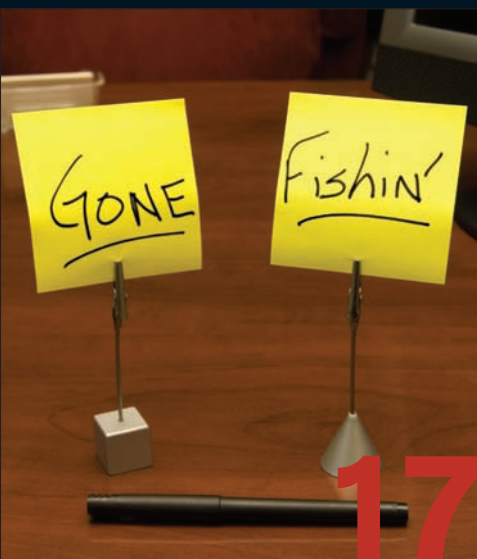
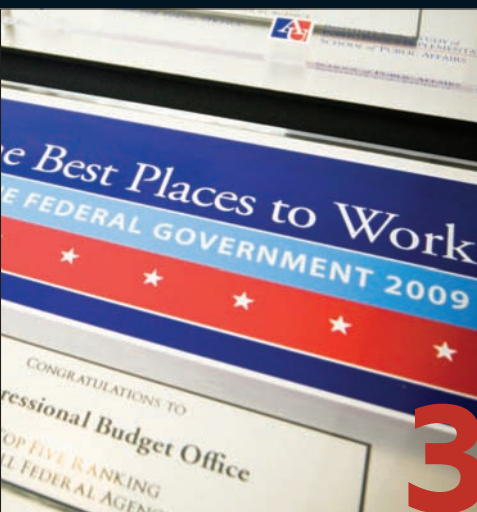


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PRESIDENT'S PAGE



*FMA National President
Darryl Perkinson*

The Value of Expectations

The economic challenges facing our society today are setting the stage for the choices we make to determine our future. Nationally, we are facing the greatest challenge to our economic freedoms since the Great Depression. We are witnessing a daily debate that is asking the American public the basic question – what are your expectations of the federal government and its impact on your daily lives? Each of us has our individual thoughts and opinions on

what should be inherently governmental and, on the flip side, those issues with which the federal sector should not interfere. Over the last six months, we have seen debates unfold on stimulus assistance, mortgage relief, job creation and now health care reform. We each have a stake in the outcome of those discussions and perhaps the true reflection of our actions will occur decades from now. In essence, our opinions and feelings on these national topics come down to a basic fundamental question for each of us – what do we think the value of our expectations is worth?

In our states and localities, we deal with the same issues and express the same concerns as our national leaders. In this economically challenging period, do we furlough workers or close factories for significant periods of time? Do we lay off teachers, police officers or firefighters? In some localities, leaders are looking at increasing revenues by whatever means to maintain basic services to the public. Again, the fundamental question comes to the forefront – what do we think the value of our expectations is worth?

The concerns both nationally and locally are impacting us as an Association as well. In recent years, we have had a fairly steady decline in members, and have reacted by making cuts to various programs and activities we conduct. FMA is at a crossroads in its history. At a time when we are at the apex of our advocacy influence and activity on Capitol Hill and within our agencies, the economic distress facing our nation impacts our daily efforts as an Association. We have reached the point of that all important question that will decide our future and the ability of the Association to represent managers and supervisors in the decades ahead. What do we, as FMA members, think the value of our expectations is worth?

It is my expectation that our members see the work of our Association as being important enough to have a serious discussion in establishing the real value (worth) of our mission. It is my duty as your President to be honest with you and tell you that we have cut our expenses to the farthest point we can without impacting services significantly. To be effective, we must be able to compensate our staff to the levels of salary they deserve for the services they provide our membership. To remain attractive to corporate sponsors, who have been generous and supportive as the economy has impacted them as well, we must maintain our quality publications and membership recruitment efforts. To maintain our capability to testify and meet with legislators and policymakers, we must be able to pay for experts and officers to travel to the right locations to spread our message. In the coming days we will have a serious dialogue that comes down to deciding our ultimate destiny. I am asking each of you to be prepared to seriously answer the question – what do you, as an FMA member, think the value of your expectations is worth? ■

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Best Places to Work in the Federal Government

How to Translate Findings
into Agency Improvements



By Max Stier

This past spring, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Peter Orszag put federal government leaders on notice that it is time to get serious about employee satisfaction at their agencies.

The context of Director Orszag's declaration was the rollout of the latest *Best Places to Work in the Federal Government* rankings, which gauge employee attitudes and commitment toward their federal agencies.

"I'm very pleased with the high performers, but we also need to improve the bottom performers," said Orszag. Then in comments directed at the struggling agencies, he added, "You should expect those agencies that are not doing as well, that we will be paying attention. We will be looking to you to develop a game plan to improve performance."

Since one of the golden rules of being an effective agency leader is to make friends – or at least not to make enemies – at OMB, senior federal managers are now hard at work addressing these concerns. "We'll have to get back to you on that,"

would not be a good answer when the people who can dramatically influence your budget are now making it clear that an unhappy workplace will not be tolerated.

But it is more than making federal workers and the budget folks happy. Employee engagement and satisfaction are important barometers of organizational performance and effectiveness, and paying heed to the rankings and what they suggest makes good management sense.

There is no doubt that improving employee commitment can translate into more effective and competent government, better implementation of public policies and first-rate delivery of services. It also can bolster the reputation and competitiveness of an agency as an employer, and make it easier to attract and

retain talent.

The 2009 rankings are based on the Office of Personnel Management's survey of more than 212,000 federal employees at 278 large federal agencies, small agencies and agency subcomponents, and are produced by the Partnership for Public Service and American University.

The rankings identify the key elements of employee satisfaction, including work/life balance, teamwork, support for diversity, strategic management, and performance-based rewards and advancement. They also measure employee attitudes toward pay and benefits, family-friendly culture, development and training, employee skills/mission match, and last but not least, effective leadership.

For the fourth time in a row, effective leadership topped the list of what is most



Office of Management and Budget Director Peter Orszag presents at the Best Places to Work Awards Ceremony.

important, and unfortunately, what is most lacking. While this finding is no surprise, the reasons behind it might be of interest.

When it comes to leadership, conventional wisdom holds that the greatest influence on an employee's satisfaction is his or her immediate supervisor. However, it is actually the quality of an agency's senior leadership that has the greatest bearing on employee views — and by a large margin. In other words, if agency leaders think they can improve worker satisfaction at their agencies without investing their own time and energy, they are sadly mistaken.

While the rankings deliver unsettling news to some agencies, federal managers should study the examples of agencies that have had problems and made real improvement. The good news is that there are ways to turn around an agency and improve performance.

In the 2007 rankings, the Small Business Administration (SBA) was the lowest-rated large agency in the entire government. This year, SBA is the most improved, boosting its index rating by more than 30 percent, proving that progress can take place anywhere.

This spike in SBA's rating was no fluke, as former SBA Administrator Steve Preston led an agency-wide effort to better engage employees.

Preston's change agenda focused on aggressively addressing service quality problems, involving employees in the solutions, and creating an organized management structure to supervise initiatives. He instituted a strong communication program with the workers, made sure they understood every aspect of the new agenda, and

continued on next page

Overall Index Scores for Employee Satisfaction and Commitment

The overall index score measures the performance of agencies and agency subcomponents related to employee satisfaction and commitment.

Large Agencies

Rank	Agency	2009	2007	% Change
1	Nuclear Regulatory Commission	80.7	76.2	5.90
2	Government Accountability Office	76.6	72.1	6.20
3	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	71.7	69.7	2.80
4	Intelligence Community	70.9		0.00
5	Department of State	69.1	67.9	1.80
6	Environmental Protection Agency	68.2	65.5	4.20
7	Department of Justice	68.0	69.0	-1.40
8	General Services Administration	67.5	65.7	2.70
9	Social Security Administration	67.0	66.5	0.80
10	Department of Commerce	66.5	63.5	4.70
11	Securities and Exchange Commission	66.2	71.9	-7.90
12	Department of Veterans Affairs	66.0	61.9	6.60
13	Department of the Army	64.5	64.8	-0.50
14	Department of the Navy	63.7	61.1	4.30
15	Department of the Air Force	63.6	63.8	-0.20
15	Department of Defense	63.6	62.9	1.10
17	Department of the Treasury	63.3	62.7	0.90
18	Department of Labor	63.2	61.9	2.10
19	Department of Energy	63.0	60.9	3.40
20	Office of Personnel Management	62.7	54.9	14.30
21	Department of Health and Human Services	62.3	61.3	1.70
22	Department of the Interior	61.1	59.1	3.40
23	Department of Agriculture	60.6	61.6	-1.70
24	Department of Housing and Urban Development	58.0	57.2	1.50
25	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	57.6	57.1	0.90
26	Small Business Administration	56.5	43.4	30.10
27	Department of Education	56.4	52.1	8.20
28	Department of Homeland Security	56.2	49.8	12.90
29	National Archives and Records Administration	56.0	54.9	2.00
30	Department of Transportation	52.2	52.9	-1.40
	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation		59.5	0.00



It is the quality of an agency's senior leadership that has the greatest bearing on employee views — and by a large margin. In other words, if agency leaders think they can improve worker satisfaction at their agencies without investing their own time and energy, they are sadly mistaken.



Best Places to Work in the Federal Government continued from page 5

increased their training opportunities.

Preston's effort also involved reengineering an SBA business loan program, moving people, changing workflows and improving technology.

Another example presents itself at the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), which remains a low-rated organization but has seen its scores steadily increase since 2005. One of the TSA's key initiatives is the creation of "Idea Factory," an online system similar to a blog that is used to gather and share employee suggestions. Ideas that receive the greatest support from other employees may ultimately be implemented across the agency.

The TSA believes that "Idea Factory"

lets employees feel empowered as it expands the base of ideas for improving the workplace environment.

To be clear, the leaders of low-rated agencies are not the only people who should be paying close attention to these rankings or taking action to improve workplace conditions and performance. Just because an agency rates well one year does not mean it will continue to do so or can rest on its laurels.

In 2007, the Securities and Exchange Commission was one of the highest rated agencies in government. In the 2009 rankings, it took the biggest tumble among large agencies, dropping out of the top 10. Clearly employees were expressing unhappiness, and recent disclosures about the lax enforcement and regulation of Wall Street may explain why.

In contrast, the top-rated Nuclear



The Congressional Budget Office received a Top Five Ranking for Small Federal Agencies.

Regulatory Commission (NRC) has continued to progress in the employee rankings. Even though the NRC earned the top spot in the 2007 rankings, it continued to promote ways to energize its workforce and ultimately improved its score over the past two years. It is worth noting that without this improvement, the NRC would have lost its perch atop the rankings.

At the NRC, officials cited the willingness of senior managers to listen to the staff and respond to concerns and to constructive suggestions as key elements of their success.

Other large agency top performers in the 2009 rankings besides the NRC were the Government Accountability Office, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Intelligence Community, the State Department, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Justice.

Top rated small agencies included the Surface Transportation Board, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, the Congressional Budget Office, the Office of Management and Budget, the National Science Foundation and the Federal Maritime Commission (FMC).

These agencies, according to their employees, stood out because of senior leadership, good communication from superiors about what is happening in the organization, and opportunities for training and growth.

While there are many management problems across the federal government, the new rankings brought some good news.

After leveling off from 2005 to 2007, government's overall employee satisfaction rating in 2009 has resumed an upward trajectory. This year's

continued on next page

Overall Index Scores for Employee Satisfaction and Commitment

The overall index score measures the performance of agencies and agency subcomponents related to employee satisfaction and commitment.

Small Agencies

Rank	Agency	2009	2007	% Change
1	Surface Transportation Board	80.4		0.00
2	Overseas Private Investment Corporation	80.0		0.00
3	Congressional Budget Office	79.4		0.00
3	Office of Management and Budget	79.4	75.9	4.60
5	National Science Foundation	76.7	74.4	3.00
6	Federal Maritime Commission	76.6	59.8	28.00
7	National Transportation Safety Board	76.1	65.2	16.70
8	Commodity Futures Trading Commission	75.2	61.5	22.20
9	Office of the U.S. Trade Representative	74.2		0.00
10	Federal Trade Commission	73.7	71.1	3.70
11	Merit Systems Protection Board	73.5	78.0	-5.80
12	National Endowment for the Arts	72.7	61.3	18.60
12	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	72.7	68.5	6.20
14	U.S. International Trade Commission	68.8	64.5	6.60
15	Agency for International Development	67.7	61.1	10.80
16	Railroad Retirement Board	66.7	62.0	7.60
17	Corporation for National and Community Service	66.4	64.2	3.40
18	Export-Import Bank of the United States	66.0	70.7	-6.70
19	Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	64.5	65.8	-2.00
20	Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency	64.1	55.7	15.10
21	National Endowment for the Humanities	63.2	59.0	7.10
22	Federal Housing Finance Board	62.2	63.1	-1.40
23	National Credit Union Administration	60.1	67.5	-11.00
24	Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight	59.4		0.00
25	Consumer Product Safety Commission	58.2	59.1	-1.50
26	National Labor Relations Board	57.3	64.6	-11.30
27	Federal Election Commission	55.7	53.4	4.40
28	Federal Communications Commission	55.0		0.00
29	International Boundary and Water Commission	49.2	61.2	-19.60
30	Selective Service System	44.8	54.0	-17.00
31	Broadcasting Board of Governors	43.8	43.0	1.90
32	Federal Labor Relations Authority	19.5	18.1	7.70
	Farm Credit Administration		60.5	0.00
	Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services		85.6	0.00
	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum		49.8	0.00
	Millennium Challenge Corporation		72.1	0.00

Best Places to Work in the Federal Government continued from page 7

government-wide index is up 2.4 percent, and 71 percent of federal organizations improved their scores. The movement is not dramatic, but change comes slowly in large organizations, and the trend is consistently and clearly moving in a positive direction.

Yet even with an improvement in federal workers' job satisfaction, the government still trails behind the private sector when it comes to measures of worker contentment.

Sixty-six percent of federal workers think their immediate supervisors are doing a good job, but that is eight points less than in the private sector. Just 48 percent of federal workers were satisfied with the openness of their managers about what is taking place in their organizations compared to 66 percent in the private sector.

Now that agencies have been instructed by the Obama administration to improve, they are, to their credit, taking action. And in an effort to assist them, the Partnership for Public Service has created a collection of tools, tips and guidelines to provide a clear understanding of how to use the *Best Places to Work* data and improve workplace environments and organizational effectiveness. The guide and the agency rankings can be found online at: <http://bestplacestowork.org>.

The starting point for managers should be analyzing the data, understanding any recent changes in employee satisfaction, and pinpointing the problem areas. The next step requires developing a strategic plan that could involve creating a *Best Places to Work* action team to help identify specific challenges and issues, develop recommendations and assist with implementation.

Overall Index Scores for Employee Satisfaction and Commitment

The overall index score measures the performance of agencies and agency subcomponents related to employee satisfaction and commitment.

Agency Subcomponents

Rank	Agency	2009	2007	%Change
1	Environment and Natural Resources Division (DOJ)	83.5	80.0	4.40
2	Office of the Inspector General (OPM)	81.3	77.1	5.50
3	Civil Division (DOJ)	81.1	74.7	8.50
4	Bureau of the Public Debt (Treasury)	78.7	71.8	9.60
4	Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center (NASA)	78.7	77.8	1.20
6	Executive Office of U.S. Attorneys and U.S. Attorneys (DOJ)	78.2	73.8	6.00
7	Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (Treasury)	77.9	75.3	3.40
8	Region 9 - San Francisco (EPA)	77.8	79.7	-2.40
9	Tax Division (DOJ)	77.2	70.6	9.30
10	Region 3 - Philadelphia (EPA)	76.5	67.6	13.20
11	Anti Trust Division (DOJ)	76.3	73.7	3.50
12	Region 1 - Boston (EPA)	76.1	72.8	4.50
13	Office of the Inspector General (Interior)	75.9	57.5	32.00
14	Office of the Inspector General for Tax Admin. (Treasury)	75.8	72.8	4.10
15	George C. Marshall Space Flight Center (NASA)	75.7	74.9	1.00
16	Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (Treasury)	75.2	79.4	-5.20
16	Strategic Human Resources Policy (OPM)	75.2	70.6	6.50
18	Goddard Space Flight Center (NASA)	74.5	67.1	11.00
19	National Institute of Standards and Technology (Commerce)	74.1	71.7	3.30
20	Region 6 - Dallas (EPA)	74.0	68.9	7.40
20	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (DOJ)	74.0	74.0	0.00
22	Federal Bureau of Investigation (DOJ)	73.7	71.4	3.20
23	All Other Components (EPA)	73.6		0.00
24	Region 10 - Seattle (EPA)	73.3	77.2	-5.00
25	U.S. Army National Guard Units (Army)	72.2	74.5	-3.10
26	John C. Stennis Space Center (NASA)	72.0	75.1	-4.10
27	National Cemetery Administration (VA)	71.9	73.4	-2.10
28	Region 2 - New York (EPA)	71.8	67.6	6.10
29	U.S. Coast Guard (DHS)	70.9	68.6	3.40
30	Dryden Flight Research Center (NASA)	70.7	68.7	2.80

Any successful effort will require buy-in from top leadership, identifying short, mid-range and long-term goals, and engaging key stakeholders at every level, including supervisors and managers, staff members, unions, and even congressional staff and committees. It is important that all parties see improving employee satisfaction as an essential part of a long-term commitment.

It also is crucial to communicate a clear vision and message of what needs to be accomplished and how it will be done. This will mean meeting with workers individually to foster candid exchanges, holding symposiums or town hall meetings with employees, using electronic communications and making agency-wide public announcements.

Agency leaders must acknowledge areas needed for change and should highlight the positive aspects found in the rankings. Praising the parts of the agency that are doing well can improve employee satisfaction by helping employees feel better about where they work and reinforce best practices. Acknowledging areas for development will set expectations and shine a light on the challenges ahead.

Beginning the improvement will require having employees fully involved in the process and committed to the objectives. Agency employees have special knowledge of the agency's culture and inner workings, and listening to what they have to say may be the best guide of all. It is also important to communicate in other ways, including helping employees

understand how and why agency decisions are being made.

The Federal Maritime Commission's efforts to better communicate helped it become the most-improved small agency in the 2009 rankings. An important step to improve communication was opening meetings of the full commission and encouraging employees to attend.

Now, FMC staff members have a much better understanding of the basis for management decisions. The commission also sought to better educate staff regarding issues faced by the industry by inviting representatives from the maritime community to speak directly with the staff.

The *Best Places* rankings do not provide all of the answers behind agency performance, but they provide clear signs of issues that should be addressed.

In the end, agency leaders should take note of the latest *Best Places* rankings and figure out where they can improve, because it never hurts to keep the folks inside OMB happy. More importantly, senior leaders need to focus on satisfying their own employees because an engaged workforce is a higher performing workforce.

To learn more about the Partnership for Public Service, visit: www.ourpublicservice.org. ■

Max Stier is President and CEO of the Partnership for Public Service.



Any successful effort will require buy-in from top leadership, identifying short, mid-range and long-term goals, and engaging key stakeholders at every level, including supervisors and managers, staff members, unions, and even congressional staff and committees.

