



# Strategies and Best Practices for Career Executives: Managing the Transition to a New Administration



# How to Engage Effectively and Support New Political Leadership

**December 7, 2016**

Sixth in a Webinar Series with the Support of The Distinguished Executives Advisory Network –  
“The DEAN’s List”



## Panelists

**Dan Blair**, President, NAPA

**Stan Meiburg**, Acting Deputy Administrator, EPA

**Karl Schneider**, Deputy Chief Management Officer, Army

**Richard Turman**, Deputy Director, Center for Tobacco Products, FDA

**Rita Wells**, former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Business Administration, Energy

## Moderator

**Carol Bonosaro**, President Emeritus, Senior Executives Association



# Transition Webinars Series Schedule

- **Webinar 1 - May 18, 2016** - What to expect during the year, the role of the SES in the transition, and what executives can and should begin to do right now to prepare themselves and their agencies for the transition. *Recording and slides available on SEA's website.*
- **Webinar 2 - July 21, 2016** - What agencies are required to do – and are doing now – to prepare for transition. *Recording and slides available on SEA's website.*
- **Webinar 3 – September 21, 2016** - What the White House Transition Coordinating Council and the Agency Transition Directors Council have been up to. *Recording and slides available on SEA's website.*
- **Webinar 4 - October 5, 2016** - What to expect from transition teams and the next Administration, and determining and integrating information relevant to candidates' policies and commitments. *Recording and slides available on SEA's website.*
- **Webinar 5 - October 26, 2016** - The SES personnel rules which are of particular concern during the transition, including the 4 different 120 day “get acquainted” periods and those which apply to reassignment or transfer, as well as removal. Given the importance of the f.y.16 performance appraisal, the Performance Reviews Board process will also be reviewed.
- **Webinar 6 - December 7, 2016** - How to engage effectively with and support new political leadership after arrival.



# Transition Resources on SEA's Website

- Recordings and Slides from the First 5 Webinars on Transition for Federal Career Executives.
- A List of Key References and Resources for the Presidential Transition
- **SEA's Presidential Transition Handbook version 3.0, which covers:**
  - ✓ Transition Basics
  - ✓ The Role of Career Federal Executives in the Transition Process
  - ✓ Begin Now to Plan for the Transition
  - ✓ Develop Briefing Materials for the Transition
  - ✓ Acting in Political Positions
  - ✓ Transition Teams
  - ✓ How to Engage Effectively and Support New Political Leadership
  - ✓ Additional Tips from Seasoned Executives
  - ✓ Personnel Rules Applicable to the Senior Executive Service During Transition



## **Every transition eventually becomes a transformation...**

It moves from initial distrust from the political appointee to his or her eventually saying, “Civil servants are great. Their contribution is invaluable, and I didn’t realize it when I walked in.”

## **The challenge...**

To minimize the time it takes for that transformation to take place and for the career-political team to function well.



# Characteristics of New Appointees

- Varied:
  - Backgrounds/Preparation
  - Needs
  - Motivation/Expectations
  - Knowledge of roles
- Often new to:
  - Large, complex organizations
  - Successful government management
  - Dispersion of power
  - Invasive Congressional presence
  - Media scrutiny
- Challenged by a backlog of decisions, and a government of strangers



# Differences in Approach, Skills & Competencies

## Careerists:

- Understanding of government processes
- Functional and deep subject matter expertise
- Strong historical perspective
- Stress on continuity

## Appointees:

- Short-term Goals
- Urgency: translate agenda into action
- May move abruptly from one goal or crisis to another





# The Role of Career Executives

*I, [name], do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God.*

To serve every Administration to the very best of his or her ability without regard to personal political beliefs.

To provide continuity in leadership and expertise during Presidential transitions.

To serve as the interface or link between policy and implementation.



# The Role of Career Executives in Transition

- Introducing appointees to agency staff, resources and programs
- Serving as an “institutional memory” and “training” new political leadership
- Not acting as a roadblock to change but providing recommendations and options to accomplish appointee goals
- Pointing out possible ethical or legal problems when changing a current practice/implementing a new procedure.
- Helping the personnel you supervise adapt to and implement change.



# 15 Engagement Tips from Distinguished Executives

1. Learn about the new appointees for and with whom you'll work, and the policies and programs they are likely to promote.
2. Prepare written briefing materials for the new appointees, including program objectives and priorities for Day 1 and beyond.
3. Communicate early and often...obtain meetings with the new appointees...be well prepared.
4. Provide all options for decisions, including ones that may be anathema.
5. Develop relationships with appointees' key advisors (junior & senior).
6. Learn about and adjust to the management style of new appointees.
7. Keep your focus on the mission and seize opportunities to influence the agenda with facts and ideas.



# 15 Engagement Tips from Distinguished Executives (cont.)

8. Make an honest assessment of your own strengths and weaknesses and prepare to “resell” yourself to the incoming team. You have 120 days to do so.
9. Don’t cling to old ideas...be flexible and agile
10. Accept confusion and uncertainty
11. Expect pushback until the new team develops trust in you...build trust through displaying competence with integrity, honesty and facts...attitude is critical.
12. Listen carefully, but don’t over-interpret the words.
13. Be patient, honest and open...share bad news when necessary.
14. Be cautious...risk a little, but protect yourself.
15. Find another job if you’re unable to work well with the new team.



# Stan Meiburg's Top 12 Tips for Transition

12. Present REAL choices
11. Don't gossip about appointments
10. Learn from good and bad bosses
9. Satisfy on small things – build credibility for big ones
8. Not all issues are partisan
7. Distinguish between policy and moral issues
6. The glass is usually half full
5. Don't confuse your life with your job
4. Rufus Miles' Law: Where you stand depends on where you sit
3. The Golden Rule is a pretty good rule
2. Keep up your networks
1. In the long run, hard work pays off



# 120 Day Rule: The “Get Acquainted” Period

- Provides an opportunity for the career executive and political appointee to get to know one another
- There are four 120 calendar day moratoriums:
  - With the beginning of a new Administration: no performance appraisals and ratings 5 USC 4314(b)(1)(C)
  - When the head of the department (not a component agency, except DoD) is new: no involuntary reassignments or removals. If you are detailed, the first 60 days of the detail do not count toward the 120 days. (An executive can waive his or her right, however.)
  - When a new non-career appraising official is appointed: no involuntary reassignments. (An executive can waive his or her right, however.)
  - When a new non-career immediate supervisor is appointed who has authority to remove the career executive: no removal.



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