skills
- Communicate effectively
- Be comfortable associating with people in power
- Get used to making decisions
- Grasp situations rapidly
- Seek advice when needed
- Keep dual focus on the big picture and the issue at hand
- Visualize where you want to go and go there



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THOUGHTS ON LEADERSHIP

- Care about people
- Fill positions with “first class people”
- Continue building new relationships
- Push new ideas and don't quit easily
- Disappointment brings growth and opportunity
- Be persistent and demonstrate commitment to your ideals
- Mobilize support through a wide network of contacts



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You will hold a unique position, along with a small handful of other leaders out of all the population, to make a difference in how events play out.

Kenneth Ashworth



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