

SES CDP: Wisdom

I'm thinking about things that managers that I've had should or could have shared with me that would have made a useful difference to my success, and I would say that I had such remarkably good mentors, and these mentors were informal mentors and often were my managers, that I can't say that I felt anybody was holding anything back; however, I do think that in coming in to the federal government, it would have been very helpful if there was somebody who still remembered what that was like to start out as a federal employee, so it really helps in meetings for managers in my opinion to be aware when there are new people, new to the government, to not use too many acronyms, to turn and explain things to people a little bit as an aside or a little sidebar. Those are the kinds of things that I think new people will hold back on asking because they don't want to appear to be too naïve or too ignorant or uneducated, but the truth is that the federal government has its own bureaucratese and its own language, and so no matter how skilled somebody is coming from the private sector or not-for-profit, they can feel quite green when they first start.

I worked in a resource management agency prior to this at BLM, and I asked myself coming here what would be different. Coming to a science agency, is it anything different, and the answer to that is yes, and I think what you quickly encounter is a real questioning attitude on the part of the workforce. By nature they're scientists. They're trained, and their experience is to challenge suppositions, to challenge theories, and to challenge decisions that are being proposed or policies that are being proposed. Not because they're challenging

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the authority but they're trying to understand the underlying rationale of what it is that's being proposed and how it affects their ability to do their job, and so just coming into that kind of environment and that kind of culture and the implications that it has throughout the work that we do or the planning and the execution of our programs and the administrative support to be able to enable the scientists to do the job, that is really the core mission of this organization. So if I understood the depth to which that affected our ability to improve our administrative and support services, it would have helped me better early on.

A lot of folks know Rick Lemon, my predecessor, and he worked very hard and conceptualized the Training Center and worked behind the scenes in many, many realms getting support for the place before it came on-line, worked to get it constructed, and was here from the very beginning, hired the staff, and I don't know how many times I've heard since I got here you've got big shoes to fill, and so that's a pretty interesting start in a new position to follow someone that has been the only person here and the person that basically was the person that got the place up and running. So the simple answer to your question is I wish I knew everything that Rick knew because he pretty much knew what it took to make this place work. What I've done, to go on beyond the question that you've asked, what I've done is take the tack that I can't fill those shoes, I don't have that knowledge, and so what I've tried to do is bring the experience and knowledge that I possessed and work on things from a different perspective, a fresh perspective.