



Reinventing the Federal Government: "Action on the National Performance Review"

Category: Case

Jurisdiction: Federal Government

Management Issues: Reinventing Democracy

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Article:

"Action on the National Performance Review"

Spurred by tight budgets and a new emphasis on management, the Clinton Administration and Congress have begun acting on 80 percent of Vice President Gore's 384 "reinventing government" recommendations, NPR officials say.

President Clinton has signed 18 NPR-based executive orders and memoranda, as well as detailed performance agreements with three Cabinet secretaries (HUD, Interior, Labor) and two agency heads (Small Business Administration, General Services Administration). Nearly two dozen agencies have established more than 130 reinvention labs, and Congress is considering 50 reinvention bills - including fundamental procurement reform.

In word and deed, the Administration seems determined to counter widespread skepticism that its effort to reinvent government will fade away, like some previous management initiatives. "The whole thrust of this has been...to take the report and implement it," Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Leon Panetta said at a March 3 briefing marking the one-year anniversary of the NPR's birth.

Reinventing OMB?

In part because of OMB's central role in implementing the management reforms recommended by the NPR, Panetta's and Deputy Director Alice Rivlin's recent announcement of a major restructuring of the agency has drawn mixed reviews. Supporters of the plan to merge management and budget staffs into new "resource management offices" argue that the management analysts and budgeteers should work hand in glove to effect change. Opponents maintain that the management function will get lost as budgetary considerations and timelines drive decision making. - L.J.H.

The NPR is moving from modest but important first steps to the tough work of government-wide systems change. The administration's reinvention enthusiasts must remain mindful of the human element: learning, training and capacity-building for the 2 million civilian front-line workers and managers on whom the success of this effort depends.

Positive signs: the new Reinvention Roundtable newsletter, NPR's link to workers across the government; NetResults, a collection of electronic networks dedicated primarily to federal reinventing government issues; and a planned series of professionally-produced training videos on customer service, employee empowerment and cutting through red tape.

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