

# UNDERSTANDING GOVERNMENT DECISION MAKING

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# PURPOSES

- Provide an understanding of government decision-making processes
- Show how and where government differs from commercial industry
- Provide guidelines to follow
- Evaluate government agencies

# FAGAN'S RULE OF BUREAUCRATIC STRUCTURE

- “The incompetent objects loudest to the incompetence of others”
  - ▣ Harvard School of Business Calendar

# FAGAN AXIOMS

- #15: The government may care if you have a problem but still needs the items on time
- #21: If the government says to deliver the items by dog sled; that is what you should do
- #29: Develop a relationship with civilian employees of the government. Visit with them periodically
- #3: If you are unsure what to do, ask the KO for guidance

# The Environment

- ❑ Mistakes are punished in the government
- ❑ All decisions are reviewed by many others
- ❑ Promotions are hard to come by and impossible if conflict has arisen
- ❑ There are no excuses for missing an imposed deadline
- ❑ Out of the box initiatives are high risk

# Government Needs

- If specification asks for the item to be upside down, wrapped in foil, not more than ten days old, and delivered in a pink package, you should:
  - ▣ A. Tell them the BEST way to have the item delivered
  - ▣ B. Volunteer to change the specification
  - ▣ C. Deliver as the spec asks
  - ▣ D. All of the above

# How to Influence the Government

- Develop a relationship
- Meet/Exceed all expectations
- Use terms and words that are geared to their decision making: This item is the number one food item for 18-24 year old males
- Leave your data more than once and always in writing
- Always be professional, do not knock your competition, and do not nag!!

# Decisions are Institutionalized

- Once approved decisions, even if stupid, are seldom changed
- Since there is risk in challenging leaders, many decisions, not supported by workers, are enforced by these workers
- Any change offers a new opportunity to fail

# Standing Out from Others

- Visits
- Relationships
- Complain not more than once per year
- Ask for their guidance and help
- Know ethical standards: Ask if unclear
- Offer items with great backup documentation
- Understand the government employees are always receptive but that does not mean they accept your item

# Pressuring the Government

- Start at the LOWEST level possible and keep issue at that level for a reasonable time
- Escalate issues AFTER informing lower level
- Address issues “up the chain of command” in order
- Address at Congress and higher headquarters level only if you are convinced that future penalties for the action are worth it

# Know When to Quit

- Not all battles are worth the fight
  - ▣ If a relationship will be destroyed
  - ▣ When there are future contracts you want to compete for with this organization
  - ▣ When it is clear the government decision has been institutionalized
  - ▣ When you have to sue the government with less than a 75% chance of victory

# Appealing Decisions

- Find the REAL decision maker: may be a low graded employee and start there
- Do a visit with pre-scheduling the chain of command 90 minutes apart
- Put your reasons in writing with substantiation
- Never make it personal!
- Give the government a reasonable time to respond

# Government Agencies Characteristics

- ❑ USDA: Very Bureaucratic/ hard to influence
- ❑ DLA-Troop Support: Very open until decisions are made
- ❑ Natick: Positive and helpful always
- ❑ Army: Too many items to focus too much time on you
- ❑ Navy: Very open, but hard to get commands to support their decisions
- ❑ AF: Open and somewhat bureaucratic
- ❑ USMC: Does not make many decision affecting you

# Sage Advice

- Know the specifications and exact government needs
- You can create a need for the government at the user level
- This is never a sprint and always a marathon
- Never bash your competition to government no matter how bad the competition acts
- When in doubt: Ask!

# QUESTIONS

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