



*The First 90 Days in Government: Critical Success Strategies for New Public Managers at All Levels*

Author(s): Michael D. Watkins, Peter H. Daly and Cate Reavis

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Reviewed by: Don Birchler, PhD, Senior Research Scientist at CNA Corporation a member of the Defense ARJ Editorial Board.

Leaders are often judged by how well they have done in their first 90 days in office. The Gallup polling organization, for example, has polled the American people on the job approval of every president since Eisenhower after their first 90 days. While public sector managers may not have the same political pressures as presidents, they still need to take advantage of those first 90 days to establish a new tempo for their organizations and create a vision for change that adds value to the overall enterprise. Daly and Watkins' *The First 90 Days In Government* explains just how these new managers, including those in the DoD, can most efficiently use this transitional period.

Daly and Watkins specifically wrote this book to be non-theoretical in nature. Each chapter details practical lessons that new managers should use to ensure success. Throughout the book, they intersperse actual stories from public sector managers about the challenges they faced and how they dealt with them. In some cases, these stories recount a successful transition. In other cases, the stories depict manager failure. In all cases, Daly and Watkins detail what happened and what lessons learned new managers can take away.

Like a cookbook, the authors lay out their book in a step by step fashion. The first of nine steps stresses the need for new managers to clarify expectations across the organization. This includes engaging in meaningful discussions with those subordinate to the new manager as well as her new boss in order to avoid conflicting expectations. The book ends with the ninth step which offers new managers an approach they refer to as "The Four Pillars of Self Efficacy" to minimize stress while increasing their overall efficiency. These two bookends are connected very neatly via steps two through seven which help new managers understand the importance of early wins, matching strategy to situations and building teams and alliances.

I have had the occasion to work closely with many managers throughout the DoD, especially in the acquisition world. Even the best managers stumble, especially when they are new. However, acquisition can be a very unforgiving place and a bad start for a new manager can have serious repercussions. Expectations for a weapon system flood in from every possible avenue, budgets change frequently, negotiations with prime contractors are complicated and often political, and the laws and guidelines for acquisition are byzantine. Any one of these problems can easily overwhelm even the best manager. Given this harsh environment, *The First 90 Days In Government* should be required reading for new managers at all levels in the acquisition world.