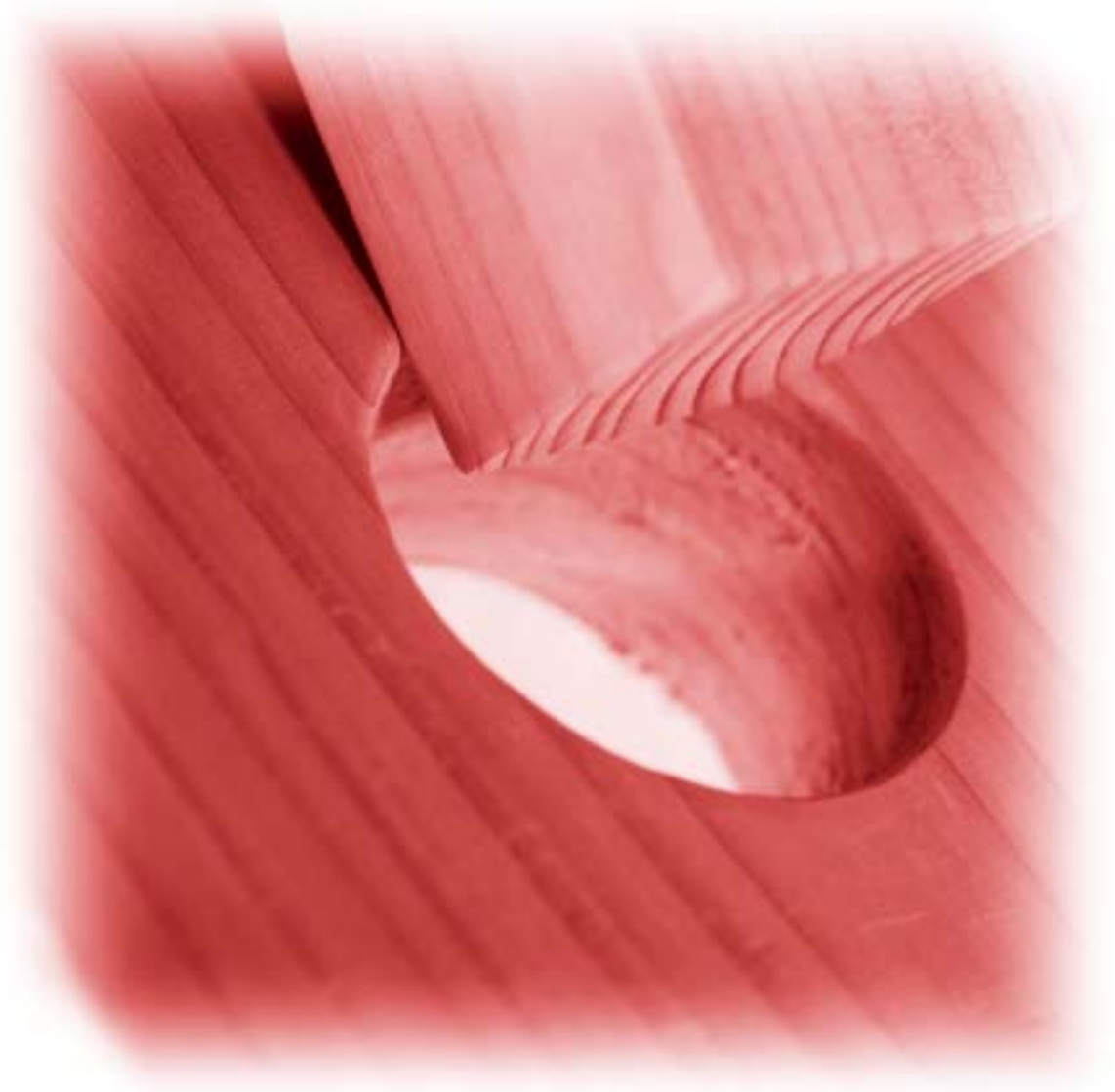




# ***Making Transitions Work***

*Integrating External Executives into  
the Federal Public Service*



Arthur Kroeger and Jeff Heynen

# ***Making Transitions Work***

*Integrating External Executives into  
the Federal Public Service*



Arthur Kroeger and Jeff Heynen

For more information or copies, please contact the Research and University Relations Group of the Canadian Centre for Management Development.

Telephone: (613) 947-3682 / 943-8370

Fax: (613) 992-1736

Email: publications@ccmd-ccg.gc.ca

*The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Canadian Centre for Management Development.*

© Canadian Centre for Management Development, 2003

### **National Library of Canada cataloguing in publication data**

Kroeger, Arthur

Making Transitions Work : Integrating External Executives into the Federal Public Service

Text in English and French on inverted pages.

Title on added t.p.: Des transitions réussies.

ISBN 0-662-67228-5

Cat. no. SC94-103/2003

1. Government executives – Canada.
2. Canada. Officials and employees – Recruiting.
3. Civil service – Canada – Personnel management.
4. Government executives – Canada – Interviews.
- I. Heynen, Jeff, 1972- .
- II. Canadian Centre for Management Development.
- III. Title.
- IV. Title: Integrating External Executives into the Federal Public Service.
- V. Title: Des transitions réussies.

JL111.E93K76 2003 352.6'5'0971 C2003-980300-7E

# Table of Contents

|   |      |
|---|------|
| PREFACE .....   | .ii  |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS/ABOUT THE AUTHORS .....                                 | .iii |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....   | .1   |
| I) INTRODUCTION .....   | .3   |
| a) Purpose and Methodology .....  | .3   |
| b) Recruitment Trends .....   | .4   |
| c) Structure of Report .....  | .6   |
| II) IDENTIFYING THE BENEFITS AND COSTS OF INTEGRATION .....             | .7   |
| a) Defining the Benefits of External Recruitment .....                  | .7   |
| b) Defining Successful Integration .....                                | .7   |
| c) Costs of Unsuccessful Transitions .....                              | .8   |
| d) Private Sector Experience .....                                      | .10  |
| III) THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE: CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION ..... | .11  |
| a) Culture .....  | .11  |
| b) Networks .....   | .12  |
| c) Administration .....   | .13  |
| IV) UNDERSTANDING THE DIVIDES .....                                     | .15  |
| a) The Public-Private Sector Divide .....                               | .15  |
| b) The Federal-Provincial Divide .....                                  | .17  |
| V) IMPROVING THE INTEGRATION PROCESS: RECOMMENDATIONS .....             | .19  |
| a) Selection Process .....  | .20  |
| b) Reception Arrangements and Orientation .....                         | .21  |
| c) Continuing Support .....   | .24  |
| VI) SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION .....  | .27  |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY .....  | .28  |
| ANNEX 1 - LIST OF INTERVIEWEES .....                                    | .29  |
| ANNEX 2 - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....                                     | .31  |

## PREFACE

The Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD) is pleased to publish *Making Transitions Work*, which addresses a timely yet enduring question: how can we make a new professional environment more hospitable to an incoming executive? The timeliness of this study emerges from recruitment and retention challenges the federal public service will increasingly face – illustrated by increased retirements at the executive level and greater movement of individuals between sectors and orders of government. We must learn how to better capitalize upon the ideas, energy and “outside” expertise of new recruits.

The long-term relevance of the report stems from the cultural challenges that virtually all senior professionals confront when undertaking significant career transitions. Such moves are rarely easy, given the entrenched networks of decision-making and unwritten rules in many large organizations. Successfully integrating into these settings requires an openness to learning on the part of both incoming executives and their new colleagues.

Based on interviews with nearly 50 senior executives in both the public and private sectors, Arthur Kroeger and Jeff Heynen point out a number of steps the federal public service could take to improve both its selection and subsequent support of external recruits at the senior executive level. Many of their recommendations are simple but essential. The challenge will be to ensure appropriate follow-up in establishing a more systematic approach to integrating external executives into their new roles.

The federal public service clearly has much to gain from the diverse perspectives, experiences and talents of external recruits at the management level. This study is an important contribution in how we can nurture the strengths of these individuals and ultimately increase the capacity of the public service to respond effectively to the needs of elected officials and citizens.



Janice Cochrane  
President, CCMD

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank all those who agreed to be interviewed and who generously shared their expertise and insights. Jocelyne Bourgon, President Emeritus of the Canadian Centre for Management Development and Raymond D'Aoust, formerly Director General of Strategic Research and Planning at the Canadian Centre for Management Development, played key roles in highlighting the need for and conceptualizing this study. Finally, the authors would like to thank Oryssia Lennie, James Nininger and David Mac Donald for their helpful comments.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Arthur Kroeger** began his federal public service career in 1958 with the Department of External Affairs and was first appointed a Deputy Minister in 1974 at Indian and Northern Affairs. He subsequently served as Deputy Minister in five other departments, including Transport, Energy, and Employment and Immigration. After leaving government in 1992, he has held several visiting professorships and has been active on numerous boards of prominent research institutions. From 1993 to 2002 he served as Chancellor of Carleton University.

**Jeff Heynen** is presently Senior Research Analyst at the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD), having previously worked in the Privy Council Office (Intergovernmental Affairs) from 1999-2001. Prior to joining CCMD, Mr. Heynen served for a year as a Canada-US Fulbright Scholar based in Washington, DC.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study is primarily based on interviews with 46 senior public and private sector executives, the majority of whom have had experience in both sectors. The main findings are as follows:

- Transitions of executives to any new organization, whether in the private or public sectors, are inherently difficult. Failure rates of new senior executives changing jobs within the private sector often range between 40 to 60 percent. Of all the transitions investigated in this study – between sectors and orders of government – the transition into the federal public service, particularly from the private sector, was regarded as the most challenging. The biggest impediments typically relate to understanding the unique cultural elements of the public service, its entrenched networks of decision-making, and administrative norms.
- Although there are many benefits to external recruitment, the federal public service must be mindful of the potential costs of unsuccessful transitions, including costs to the reputation of the public service internally and in the eyes of the community from which the executive was drawn. The more senior the appointment, the greater the visibility of failure. Should the government opt to increase the number of external senior recruits, many of those interviewed believed that appointment at the EX 1-5 level holds the greatest promise.
- Most of those interviewed believed that the federal public service must establish a more systematic approach to the selection and subsequent support of external recruits at the senior executive level. Accordingly, the authors recommend that the public service take steps to:
  - increase the rigour of the selection process of external senior recruits, including the use of exposure interviews at the pre-hiring stage or specialized executive search firms and advisory panels;
  - ensure that appropriate transition arrangements are in place, especially comprehensive orientation upon arrival and the preparation of colleagues in the receiving organizations; and
  - offer continuing support for the new entrant, including mentoring arrangements and making support for incoming colleagues an explicit part of the responsibilities of government executives.

## *a) Purpose and Methodology*

The purpose of this study is to assess the recent experience of the Government of Canada in integrating senior executives from outside the federal public service and to suggest ways of improving the transition process. The relevance of the study is rooted in a basic observation: transitions of executives to any new organization, whether in the private or public sectors, are inherently difficult. Moving from one organization to another requires adjusting to a new and complex operational and cultural environment. Transitioning between sectors (public and private) or between orders of government (provincial and federal) significantly magnifies the challenges.

The core of this study is a set of three propositions. First, the management of transitions matters. The nature of “beginnings” in a new organization – such as acceptance by staff, understanding of the organizational culture – can have a significant impact on subsequent job performance. Second, not all transitions of external executives have been successful into the public service. Consequently, it is important for the Government of Canada to be more systematic and attentive to the complexities inherent in the recruitment of executives from outside the federal public service. Third, certain measures can be taken to help make a new professional environment more hospitable to an incoming executive, thereby enhancing the success of a new recruit.

The methodology of the study consisted primarily of interviews with a set of senior public and private sector executives – all of whom have either had personal experience in moving between sectors or governments or who have worked closely with such individuals. A total of 46 interviews were conducted – including seven current Deputy Ministers (DMs) and Associate Deputy Ministers, 16 officials at the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) rank, 17 senior private sector officials (all of whom had previously worked as senior executives in the federal public service), three Governor in Council appointees, and three specialists in senior personnel management. The list of those interviewed is found at Annex 1 and the list of questions sent to each individual prior to the interview at Annex 2.

All of those interviewed were invited to share their perspectives on the following broad themes:

- challenges faced in their transition to a new organization;
- support received from their new organization in facilitating the integration process;
- strategies they personally employed to ease their integration experiences;
- major substantive and cultural barriers between the private sectors and government, or between different orders of government, that must be overcome to ensure success in transitions; and
- advice they would offer the federal public service in making transitions more successful.

Interviews typically lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. All interviewees were informed that their comments were not for attribution. In many cases, the interviewer knew the interviewee personally and as a result enjoyed open and forthright discussion.



## b) Recruitment Trends

In addition to the inherent difficulty in executive transitions, the rationale of the study stems from broader recruitment and retention challenges that the federal public service is facing – many of which are shared by similar large organizations, such as private sector firms and universities. These include competition for increasingly specialized skills (e.g. information technology experts, scientists), preparing for anticipated retirements, and retaining top-level talent in a tighter labour market. Other challenges are more unique to the federal public service, including commitments to increase diversity at the executive level and calls to enrich the overall culture with more perspectives, experiences and talents.<sup>1</sup> Seeking more talent outside of the public service and improving integration processes are obviously key components in addressing these challenges.

Although this study focuses on the integration experience of senior executives in the public service, specifically at the Assistant Deputy Minister level (EX-4 and 5) and above, it was nonetheless instructive to examine some of the recruitment statistics relating to the broader executive community (levels EX-1 to EX-5). This helped us identify possible trends regarding external recruitment relative to internal promotion. We also believe that many of the measures the federal government can put in place to ease the integration of externally recruited senior executives have relevance at all levels of the public service.

Statistics indicate that mobility between sectors is increasing at the executive level. It is interesting to note that, for the first time in Canadian history, a number of major corporations in the private sector are now headed by former senior officials of the federal government. At the same time, there has been a discernible increase in the number of individuals joining the public service from outside at the middle and senior levels. Table 1 indicates the level of external recruitment into the EX community from 1994-2002 as a percentage of total executive appointments (which comprises both external recruitment and internal promotion).

---

<sup>1</sup> In June 2000, the President of the Treasury Board endorsed the Action Plan of the (Perinbam) Task Force on the Participation of Visible Minorities in the Federal Public Service. Among the Task Force's recommendations is the establishment of benchmarks in the recruitment of visible minorities. Specifically, it recommends that executive appointments in this category rise to 1 in 5 as an annual rate by 2005.

Table 1: Annual External Executive Recruitment into the Federal Public Service, 1994-2002



Source: Public Service Commission statistics. These numbers include Indeterminate and Term employees but exclude employees of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and Governor-in-Council appointments as well as Deputy Minister and Associate appointments. The line represents a trend line from 1994 to 2002.

Table 1 shows a clear trend line of increased external recruitment at mid-level management ranks during this period, ranging from 4.9% in 1994-95 (12 out of 245 total annual recruitment) to 9.4% in 2001-02 (74 of 788 total annual recruitment). The largest number of external recruits has been at the EX 1-3 levels. During this period, the levels of external recruitment to the Assistant Deputy Minister level – typically EX 4-5 – remained consistent at between two to six individuals per year.

An interesting observation not captured by these statistics is the “return flows” of senior public servants. For example, 65% (11 of 17) of ADMs interviewed (whose immediately prior job was outside the federal public service) had served previously in the Government of Canada, often at the beginning of their professional careers. This “inners and outers” phenomenon is likely to grow, particularly given generational shifts in job expectations as evidenced by increased desires for varied professional experiences and declining predisposition to “life-time” employment security.<sup>2</sup> This pattern also corroborates the view that early exposure to public service – followed by departure – increases the chances of success upon subsequent return.

<sup>2</sup> Allison Cowan, Carolyn Farquhar and Judith MacBride-King, *Building Tomorrow's Public Service Today: Challenges and Solutions in Recruitment and Retention* (Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada, 2002), p. 11.

It is important to note that external recruitment at the Deputy Minister and Associate Deputy Minister level has been quite limited. A general consensus emerged among the interviewees that the number of external recruits at this level would likely continue to be small. This is partly based on entry constraints, including remuneration disparities with the private sector<sup>3</sup>, the need to recuse oneself from personal financial asset management, and linguistic barriers for some individuals.

More generally, some of those interviewed cited the importance of maintaining a professional and non-partisan public service as a reason for avoiding very large scale external recruitment at executive and Deputy Minister levels. For individuals with little or no prior federal government experience who are appointed to the most senior levels of departments, special assistance and nurturing will be required to ensure their successful transition.

### c) Structure of Report

Section II of the study attempts to identify the benefits of external recruitment, the components of successful integration, as well as the costs of unsuccessful transitions. It also places executive transitions into context by examining integration experience in the private sector. Much of the material in the section is based on the available literature pertaining to executive transitions and supplemented by our interview findings.

Section III presents our findings from the interviews as they relate to existing measures the federal public service has in place to support the integration of external executives. We also summarize the major challenges encountered during the integration process, particularly pertaining to the unique culture of the public service and the difficulties of networking into a tightly-knit senior management cadre.

Section IV examines the cultural differences between the federal public service and the two biggest pools of externally recruited executives: provincial governments and the private sector. This information is intended to help identify critical information that should be at the core of orientation programs for incoming senior executives to the federal public service.

Finally, Section V presents our main recommendations on measures the federal public service might implement to mitigate the various challenges – as identified earlier in the report – that executives face during the early phases of the transition process. We also include a number of recommendations pertaining to the selection of external recruits. Section VI provides a brief summary of our main conclusions.

---

<sup>3</sup> At the discretion of the Treasury Board, some arrangements have been made for salary allowances above approved pay grades. Several of the Government's Chief Information Officers, for example, receive compensation and benefits through the Information Technology Association of Canada while on secondment to the federal public service.

## II) IDENTIFYING THE BENEFITS AND COSTS OF INTEGRATION

### a) Defining the Benefits of External Recruitment

External recruitment at the executive level has many potential benefits. In both the public and private sectors, the most obvious rationales include gaining missing skills or competencies, enhancing productivity in certain areas (e.g. information technology), and filling niche expertise (e.g. tax law, comptrollership).

Organizations hire senior executives for a number of other reasons, beyond the need for obvious skills and abilities. These include capitalizing on outside perspectives, tapping into an executive's networks in a particular sector or community, and implementing strategic change. Moreover, recruitment of diverse executives can have symbolic meaning to underrepresented communities – which can be of particular importance in the public sector.

A number of those interviewed believed that the senior leadership in the federal public service must think more strategically about why it is bringing particular individuals into government in the first place. Although the benefits of external recruitment can be readily identified, these benefits are rarely articulated to the broader management community or public service. In essence, external recruitment should not be perceived as an end in itself – there must be clearly defined reasons for doing it in each case.

### b) Defining Successful Integration

While we believe it is impossible to define with rigour what constitutes a successful transition, a number of broad parameters can nonetheless be identified. Full contribution of senior executives occurs when he or she:

- fully understands how the organization really works;
- builds strong, supportive networks and relationships;
- gets to the point where his or her success is visible within the organization; and
- gains a reputation of being a valuable resource.

It is useful to note that private sector analyses suggest that full and successful integration into a new organization can easily take up to 18 months.<sup>4</sup> According to one noted source, a successful integration is one in which both the individual and the organization are transformed for the better and are able to leverage each other's strengths to achieve mutually beneficial goals.<sup>5</sup>

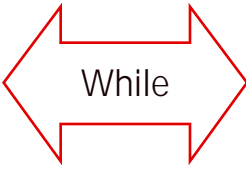
The success of the integration experience – both in the private and public sectors – appears to be contingent on balancing the apparent contradictions in the new executive's role. In essence, outside recruits are typically asked to bring fresh insights and experiences to their new positions while simultaneously understanding the operational “style” of their new organization. A completely “assimilated” executive would bring little value-added in cultural terms, while a new executive entirely insensitive to an organization's culture risks rejection. Accordingly, the integration experience can be perceived as seeking a balance between various extremes as expressed in Table 2.

---

<sup>4</sup> Diane Downey, *Assimilating New Leaders: The Key to Executive Retention* (New York: Amacom, 2001), p. 189.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

Table 2 – Integration Extremes: Achieving the Right Balance

|                                       |   |  |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Being patient                         |  | Becoming productive                                    |
| Setting your own pace                 |   | Following the organization's pace                      |
| Trusting your intuition               |   | Making deliberate criteria-based decisions             |
| Pleasing your stakeholders            |   | Ensuring you can meet your own priorities              |
| Implementing change                   |   | Respecting the history and culture of the organization |
| Demonstrating competence              |   | Seeking advice and help when you need it               |
| Building relationships based on trust |   | Testing assumptions about others                       |
| Intervening appropriately             |   | Waiting until you have enough information              |
| Drawing on past experience            |   | Not letting past experience blind you to new realities |
| Acting with authority                 |   | Staying in learning mode                               |
| Not leading with your ego             |   | Displaying confidence                                  |
| Affiliating with people               |   | Maintaining professional boundaries                    |

Adapted from Diane Downey, *Assimilating New Leaders: The Key to Executive Retention* (New York: Amacom, 2001), p. 4.

Based on the interviews conducted in this study, it is clear that the success of transitions is heavily dependent on the particular individual and his or her general adaptability to a new environment. As mentioned earlier, individuals newly recruited to senior executive positions, who had some experience in the federal public service earlier in their careers, typically experienced an easier re-entry into the government. Key personality characteristics commonly cited as essential for success in managing the transition to a senior executive position include: flexibility, consensus-building skills, reflectiveness, intellectual curiosity, keen listening ability, and a capacity to submerge ego. Emotional intelligence is as important as substantive knowledge in managing the transition.

*"As soon as I became DM, I met with virtually everyone in my department and my fellow deputies. This really helped create the impression that I was ready to learn and not inclined to unnecessarily throw my weight around."*

### c) Costs of Unsuccessful Transitions

The costs of unsuccessful integration of new executives have to be carefully weighed against the potential benefits of external recruitment. The direct costs of mis-hires include the cost of recruiting, actual compensation expenditures, possible severance, training and the additional cost of lost productivity. Indirect costs can be even more damaging. When leader turnover is high, working alliances across the organization are not in place long enough to embed any changes that are introduced. Moreover, loss of an executive can chill a department's readiness to recruit externally in the future.

Failure by an outside recruit can also have adverse "cultural" consequences, not only for the individual involved, but also for the reputation of the public service, particularly in the eyes of the community from which the individual was drawn (e.g. academe, visible minorities, regions). The more senior the appointment, the greater visibility of failure of a mismatched-executive.

Given the high costs of failure for new recruits, senior leadership in the public service must decide carefully on the scope of external recruitment. It may be advisable as a general practice to encourage more hiring at lower and mid-levels – where the risks and visibility of failure are lower. Many interviewees stated that integration of executives at the EX-1 to EX-5 levels holds the greatest promise.

Significant difficulties may arise when individuals with no prior federal experience are appointed to Deputy Minister or Associate positions. These positions constitute the most senior leadership of departments; they are thus the most visible and offer the least room for error. Shortly upon assuming the position, the Deputy Minister is expected to define the department's agenda and be responsible for overall results, often in technical fields in which he or she might not be an expert. This requires mastery in seeking the public interest, implementing the government's agenda, applying strategic analysis, operating administratively in a political context, linking the department to various external universes, and understanding the government process and management. The hierarchical nature of large organizations means that employees will attach great importance to the initial style and utterances of the new top official. Individuals with little experience in such an environment face an enormous learning curve – often at a time when expectations for leadership are expected within months or even weeks.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike less senior positions, Deputy Minister appointees face unique challenges. Immediately upon appointment, they must cultivate a close relationship with the Minister by serving as a trusted advisor and chief departmental representative. At the same time, the Deputy Minister must remain accountable to the Clerk of the Privy Council and ultimately the Prime Minister, who is responsible for Deputy Ministers' appointments. Despite these various allegiances, however, the position of Deputy Minister remains a lonely one – given the complex and demanding responsibilities at the department's apex and the absence of a superior from whom they can seek guidance on a regular basis.

Appointment to the Associate level for external recruits runs less risk than appointment to the Deputy Minister level – although the challenges of the position must also be recognized. The roles of Associates tend to be relatively undefined and depend upon their working relations with their Deputies. Their responsibilities may be perceived as typically taking one of two forms: either co-management of the department with the Deputy or specific delegation of duties. Success at the Associate level is thus highly contingent upon the Deputy-Associate relationship. If Deputies are disinclined to mentor an incoming Associate or if new Associates assume responsibilities without consulting their superior, there is an enhanced potential for failure.<sup>7</sup>

The decidedly mixed record of outside appointees as Deputies and Associates over the past two decades underlines the need for great care to be taken with such appointments – both in their selection and subsequent support during transitions.

---

<sup>6</sup> For a recent study on the challenges faced by Deputy Ministers, including during the initial period following appointment, see Jacques Bourgault, *The Contemporary Role and Challenges of Deputy Ministers in the Federal Government of Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Management Development, 2003), especially chapter three.

<sup>7</sup> Canadian Centre for Management Development, "A Learning Perspective on the Role and Responsibilities of the Associate Deputy Minister," (unpublished paper, 2002).

## d) Private Sector Experience

It is important to note that executive integration challenges are by no means unique to the federal public service. A number of recent studies confirm the extent of private sector executive turnover. According to a *Harvard Business Review* article from 2000, 80 percent of a pool of 150 newly appointed senior executives changed employers again within two years.<sup>8</sup> Other studies report that between 40 to 60 percent of new executives will be unsuccessful in their new jobs and will leave their positions within 18 months.<sup>9</sup> Many of the private sector officials interviewed in this study noted that recruitment of external executives continues to be quite limited in their respective companies, particularly given the high failure rates.

Private sector studies have also attempted to identify the major reasons for new executive derailment. As noted in Table 3, reasons for failure tend to be rooted in imperfect beginnings. Poor communication and incomplete knowledge of the organization and its mores impeded proper acclimatization and job performance. Table 3 clearly indicates that without the establishment of strong relationships and job understanding, organizational “immune systems” easily reject talent.

Table 3 – Reasons for Executive Failure in the Private Sector



Note: Total greater than 100 percent due to multiple responses. Source: Corporate Leadership Council, “Duty Free Onboarding,” *Forced Outside* (1997).

The potential benefits of externally recruited executives, weighed against the high risks and consequences of failure, have led many private sector firms to be extremely rigorous in their selection processes. Several private sector executives interviewed in the study generally confirmed their use of a number of stringent selection mechanisms, including specialized “head-hunting” firms, personal involvement of the CEO, exposure interviews at the pre-hiring stage, exhaustive reference checks, and psychological testing.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Peter Cappelli, “A Market-Driven Approach to Retaining Talent,” *Harvard Business Review*, 78 (2000), p. 104.

<sup>9</sup> Corporate Leadership Council, “Integration and Assimilation of Mid-Career Hires,” December 2001.

### III) THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE: CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION

Based on the interviews completed for this study, it is apparent that the federal public service has taken only limited steps towards establishing a systematic approach to the selection and subsequent support of external recruits at the senior executive level. Most interviewees mentioned that substantive briefings provided by their departmental officials were typically of a very high calibre. However, few felt as though they received ongoing and consistent integration support outside of their immediate circle. Indeed, most stated that they had to create their own “orientation” programs. A strong consensus emerged on the need to put into place additional measures that could facilitate the executive’s transition to a new and complex environment. These measures are discussed in detail in Section V.

Interviewees did express praise for existing orientation efforts (such as executive orientation courses for DMs and ADMs offered by the Canadian Centre for Management Development or career support given by The Leadership Network for ADMs) and networking opportunities (such as ADM Forums and DMs’ weekly breakfasts). Indeed, these programs contain many of the essential elements to address the learning needs of new recruits. Interviewees believed, however, that these programs as currently formulated were alone insufficient to meet the needs of new recruits.

*"When I first became a Deputy Minister, I felt like I was a spider spinning a web in a toilet bowl. I had no idea what I was getting myself into."*

Before identifying additional measures that might be put into place, however, it is critical to examine what individuals perceive to be the greatest obstacles in the integration process. Based on interview findings, we have grouped these challenges into the following three categories: the culture of the public service, accessing existing networks, and understanding government administration.

#### a) Culture

For most of the senior executives interviewed, the most significant struggles upon entering their new ranks related to understanding the cultural dimensions of the federal public service. This included many of the unwritten rules, such as internal and external expectations of the role of the DM or Associate, the importance of relationships with central agencies, protocol considerations, and the necessity of horizontal management and informal networks on many policy files.

To paraphrase several individuals, understanding the cultural environment of the public service is vital to comprehending “how Ottawa really works”. Several individuals also cited the distinct “policy patois” required to communicate effectively in the federal public service. Key cultural elements most commonly mentioned include:

- effective leadership styles in the public service;
- internal and external expectations of the role of the DM, Associate and ADM;
- tools and techniques of horizontal management;
- importance of consensus building and internal diplomacy;



- maintaining an effective relationship with Ministers;
- more protracted and deliberate processes for decision-making (particularly in contrast with the private sector and provincial governments);
- difficulty of defining success;
- multiple and sometimes conflicting objectives pursued by government; and
- importance of internal networks in the federal public service.

## b) Networks

The second most common impediment to integration cited by interviewees was the difficulty in breaking into networks within the federal public service. Many recent recruits perceived both the DM and ADM communities as having a “club-like” atmosphere, given that the majority have risen through the system at the same time, often since their twenties. For senior executives serving outside of the National Capital Region, this challenge of “breaking-in” at headquarters is even greater.

*"In the federal public service, the effectiveness of executives is directly proportional to their contacts."*

From the interviews, it became clear that those who have been most successful in their transitions typically took strong personal initiative in networking themselves into the federal public service. This was at times facilitated by senior human resource staff, who arranged both formal and informal meetings with key executive officials in and outside of the department. A number of external recruits reported, however, that they had not been given so much as a list of potentially useful contacts with telephone numbers.

Both DM and ADM interviewees expressed considerable support for existing networking opportunities targeted at executives within the federal public service – such as the ADM Forum and APEX conferences. In the regions, executive networking sessions organized by Federal Regional Councils received high praise. Positive reference was also commonly made to the weekly DM breakfasts, monthly DM lunches, periodic DM retreats, and DM dinners organized by CCMD. DM breakfasts, first instituted in 1985, have played a major role in fostering greater cooperation and collegiality among the senior-most officials in Ottawa. Still, the well-entrenched “social community” at the senior ranks – oftentimes bolstered by these horizontal mechanisms – requires special measures to ensure new recruits are “networked” into the federal public service.

## c) Administration

Understanding public administration and governmental processes proved to be an additional challenge for new recruits, although less so compared to cultural and networking barriers. The most frequently mentioned substantive issues that new external recruits needed to know were as follows:

- non-partisan but politically sensitive role of senior departmental executives;
- role and process of central agencies;
- Cabinet committee structure and process;
- legislative underpinnings of management responsibilities (especially the Financial Administration Act);
- nature of public service directives such as Treasury Board guidelines;
- policy and administrative terminology (e.g. Aide Memoires, “decks”, “unfunded MCs”);
- human resource management in the public sector;
- relations with public service unions;
- budget and planning cycles;
- Access to Information provisions and requirements; and
- role of legal services units in departments.

In addition to formal orientation events, numerous interviewees expressed a desire to better understand the role and process of central agencies through first hand experience. These institutional features of the federal public service are among the most baffling elements to comprehend for recruits from both the private sector and provincial governments. Some of those interviewed displayed interest in attending as observers meetings of Cabinet committees, the Treasury Board, and/or senior management of PCO. Several others expressed interest in participating in an executive “internship” in central agencies for short periods, perhaps between one to three months. It was believed such an experience would help them in better appreciating overall government priority setting and the political-public service interface.

## IV) UNDERSTANDING THE DIVIDES

*"To the outsider, entering the senior ranks of the public service is like joining the Vatican - a monastic enclave full of high priests, mysterious processes and unexplained rituals."*

*"Compared to the private sector, the government is a world of ambiguity, complexity and nuance."*

The interviews confirmed that the transition from the private to the public sector proved the most difficult of all transitions. The private-to-public transition is considerably more difficult than transitions in the opposite direction, largely due to the more complex and multi-faceted operating environment of the public service. Executives entering the public service must almost immediately integrate into multiple teams – at various levels within the department, with peers across departments, and with the participation of often poorly understood central agencies. Since the Prime Minister appoints Deputy Ministers, the latter must carefully balance their loyalty to their Minister and their responsibility to the centre of government. The clearer hiring processes, objectives and accountabilities typical of the private sector, by contrast, help explain the comparative ease of transitions from the public to private sector. These sectoral differences are elaborated in the two sub-sections below.

Interviews also highlighted that certain private-to-public transitions tend to be easier than others. The challenges of integration tend to be minimized in areas with readily transferable skills (e.g. law, accounting), in areas where sectoral expertise is readily applicable (e.g. regulatory agencies) or in areas that are overwhelmingly operational (e.g. Crown Corporations). The most difficult transitions tend to be in the policy development area, particularly for individuals who have had limited exposure to federal government decision-making processes.

Given that the bulk of external senior recruits tend to come from either the private sector or provincial governments, the following sections highlight the main “environmental” differences and similarities with the federal public service from the perspective of executives. Identifying and describing these differences should be at the core of orientation programs (broadly defined) for new recruits.

### a) The Public-Private Sector Divide

There is an apt description that summarizes the degree of similarity between the public and private sectors: “business and government administration are alike in all unimportant respects.”<sup>10</sup> These “unimportant” similarities are closely linked to certain immutable laws of large organizations. They include bureaucratic procedures, hierarchies, and problems of internal communications. On the other hand, government and the private sector are markedly different in their cultures and the way in which they function.

---

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Lawrence E. Lynn, Jr., *Managing the Public's Business: The Job of the Government Executive* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1981), p. 136.

*"Ottawa is far more advanced in certain areas of management than the private sector - especially when it comes to balancing competing internal interests. When I left the government, I found that the mental agility that comes from making trade-offs as an executive in the federal public service was a huge asset in the private sector."*

From the perspective of the senior executive, the most important features of the private sector were:

- motivation in the private sector is quite different from the public sector;
- considerably greater compensation levels at mid- and top-level executive levels;
- much clearer accountabilities over tasks and objectives;
- better defined and quantifiable performance targets and results;
- less oversight of decision-making (with the possible exception of holding company control);
- the absence of political process requirements (e.g. Ministerial requests, intergovernmental considerations);
- a quicker pace of decision-making;
- typically fewer stakeholders;
- much greater flexibility over human resource practices (especially hiring and firing);
- less constraints on managerial initiative generally; and
- fewer diversity or language requirements.

Several of the senior private sector executives interviewed stated that a strong disconnect and misunderstanding currently exist between the elites of both the private and public sectors. Despite the visible success of a number of former federal public servants currently in the private sector – many of whom were interviewed for this study – several interviewees believed business leaders have become less interested in public affairs than ever before.

As a possible response to this development, several executives in both sectors endorsed the idea of establishing a Canadian equivalent of the White House Fellows program in the United States. The main intent of such a program would be to encourage greater movement of private sector and other diverse talents into the federal public service at early stages of individuals' careers, if even for a short period of time, in order to produce a better comprehension of government in the private sector. Such a program could also create a greater disposition for continued public service or reentry at a later date. Those interviewed suggested that such a non-partisan initiative would likely require the support of the Prime Minister, several private sector CEOs, and be administered by the Privy Council Office.

## The US White House Fellows Program

Established in 1965, the White House Fellows Program is a non-partisan initiative intended to provide highly motivated young Americans (typically between the ages of 28-40) first hand experience in government and leadership. Participants spend one year as full-time, paid assistants to senior White House staff, the Vice President, Cabinet Secretaries and other top-ranking officials. They are remunerated at the GS-14 pay scale (\$83,482 US). Approximately 1000 applicants apply yearly for between 11 to 19 fellowships.

## b) The Federal-Provincial Divide

Given their operational and political similarities with the federal public service, provincial governments have been a fertile recruiting ground for a number of senior executive positions in Ottawa in recent years. The basic public management models are essentially the same in both orders of government, such as the provision of support to Ministers, budgeting practices, public servant anonymity and political neutrality. The growth of provincial bureaucracies since the 1970s, moreover, has reinforced the professionalism in provincial executive ranks.

*"Compared to provincial governments, decision-making processes are much more drawn-out and studied in the federal public service. On the upside, this allows for better longer-term planning in Ottawa."*

*"In provincial governments, public servants have much breadth but limited depth on particular policy issues. It is the opposite in Ottawa."*

The surface similarity of both orders of government, however, has tended to mask a number of key differences, many of which were highlighted during the course of the interviews. Provincial governments typically:

- have closer interaction between ministers and senior managers (and, in several cases, more political appointees at senior ranks of the civil service);
- allow for more direct ministerial agenda-setting;
- have “flatter” and less hierarchical departments, with less attention to protocol considerations;
- are more operational and less policy-driven;
- due to their smaller size, tend to encourage a more collegial decision-making environment and natural tendency towards horizontal management of issues;
- have closer and more direct relations with stakeholder organizations and citizens; and
- have comparatively smaller and less directive central agencies (e.g. equivalent of the Finance department and Treasury Board merged in a single organization).

This last difference – the more limited role played by central agencies – proved to be a common observation in interviews with executives originally from provincial governments. Several interviewees mentioned that understanding the comparatively powerful role of central agencies in the federal public service proved to be the biggest adjustment when coming to Ottawa.

## V) *IMPROVING THE INTEGRATION PROCESS: RECOMMENDATIONS*

This section presents our main observations of the integration process and suggests measures the federal public service might implement to increase the success rate of externally recruited executives.

### Main Recommendation

- The federal government needs to develop a systematic approach to integrating executives from outside, particularly in view of the trend towards increasing outside recruitment.

As mentioned at the beginning of Section III, a strong consensus emerged that much more should be done to ease a professional transition that is inherently difficult. Interviewees at both the DM and ADM levels commonly referred to the “sink or swim” mindset when first entering the position. We believe that new swimmers need to be better informed about the nature of the water they are entering – the temperature, speed and flow of the water – to help adapt their techniques. Building champion swimmers requires champion coaches and champion teams.

Section IV has been divided into what we believe to be the three major components of the integration process:

1. Careful assessments of individuals – before offers are made – to ensure they have the necessary qualities for success at the senior executive level;
2. Ensuring that appropriate transition arrangements are in place, including systematic orientation for the new recruit upon arrival and the preparation of colleagues and superiors in the receiving organization; and
3. Provision for continuing support for the new entrant, including mentoring arrangements, during the first months in the public service.

These components are intended to illustrate the ideal integration scenario in the case of a new recruit with very limited understanding of the federal public service. Obviously, there is no one integration process that will work for every individual. The best process will take stock of the individual’s needs, capacities and knowledge levels – and tailor integration support accordingly.

## a) Selection Process

Although the selection process is not directly related to the process of executive integration, we believe it is intimately related to both the success and failure of recent senior recruits to the federal public service. A more rigorous selection process is essential to ensuring that an individual is not only right for the job but also right for the organization. Given the complexity and rigours of senior executive positions in the government, appointments intended to “make our numbers look better”, in the absence of proven competencies of the incoming candidate, are doomed to failure.

From the time of initial contact with a candidate, officials responsible for the selection process must be forthcoming regarding the general challenges that will be faced in joining the public service executive cadre. That means disclosing all information relevant to the job – highlighting strengths and opportunities as well as potential hurdles inherent in the position. Failure to communicate clear expectations can exacerbate the subsequent integration process should the scope and responsibilities of a new recruit’s role not match what he or she was promised.

*"The government needs to be very selective in who it brings in. Not every private sector executive could function well in the public service. Few CEOs would have the patience to attend a two-hour discursive meeting on a public policy issue that doesn't end with a decision."*

The interviews strongly confirmed the importance of bringing colleagues and superiors of the new recruit onside, before an appointment is made. Exposure interviews with potential senior colleagues or peers at the pre-hiring stage could serve as a useful means to inform the candidate and to test suitability. It will also increase current officials’ commitment to the success of a new recruit. Similarly, Deputy Ministers should be consulted in the selection of their Associates prior to the latter’s appointment – particularly given the often ill-defined role of the Associate in many departments and the importance of the personal chemistry involved in this relationship.<sup>11</sup>

Exposure  
interviews

Several private sector studies show that external hires and disparities in compensation (often required to attract the premium of specialized skills) can prompt resentment and envy among long-term employees.<sup>12</sup> These studies indicate, however, that companies active in also promoting internal employee development are less likely to experience this negative effect on employee morale. Team-building efforts and clear communication of expectations by senior management can also mitigate feelings of employee resentment.

<sup>11</sup> Canadian Centre for Management Development, "A Learning Perspective on the Role and Responsibilities of the Associate Deputy Minister," (unpublished paper, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> Corporate Leadership Council, "Recruiting and Retaining Mid-Career Hires," February 2003.

Many private sector firms expend considerable efforts when selecting senior executives from outside the company. Several interviewees argued that the federal public service should at least match this rigour, given the unique blend of skills required to navigate its complexities. To this end, suggestions included using specialized executive search firms to identify potential candidates and creating an informal advisory panel of recently retired senior public servants to help screen candidates. A “CEO Advisory Council” might also be established in connection with a highly visible and prestigious young executive program, possibly patterned after the US White House Fellows Program (see bottom of page 16).

Executive search firms and advisory panels

In identifying potential executive recruitment pools, several of the interviewees currently in the private sector pointed to business executives in their mid- to late-50s as potential recruits to the federal government. In such cases, remuneration discrepancies might be less of an issue (individuals having already accumulated sufficient resources) and some might be interested in experiencing the challenges and values of public service, and in making a contribution to the public sector.

In attempting to attract external senior recruits, several interviewees noted that the federal public service must emphasize better the “psychological rewards” of government service. While adequate financial compensation will continue to be required to attract and retain competent executives, the federal government will ultimately never be capable of matching salaries offered at senior levels in the private sector. Accordingly, the government must actively sell the non-monetary rewards of public services, including access to power and decision-making, the challenges of complexity, and the pleasure of working towards the social good.

Selling the rewards of public service

### Selection Process: Main Recommendations

- Conduct exposure interviews with potential senior colleagues or peers at the pre-hiring stage in order to test suitability and increase current officials’ commitment to the success of a new recruit.
- Consider using specialized executive search firms to identify potential candidates and/or create an informal advisory panel of recently retired senior public servants to help screen candidates.

## b) Reception Arrangements and Orientation

Interviewees commonly viewed formal orientations as being very useful in aiding the acculturation into the federal public service. While suggestions regarding the length of an initial orientation often varied – ranging anywhere from one day to three weeks (with a general preference for between one-to-three days) – almost all believed that following the initial orientation, a series of follow-up events should be held sequentially over a period of

Orientation programs



several months. New questions inevitably arise as new senior recruits become exposed to management challenges and conundrums. In addition, virtually all those interviewed expressed a preference for interactive learning environments compared to reading and lecturing.

*"Upon entering the public service, you are expected to either 'sink or swim'. That's not such a bad mindset to encourage performance - although with a more systematic orientation, I could have learned to swim faster."*

*"When you start out in Ottawa, you don't know yet what you don't know. A new recruit needs to be brought back to an orientation course after a month or two of working in order to ask useful questions and validate understanding."*

Several interviewees also mentioned the importance of providing pre-orientation guidance to the family or partner of the new recruit, particularly for individuals moving to a new region. This might include information about the work-life balance of senior executives in the federal public service, employment referral for the spouse, educational placement for children, and home relocation. Proactively addressing non-work issues helps secure the full attention of new executives during the subsequent integration phase.

Pre-orientation programs for families

An important consideration for some new recruits from the private sector is the handling of conflict of interest guidelines. Several private sector interviewees mentioned that a significant disincentive for business leaders to join government arises from fears over public disclosure of assets. Because conflict of interest guidelines are of key importance in the public service, it would be desirable to provide better support to new entrants, for example by helping them establish blind trust arrangements where necessary. In one instance, a federal executive mentioned having incurred a financial loss because of bad information in this area.

Support with conflict of interest guidelines

Helpful administrative arrangements were commonly cited during the interviews as a major facilitating factor in the integration process. Several underscored the importance of having a knowledgeable Executive Assistant to provide a road-map of the department and, at times, the broader public service. For a new senior executive lacking either familiarity with the management community or the substantive files of the position, a highly competent second-in-command should ideally be selected – before or immediately upon arrival of the new external recruit.

Administrative arrangements

*"Having a good E.A. was the single most important factor in preventing me from getting snowed under. He read all the tea leaves for me."*

*"I came into the position where I was responsible for a multi-billion dollar budget and yet started without an Executive Assistant or a 2-IC. This was a huge risk the department took and a big impediment in the initial integration process."*

Given the multiple challenges of the transition, due consideration should be given to timing the arrival of the new executive with periods of reduced activity during the year, such as summer or the early fall. By contrast, less optimal months to assume responsibilities include December and March, both very busy times in the budgetary and Parliamentary cycles. Interviews also confirmed that timing the arrival of new recruits to coincide with departmental restructuring efforts tended to ease their acceptance by subordinates. Several ADM interviewees mentioned that the creation of a new branch heightened longer-term employees' predisposition towards change. The arrival of a new senior executive to lead a restructured subset of an organization made integration easier and sometimes allowed the new recruit to have input in selecting his or her new management team.

Timing considerations for entry

An additional option for some new recruits could be their placement on a special project during the initial entry period (e.g. six to 12 months) under the sponsorship of their future superior. This could ideally allow them valuable opportunities to develop working relationships with managers across the organization. This assignment would help new entrants get their bearings, including their superior's "agenda", before assuming major responsibilities.

Special project assignment

A variation on this approach could be a "duty-free onboarding" period – a pre-work period which allows new executives time to gain critical knowledge of departmental operations and key players. Part of this period might include a job shadowing arrangement with the outgoing executive, should this be possible to arrange. According to private sector studies, this process is most useful for organizations with entrenched corporate cultures that often reject outside talent, as well as in high-velocity environments where great demands are placed on new hires.<sup>13</sup>

"Duty-free" onboarding period

## Reception Arrangements and Orientation: Main Recommendations

- Provide initial orientation and then periodic follow-up sessions to allow new recruits to gain experience and to address new questions as they arise.
- Offer pre-orientation advice and assistance to partners and families (especially if relocation is involved) as well as information on conflict of interest guidelines when needed.
- Ensure administrative arrangements are in place including a knowledgeable Executive Assistant and second-in-command where necessary.
- Consider timing of appointment - including during periods of reduced activity, departmental restructuring efforts, special assignment projects or "duty free" periods.

<sup>13</sup> Corporate Leadership Council, "Duty Free Onboarding," *Forced Outside* (1997)

## c) Continuing Support

Senior leadership acceptance and support were mentioned by virtually all interviewees as critical in ensuring successful integration. Leadership support comes in the form of providing advice and feedback on performance and also in setting clear expectations around the management table in building collective support for the new recruit. This leadership is particularly important in stemming initial skepticism of a new executive's abilities and the inevitable disappointment of internal candidates who may have been overlooked for the appointment. In order to mitigate potential hostility towards "parachuted" executives, strong communication of intentions and expectations for support by all levels are required.

*"As a new ADM, the relationship with my Deputy was key. He made it clear around the management table that colleagues were to 'cut me some slack'. At the same time, he integrated me into the department, ensuring I was on all the key committees."*

*"Senior management in the federal public service must help manage the career of an incoming executive, especially if the new recruit is being groomed for higher leadership. CEOs in the private sector are fired if they don't engage seriously in succession planning."*

Interviewees frequently mentioned the considerable pressure they felt to perform at a high pace in short order upon assuming their new assignments. The pressure of "firsts" weighs heavily on a new leader. First actions, first decisions, and first encounters can significantly define how others in the organization will subsequently view the new executive. Interviewees often mentioned that senior leadership (either the Clerk or the appropriate DM) should attempt, wherever possible, to ensure that there are early opportunities for new recruits to "put something on the scoreboard" or "to have a small victory". At the same time, senior leaders need to show some patience – and encourage others to do the same – as the new recruit continues his or her acclimation into the federal public service.

"Putting something on the scoreboard"

A number of interviewees said they had been quite unsure during their first few months of how well they were doing in their new positions. An informal discussion (as distinct from a formal evaluation meeting) with a superior after three to six months would have been very valuable. Such an unstructured meeting would allow both individuals to discuss progress and learning needs.

Informal feedback

*"The most important factor for me in easing the transition to the department was the informal advice I received from senior colleagues."*

*"It's hard to get honest feedback on performance as a new DM. More candid, trusting and non-hierarchical environments would be helpful."*

Based on suggestions received in the interviews, we believe one of the most important initiatives to ease the integration process would be the establishment of a mentoring system.<sup>14</sup> New executives need an experienced person with whom to test ideas, to learn about the history of a given policy and to understand the cultural dimensions of the public service. If designed properly, mentoring can be a highly effective means to induct and socialize new hires into a department and the larger public service community. As flexible programs, they also nicely complement formal learning or briefing processes.

Mentoring

*"Governments specialize in ambiguity. That is why you need people to help you understand how things really work."*

It is interesting to note that several recent recruits at both the DM and ADM levels personally sought out mentors – often senior colleagues in other departments more knowledgeable in government decision-making processes. These individuals admitted that this proved to be one of the most important “survival” steps when entering the federal public service.

Based on suggestions in the interviews, we believe that providing support for new entrants should be made an explicit part of the responsibilities of government executives, and should figure in their accountability agreements. Making such support explicit will help broaden networks for the new recruit and help transform the integration process into a more collegial exercise.

Accountability for integration support

A general consensus emerged in the interviews that two types of advice and support programs should be contemplated for new executive recruits. The first would be the creation of an “informal mentoring” program in which a new executive meets informally and one-on-one with a senior individual – possibly a retired senior official or a Deputy Minister or senior Assistant Deputy Minister outside the individual’s department or agency. To ensure openness in the relationship, it is critical that the mentor be outside the new recruit’s functional chain of command. It would also be optimal if a mentor possesses experience in the particular transition being faced by the new executive (e.g. private to public or provincial to federal). Since personal chemistry is vital in such relationships, new recruits should be able to select from a roster of potential mentors. Mentors should be selected on the basis of their genuine interest and commitment in such a program, excellent listening and feedback skills, and on avoidance of dominance and control.

Mentoring (1): "External mentoring"

The second possible initiative commonly mentioned in the interviews would be the establishment of an “internal buddy” system, whereby a professional peer of the new recruit is tasked with providing ongoing support and advice. This system could be more informal than the accountability arrangement as described earlier. Such an arrangement would be

Mentoring (2): "Internal buddy" system

<sup>14</sup> The distinction between mentoring and other forms of support, such as coaching or counseling, is not always clear. However, mentoring generally tends to be 'person-focused' (centred on the rounded development of the individual) rather than role- or skill-focused, as is the case with coaching.

distinguished by the mentor's understanding of the current political and policy environment, easy availability and ability to focus on the department's highest priorities.

### Continuing Support: Main Recommendations

- Support for new entrants should be made an explicit part of the responsibilities of government executives and should figure in their accountability agreements.
- Superiors should provide informal and frank feedback regarding the performance and learning needs of a new recruit after a three to six month period.
- A mentoring program should be established for new senior executives based on an external "informal mentor" and/or a departmental "buddy" system.

## *VI) SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION*

As stated at the outset of the study, transitions of senior executives are inherently difficult. Of all the various transitions investigated in this study – between sectors and orders of government – the transition into the federal public service was regarded as the most challenging by those interviewed. While the relative ease of integration depends in part on the transferability of certain skill sets (e.g. law, information technology), the biggest impediments are typically found in understanding the unique cultural elements of the federal public service and the challenges of accessing its networks of decision-making.

The benefits of external recruitment are readily identifiable, among them: filling areas of niche expertise, leavening the public service culture with outside perspectives, increasing diversity, and encouraging strategic change. While these benefits must be recognized and articulated by those managing the recruitment of external executives, the potential costs of unsuccessful executive integration must also be acknowledged. These costs include disruption to decision-making processes, decline in employee morale, and costs to the reputation of the public service internally and in the eyes of the community from which the individual was drawn. The more senior the appointment, the greater the visibility of failure.

Due to these many challenges, we believe the federal government must pay careful attention to the screening of potential external recruits at senior levels. A number of procedures have been suggested in this study that might improve the selection process, such as early exposure interviews and the use of executive search firms or advisory panels.

Should the federal government opt to increase the number of external senior recruits, many interviewees in this study believe that appointment at the EX 1-5 level holds the greatest promise. Past experience indicates that the risk of failure at the Deputy and Associate Deputy Minister levels is high.

A general consensus emerged in the course of this study that the federal government must avoid the dangers of improvisation in the way it orients new recruits into the public service. This study has offered a number of recommendations aimed to facilitate the integration period and ultimately optimize the chances of success of external executives. We believe many of these initiatives to be fairly simple but essential. These include providing staggered orientation sessions addressing both cultural and structural dimensions of the public service, offering pre-orientation sessions for partners and family, making senior executives accountable for aiding the integration of new recruits, and creating mentoring programs.

Above all, a more systematic approach to the integration of senior external recruits needs to be designed and implemented. For this purpose, consideration could usefully be given to enlisting the assistance of professional executive search firms in the private sector.

It is surprising that many assume that senior executives need less help in integrating than entry-level hires – even though it is at the executive level that individuals need particular assistance, both in breaking out of old paradigms and in resisting the urge to superimpose the lessons of their past experience onto situations in which they might not apply. At the same time, new executives need to be supported so that they have the confidence to share the lessons from their past experiences that may benefit their new organizations. We believe that transitions matter – and that a systematic approach to managing transitions can contribute substantially to the future success of leaders in any organization.

- Bourgault, Jacques. *The Contemporary Role and Challenges of Deputy Ministers in the Federal Government of Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Management Development, 2003.
- Canadian Centre for Management Development, "A Learning Perspective on the Role and Responsibilities of the Associate Deputy Minister." Unpublished paper, 2002.
- Cappelli, Peter. "A Market-Driven Approach to Retaining Talent." *Harvard Business Review*. Vol. 1, No. 1 (January/February, 2000).
- Corporate Leadership Council, "Duty Free Onboarding," *Forced Outside*, 1997.  
<[www.corporateleadershipcouncil.com](http://www.corporateleadershipcouncil.com)> (4 April 2003)
- Corporate Leadership Council, "Integration and Assimilation of Mid-Career Hires," On-line publication, December 2001. <[www.corporateleadershipcouncil.com](http://www.corporateleadershipcouncil.com)> (4 April 2003)
- Corporate Leadership Council, "Recruiting and Retaining Mid-Career Hires," On-line publication, February 2003. <[www.corporateleadershipcouncil.com](http://www.corporateleadershipcouncil.com)> (4 April 2003)
- Cowan, Allison, Carolyn Farquhar and Judith MacBride-King. *Building Tomorrow's Public Service Today: Challenges and Solutions in Recruitment and Retention*. Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada, 2002.
- Downey, Diane. *Assimilating New Leaders: The Key to Executive Retention*. New York: Amacom, 2001.
- Government of Canada. *Embracing Change in the federal public service: Task Force on the Participation of Visible Minorities in the federal public service*. Ottawa: Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada, 1999.
- Lynn, Lawrence E., Jr. *Managing the Public's Business: The Job of the Government Executive*. New York: Basic Books Inc., 1981.

# ANNEX 1 – LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

| NAME                 | TITLE<br>(previous position mentioned if currently retired)       | DEPARTMENT / ORGANIZATION<br>(at time of interview) |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Ercel Baker          | President   | Baker Group International Inc.                      |
| Alan Bernstein       | President   | Canadian Institutes for Health Research             |
| Ian Binnie           | Supreme Court Justice   | Supreme Court of Canada                             |
| Jean-Claude Bouchard | Associate Deputy Minister   | Department of Fisheries and Oceans                  |
| Verna Bruce          | Associate Deputy Minister   | Department of Veterans Affairs                      |
| Derek Burney         | Chief Executive Officer   | CAE Inc.  |
| Don Campbell         | Group President   | CAE Inc.  |
| Renaud Caron         | Vice President, Business Engineering                              | CGI Corporation                                     |
| Janice Charette      | Deputy Secretary, Plans and Consultation                          | Privy Council Office                                |
| W. Edmund Clark      | President and Chief Executive Officer                             | TD Bank Financial Group                             |
| Ken Cochrane         | Assistant Deputy Minister, Information Technology Branch          | Canada Customs and Revenue Agency                   |
| Keith Coulter        | Chief   | Communications Security Establishment               |
| Mark Daniels         | President   | Canadian Life and Health Association Inc.           |
| Cathy Downes         | Director General, Human Resources Branch                          | Industry Canada                                     |
| Cassie Doyle         | Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources and Service Innovation | Environment Canada                                  |
| Hershell Ezrin       | Chairman  | GPC International                                   |
| Rob Fonberg          | Deputy Secretary, Operations                                      | Privy Council Office                                |
| Daniel Gagnier       | VP, Corporate and External Affairs                                | Alcan Aluminium Ltd.                                |
| Tim Garrard          | former Chief Information Officer                                  | Industry Canada                                     |
| V. Peter Harder      | Deputy Minister   | Industry Canada                                     |
| Stanley Hartt        | Chairman  | Salomon Smith Barney Canada, Inc.                   |
| Don Head             | Senior Deputy Commissioner  | Correctional Services Canada                        |
| Frank Iacobucci      | Supreme Court Justice   | Supreme Court of Canada                             |
| Irwin Itzkovitch     | Assistant Deputy Minister, Earth Sciences                         | Natural Resources Canada                            |



|                          |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Paul Kennedy             | Senior Assistant Deputy Solicitor General, Policing and Security  | Solicitor General Canada                                    |
| Kevin Keough             | Chief Scientist   | Health Canada   |
| David Kinsman            | Executive Director  | Transportation Safety Board                                 |
| John Kowalski            | Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax Ruling, Compliance    | Canada Customs and Revenue Agency                           |
| Oryssia Lennie           | Deputy Minister   | Western Economic Diversification                            |
| Linda Lizotte-MacPherson | Chief Executive Officer   | Canada Health Infoway                                       |
| Gaëtan Lussier           | former Deputy Minister  | Government of Quebec and Government of Canada               |
| Alfred Macleod           | Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Direction and Communications | Citizenship and Immigration Canada                          |
| Doug Maley               | Acting Assistant Deputy Minister                                  | Western Economic Diversification                            |
| Richard Manicom          | former Assistant Commissioner, Information Technology Branch      | Revenue Canada  |
| Claire Morris            | Deputy Minister   | Intergovernmental Affairs, Privy Council Office             |
| Ursula Menke             | Deputy Commissioner, Coast Guard                                  | Fisheries and Oceans Canada                                 |
| Peter Nicholson          | Special Advisor to Secretary General                              | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development       |
| Ardath Paxton-Mann       | Assistant Deputy Minister, British Columbia                       | Western Economic Diversification                            |
| Colin Potts              | former Deputy Comptroller General                                 | Treasury Board Secretariat                                  |
| Raymond Protti           | President   | Canadian Bankers Association                                |
| Daniel Ross              | Executive Director, Operations                                    | Public Works and Government Services Canada                 |
| Michael Sabia            | President and Chief Executive Officer                             | Bell Canada   |
| Emanuelle Sajou          | Director, Management Priorities and Senior Personnel              | Privy Council Office  |
| Gisèle Samson-Verreault  | Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources                        | Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade       |
| Shirley Soehn            | Executive Director, Telecommunications                            | Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission |
| Pierre Soucy             | ADM Advisor   | The Leadership Network, Treasury Board Secretariat          |

## *ANNEX 2 – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS*

1. Looking back at the first three-six months following your appointment, what were the challenges you faced in becoming part of your new organization?
2. What were the major impediments and enablers to your integration in the organization?
3. What were the challenges of integrating into your community of peers (i.e. fellow senior managers)?
4. Focusing on the impediments to your integration in the new organization, what were the impacts on your professional effectiveness as a leader and manager?
5. What strategies did you use to overcome the impediments or barriers to your integration in the organization?
6. Did you receive support within your organization, such as coaching or mentoring, to facilitate your integration?
7. What do you believe to be the critical conditions and factors of successful integration of senior executives into a new organization? What are the best practices in this field? What is the single most important measure to support successful integration?
8. In your view, what is the overall nature of the challenge the public service is facing in integrating senior non-governmental personnel?
9. To what extent can learning programs offered to Deputy Ministers, Associates and ADMs assist in senior staff integration? How would you rate the effectiveness of existing programs (e.g. DM breakfast/lunches, retreats, ADM forum, etc.)?
10. What learning programs should be targeted at the departmental level or government-wide? What are the key design principles and content to ensure that learning activities help facilitate integration?