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**TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP IN THE FBI: A
RECOMMENDATION FOR STRATEGIC CHANGE**

By

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March 2007

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**TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP IN THE FBI: A RECOMMENDATION FOR
STRATEGIC CHANGE**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

The FBI has entered a critical point in its history. The new normalcy of the post-9/11 world has created seemingly insurmountable challenges that highlight the need to further examine the FBI's policies, practices, and procedures used to identify, select, professionally develop, evaluate and place leaders in its Special Agent ranks. The FBI must identify its most capable leaders, set conditions for their success, and systematically place them in positions that will maximize their impact on the future of the organization. This research examines drivers and impediments that have led to the current methodologies used by the FBI to select and place its Special Agent leaders. It also reviews the current mechanisms for training and developing FBI Special Agent mid-level and executive managers and explores an alternative strategy to identify, select, professionally develop, evaluate and place ensuing generations of FBI Special Agent leaders. Finally, this research recommends specific courses of action and a new strategic framework, moving from a system of individual career management to a system of organizational career development or a leadership pipeline, to transform the FBI's Special Agent leaders into standard setters within the larger intelligence and law enforcement communities they serve.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite its long and storied history, the reality of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) today is that the Bureau is not operating at its optimum level. The ongoing pattern of perceived and actual failures at such seminal events as the unfortunate end to the stand-off at Ruby Ridge, the fiery result of the siege of the Branch Davidian complex at Waco, the damage done by spy Robert Hanssen, the failure of the FBI to detect and disrupt the al Qaeda plot on 9/11, and other numerous examples, serve to underscore the need for a comprehensive examination of current FBI policies, practices, and procedures utilized by the agency to identify, select, professionally develop, evaluate, and place leaders in its Special Agent ranks. The FBI's current methods and procedures concerning its Special Agent managers and leaders can best be described as career management primarily based upon the desires of the individual rather than meaningful professional development driven by the needs of the organization. At some level all failures are leadership failures and, while the FBI has made sweeping organizational and institutional changes in the wake of its failures, very little effort has been directed specifically toward addressing the underlying leadership issues in the FBI's Special Agent workforce.

The relevance and strategic implications of a poorly led FBI are fairly obvious. The FBI has long enjoyed the well-deserved reputation of being the world's pre-eminent law enforcement organization. In addition to its responsibility of enforcing U.S. laws, the FBI is the lead agency charged with protecting America from terrorists and foreign spies. Eroded public confidence in the FBI's abilities to effectively and efficiently carry out its responsibilities could significantly undermine the reputation and capabilities of the Bureau. This dynamic has already manifested itself in serious debate concerning the splitting of the national security missions of counter-terrorism and counter-intelligence away from the FBI through the creation of a new domestic intelligence organization along the lines of Great Britain's MI-5 to handle those functions. Moreover, as a result of its failures, the FBI is subject to more oversight today than at any other time during its ninety-nine year history. A series of Congressional oversight committee

hearings with titles like, “Reforming FBI Management: Views from the Inside and Out” and “Oversight: Restoring Confidence in the FBI” have been held. The Leahy-Grassley FBI Reform Bill (S. 1974) has been approved and former Attorney General Ashcroft appointed a separate Office of Inspector General to independently investigate mismanagement and malfeasance at the FBI. In describing the state of the FBI, Senator Richard Durbin of Illinois remarked, “It’s hard to believe the situation has deteriorated and disintegrated the way it has. How did this great agency fall so far so fast?”¹

Review of the recent criticisms leveled at the FBI and the FBI’s subsequent response to criticism shows the FBI generally learns from its mistakes and responds by developing or changing policies and by creating new or modifying existing institutional or organizational structures that have contributed to the Bureau’s shortcomings and failures. The revamping of shooting review policies and creation of the Critical Incident Response Group in the aftermath of Ruby Ridge; the further modification of crisis management procedures in the aftermath of Waco and subsequent success of the Montana Freeman stand-off; the significant institutional changes relating to coordination of counterintelligence investigations and security in the aftermath of the Hanssen spy investigation; and the unprecedented re-engineering of the FBI post 9/11 to improve intelligence, analytical, and information sharing capabilities within the Bureau; all serve as evidence of the FBI’s ability to make transactional changes to improve its ability to successfully carry-out its many missions.

Transactional leadership as described by the leadership scholar James MacGregor Burns, is the brokering or substituting of one thing for another while transformational leadership involves the alteration of entire systems.² The FBI continues to approach leadership in its Special Agent workforce as a series of transactions rather than as an essential system. FBI Special Agent managers/leaders are selected through a system of volunteerism in which individuals decide to compete for managerial or leadership positions by applying for specific jobs. The only pre-requisites are three years of experience as a Special Agent and to have taken a leadership skills assessment test that,

¹ David A. Vise, *The Bureau and the Mole* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2002), 226.

² James MacGregor Burns, *Transforming Leadership* (New York: Grove Press, 2003), 24.

until very recently, did not even need to be passed in order to advance. Very little training or formalized professional education is required of Special Agent managers/leaders. Field supervisors are required to attend a week-long seminar while Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge candidates must attend the two-week long Executive Development Institute in order to advance. By comparison, the FBI offers numerous professional development opportunities for Executives serving among its local, state, federal, and international partners; including the prestigious, eleven-week long FBI National Academy, the National Executives Institute, Law Enforcement Executive Development Seminar, and the FBI Fellowship Program. The FBI should provide similar professional development opportunities for mid-level and senior executives in its own Special Agent ranks.

The FBI would also benefit from the establishment of formalized leadership principles for its Special Agent leaders. Established codes of conduct help drive how Special Agent leaders are expected to act. The current leadership system of individual career management emphasizes the individual and not the organization. Leadership principles refocus the energy of the individual in a way that is beneficial for the entire organization. Core competencies focus on the individual, core values define the organization and core principles support and help guide the individual to the greater benefit of the organization.

The FBI Strategic Human Capital Plan released in 2004 identifies forecasting as an essential element for human capital planning. It further identifies drivers linked to operational impacts and organizational consequences as having implications for human talent requirements. It discusses leadership initiatives for Special Agent managers including training programs, performance measurement criteria, intelligence officer certification and succession planning in transactional terms.³ While this plan outlines some excellent transactions that will undoubtedly improve the FBI, it falls short in describing or developing leadership in a systemic fashion, as an essential system from which all other FBI operations flow. The overarching problem in today's FBI is that

³ Ron Jones and Donna Sisson, *FBI Strategic Human Capital Plan* (Washington, D.C.: FBI Administrative Services Division, 2004), 24.

there is no deliberate, all-encompassing leadership plan to address the identification, selection, training, and education or professional development, evaluation, or performance measurement criteria and succession planning for a workforce consisting of over 12,000 Special Agents. A comprehensive Special Agent leadership framework that addresses the aforementioned issues would represent a transformational rather than transactional approach toward fixing the problems that have plagued the FBI and go a long way toward securing the future of one of America's greatest institutions.

This thesis will argue the FBI has entered a critical point in its history and the new normalcy of the post-9/11 world has created seemingly insurmountable challenges that serve to underscore the need for further examination of FBI policies, practices, and procedures utilized to identify, select, professionally develop, effectively evaluate, and place leaders in its Special Agent ranks. As the FBI continues to redefine its principle mission and navigate unprecedented strategic change, it must identify its most capable leaders, set conditions for their success, and deliberately place them in positions that will maximize their impact on the future of the organization.

This research examines some of the drivers and impediments that have led to the current methodologies used by the FBI to select and place its Special Agent leaders. It also looks at the current or "As Is" mechanisms for identifying, selecting, developing, evaluating, and placing FBI Special Agent mid-level and executive managers and explores an alternative or "To Be," strategy to identify, competitively select, professionally develop, fairly evaluate, and appropriately place ensuing generations of FBI Special Agent leaders. Finally, specific recommended courses of action and a new strategic framework is offered; moving from a system of individual career management to a system of organizational career development described as a leadership pipeline to transform the FBI's Special Agent leaders into standard setters within the larger intelligence and law enforcement communities they serve.

I. INTRODUCTION

My greatest concern is not whether you have failed, but whether you are content with your failure.

-Abraham Lincoln

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The reality of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) today is that the Bureau is not functioning at its maximum potential. Review of recent criticisms of the FBI serves to define institutional or organizational structures that have contributed to the identified shortcomings and failures. Many of these identified organizational and institutional issues have been addressed through policy or structural changes at the FBI. This dynamic indicates the FBI learns from past mistakes and makes adjustments to ensure its mistakes are not repeated in the future. If the suggestion that the FBI learns from past mistakes and has a demonstrated willingness to make transformational institutional and organizational changes is true, why does the FBI continue to find itself under almost constant criticism by Congress, the media, and the American public? Are the changes made by the FBI in the wake of public criticism or Congressional oversight transactional rather than transformational changes? As the medical metaphor suggests, perhaps the FBI is merely “treating the symptoms rather than looking to cure the disease.”

The FBI has experienced unprecedented challenges in the new normalcy of the post 9/11 world. Most U.S. government agencies engaged in counter-terrorism activities have experienced varying degrees of change. The vast majority of these agencies have had change occur incrementally. Organizations such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) have experienced alterations in priorities and business practices, but remain fundamentally engaged in the same activities, which are conducted in roughly the same manner. By comparison, the FBI has experienced unprecedented transformation characterized by sweeping and revolutionary changes. The FBI has seen a strategic shift that has significantly altered its priorities, operations, structure, and personnel.

These necessary changes were driven internally by the vision of a new Director who took over his post a week prior to the attack on America and driven externally in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack, fueled by a continuous stream of reports from the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA), the Markle Commission, the 9/11 Commission, Congress, and other events and external organizations.⁴

The FBI is experiencing an unprecedented state of change as it continues to define what it hopes to become in the aftermath of 9/11. Given the unprecedented changes experienced by the FBI during the past five years, does the organization possess the leadership and human capital to continue to guide it through its current state of transformation and beyond? Are the leadership structures in place adequate to support the new roles and responsibilities being undertaken by the FBI and its senior leaders? Finally, why does the development of a specific strategic goal focused on leadership in the post 9/11 transformation of the FBI matter?

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Failure by the FBI to successfully transform or to effectively prevent the next terrorist attack on the U.S. would likely have dire consequences for the organization, including resurrection of public debate to develop a separate domestic intelligence organization. Much of what has been done by the FBI post-9/11 has represented transactional solutions to specific problems. Taken together, these individual actions have served to permanently transform the FBI. If the FBI is going to continue to effectively evolve, does the organization need to develop a new way of thinking about its Special Agent leaders? Should the Bureau move away from the current system of individual career management and toward a comprehensive system of deliberate and systematic organizational professional development? What are the current mechanisms for training

⁴ Dick Thornburgh, et al., *Transforming the FBI: Progress and Challenges* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy for Public Administration, 2005), 9.

and developing FBI Special Agent mid-level and executive managers? Is there an alternative strategy to identify, recruit, train, professionally develop and place ensuing generations of FBI Special Agent leaders?

Do Special Agent leaders require a new set of skills? The FBI strategic shift since 9/11 has occurred during a time of national crisis. The Global War on Terror, triggered by the tragedy of 9/11, has led to intensification of the constant stream of threats directed toward the United States or U.S. interests abroad. This has led to the identification of new skills required of FBI leaders, increased the FBI's operational tempo, created additional pressures, and strained limited resources. Turnover of leadership in the Special Agent ranks, particularly at the Senior Executive Service (SES) level, is excessive. In fact, a September 2005 report issued by the National Academy for Public Administration noted turnover in FBI SES positions at headquarters and in the field is extensive. The report indicated turnover in the field hampers critical relationships with stakeholders at the state and local levels and turnover at FBIHQ contributes to a lack of consistency and follow-through on program improvement initiatives. Finally the report noted Director Mueller, who was appointed in September 2001, is the longest serving executive at FBI Headquarters.⁵ Persistent shortcomings and increased demands relating to Special Agent management positions has led to the development and implementation of numerous plans designed to provide relief for these issues and develop continuity in the FBI's Special Agent leadership ranks. The National Academy of Public Administrators surmised in a report issued concerning a 2005 symposium on growing great leaders in government, that the development of strong leadership in federal agencies and institutionalizing a leadership culture are key ingredients in assuring a high level of government performance.⁶ These skills can only be obtained through a combination of education and training, experiences, and constructive evaluation. Does the current system of self interest need to be replaced by an overarching leadership system where the FBI as an organization and principal stakeholder, takes an equal or greater role than the individual

⁵ Dick Thornburgh, et al., *Transforming the FBI: Roadmap to an Effective Human Capital Program* (Washington, D.C. National Academy for Public Administration, September 2005), 42-43.

⁶ Prudence Bushnell, et al. *Can Government Grow Great Leaders? Results of a Symposium conducted by the National Academy of Public Administration and Human Capital Solutions* (Washington D.C.: National Academy of Public Administration, June 2005), 14.

in shaping and determining the future of its leaders? What are the drivers that have led to the current methodologies used by the FBI to select and place its Special Agent leaders? Does the current system of individual career management effectively address the five primary business or leadership lines of identification, selection, professional development, evaluation and placement or succession planning for Special Agent leaders? If it does not, what must the FBI do to identify, select, develop, evaluate, and place its best leaders in positions for which they are not only qualified, but are equipped to excel? How will that help shape and guide the FBI's future?

Finally, does developing a strategic framework to grow and place the best possible leaders in the FBI enhance the ability of the organization to think, act, and learn strategically, enhance effectiveness and efficiency, improve decision-making, and increase political support, the earmarks of a good strategic plan as suggested by strategic planning expert John Bryson?⁷ Are the transactional fixes already planned and implemented in the post-9/11 FBI, sufficient to produce an FBI led by the world's best law enforcement and national security leaders? What additional specific courses of action or strategic changes are required to transform the FBI's Special Agent leaders into standard setters within the larger intelligence and law enforcement communities they serve? This thesis will attempt to effectively answer these questions and provide a transformational framework that will allow the FBI to effectively navigate the challenges and leverage the opportunities presented in the landscape of the post-9/11 law enforcement and intelligence communities.

C. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The research which forms the foundation of this thesis occurred during the period from September 2005 through February 2007. This dynamic period of time encompasses significant transformational and transactional changes in the FBI. As such, many of the assumptions and facts relevant at the beginning of the study changed during the course of the evaluation. Research is limited in scope to the issue of Special Agent leadership.

⁷ John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2004), 11-12.

While the author recognizes the future of the FBI rests on the ability of the organization to conduct investigations in the new context of an integrated team where every member of the team has an equally important role, the role of the Special Agent leader/manager is unique within the organization as well as within the functions of federal government. Additionally, unlike most of the other core functional areas and leadership positions residing within the FBI, the Special Agent leader must emerge or be grown wholly from within the organization. The Special Agent leader/manager presents a unique set of challenges for the organization and is, therefore, the focus of this study.

Research included study and critical review of Congressional testimony, public statements of FBI and non-FBI stakeholders, focused interviews of select current and former FBI and non-FBI officials engaged in various aspects of the FBI's human capital and leadership functions, and detailed analysis of various written and electronic medium, including magazine and newspaper accounts, various periodicals and books, published studies, monographs and reports, and review of unclassified internal FBI documents.

Specific research conducted included review of reports concerning the FBI issued by the NAPA, the GAO, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB); Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Inspector General (OIG), internal FBI documents including electronic communications; The Field Division Organizational Analysis conducted in June 2002 by the FBI Inspection Division; the Executive Summary of a 2001 Management Study of the Federal Bureau of Investigation conducted by Arthur Anderson; FBI training Division working papers detailing FBI leadership development; white papers; and a master's thesis conducted by a former FBI supervisor dealing with leadership development based on the professional military education model.

This thesis has also been shaped by the experiences of the author who has served in the federal government for the past 24 years. The author entered federal service as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Army in 1983, serving five years in a variety of staff and troop leading assignments in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and in the 160 Special Operations Aviation Group (Airborne), where the author participated in combat operations. The author left the military in 1988 at the rank of Captain to pursue a career in the FBI and served as a Special Agent (GS-10 to GS-13) for over 13 years before

spending the last five-plus years serving as a Supervisory Senior Resident Agent (GS-14). The author was recently promoted and transferred and is currently serving as a Supervisory Special Agent (GS-15) in the FBI Counterterrorism Division. As such, the author has an understanding of the military leadership development practiced by the U.S. Army and unique personal insight into the internal workings of the FBI.

The goal of this thesis is to generate meaningful discussion about leadership in the Special Agent ranks of the FBI. This paper will attempt to define the topic as a strategic issue, one that has serious short and long term implications for the organization and an issue that needs to be addressed at all levels of the Bureau. This thesis will attempt to limit the scope of the discussion by defining the “just one thing” that needs to be done to move the FBI toward an idealized strategic vision of an FBI led by the world’s best law enforcement and national security leaders and providing a suggested strategic framework for change. It will offer some observations and recommendations for further exploration in order to effectively move the FBI toward a strategic vision of being led by the world’s best law enforcement and national security professionals. It will not develop a comprehensive strategic leadership plan, nor will it fully identify or offer suggestions to fix all the leadership issues present in the FBI. In the end, it is hoped this thesis will serve as a tipping point for truly transformational strategic change in the way the FBI identifies, selects, professionally develops, evaluates, and places its Special Agent leaders by generating meaningful discussions at the right levels within and external to the FBI.

II. IDENTIFICATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM

The task of a leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been.

Henry Kissinger

A. DISCUSSION OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership scholar John Gardner defines leadership as “the process of persuasion or example by which an individual or leadership team induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers.”⁸ Leadership centers on the ability to influence others. FBI Supervisory Special Agent Jeff Green, Ph.D, of the FBI Leadership Development Institute analyzed the leadership component of change and concluded change leaders do not achieve success in a vacuum. Green observed:

Change leaders do not achieve success by themselves. Extraordinary leaders, transformational leaders, enlist the support and assistance of those who must make the project work. They encourage employees and build teams. They motivate and challenge others to do more than they originally intended and possibly more than they even thought possible. Depending on the needs of the situation and developmental levels of their employees; leaders direct, coach, support and delegate. They empower others at all levels including subordinates, peers, suppliers, customers and their leaders. Leadership is multi-directional; effective leaders influence below, sideways and up.⁹

Leadership is different than management. Leadership is about people, whereas management focuses on things such as budgets, programs, and measuring results. Today’s leaders in the FBI must have demonstrated leadership and management skills. They must be able to motivate, inspire, and empower against a backdrop of controlling priorities, resources, budgets and personnel. For the purposes of this discussion, leadership and management will be used interchangeably, as FBI Special Agent leaders must possess and demonstrate both excellent leadership and managerial abilities.

⁸ John W. Gardner, *On Leadership* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 1.

⁹ Jeff Green, “The Leadership Component of Change” in *The Police Executive* (Quantico, Virginia: The FBI Academy, 2005), 51.

Pulitzer Prize winning author James MacGregor Burns described leadership as one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth.¹⁰ Social Psychologist Edgar H. Schein views leadership and organizational culture as two sides of the same coin. Schein argues the creation and management of organizational culture is uniquely associated with leadership. He views the relationship as evolutionary in that leaders impose their values and assumptions on groups, creating organizational culture. As these views are accepted and assimilated, the culture begins to define itself by its leader's values. The values defined by the leader become the organizational culture until the dynamics change and environmental forces create difficulties. According to Schein, this in turn sets conditions for leadership to start the evolutionary change process anew. Schein believes the ability of an organization to perceive its limitations concerning its culture and evolve adaptively is the ultimate challenge of leadership.¹¹ The FBI may be experiencing this dynamic as it moves from being a law enforcement culture to a national security and law enforcement organization that is intelligence driven.

Deputy Attorney General James Comey has opined about the FBI, "That's an organization where the culture is very, very fixed, more so than a place like the Marine Corps; unlike the Marine Corps, most people spend 30 years at the Bureau. The culture sets like concrete over 30 years and to change that is very, very hard."¹²

The NAPA Panel on FBI reorganization emphasized the importance of changing the FBI culture by shifting the emphasis from the agent's traditional values of independence, determination, strong camaraderie, and professionalism to one of joint collaboration, interagency cooperation, and information sharing.¹³

Burns describes bureaucracies as a product of a conscious decision by leadership to organize human and material resources. According to Burns, bureaucracies help buttress the status quo and serve to inhibit social change.¹⁴ The bureaucratic nature of

¹⁰ James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 2.

¹¹ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership 3rd Edition* (San Francisco: CA, Josey-Bass, 2004), 1-2.

¹² Chitra Ragauan, "Fixing the FBI," *U.S. News and World Report*, March 28, 2005, 20.

¹³ Thornburgh, *Transforming the FBI: Progress and Challenges*, 12.

¹⁴ Burns, *Leadership*, 296.

the FBI may serve to inhibit organizational cultural change. It may also lend itself more toward facilitating transactional or incremental changes than to transformation.

Leadership must have a collective purpose. In this context, Burns describes leadership as,

...the reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers.

Transactional leadership as described by Burns is not just a joint effort of individuals acting in a collective manner, but a bargaining process to aid individual interests. Burns tells us leaders can move transactions to transformations and this occurs when higher goals are achieved through the pooled or collective interests of both leaders and followers that result in significant change.¹⁵

At this time it remains undetermined if the incremental or transactional changes that have occurred in the FBI since 9/11 will collectively result in a truly transformational change in the bureau's approach to leadership development and the management of its leaders. In conducting an honest introspective assessment of its policies, the FBI should evaluate its need to focus on its leaders and examine any deficiencies in the current processes. To effectively assess its current policies, the FBI must first determine if the Bureau is broken.

B. INDICATORS THE FBI IS BROKEN

Some senior and mid-level leaders in the FBI would argue the FBI is a high performing organization that is well led. While it is true the FBI has some outstanding and high performing leaders, the organization has been plagued with leadership failures over the past several decades. Short or one-word descriptions of these failures have been etched into the American consciousness and the mention of phrases and names such as Ruby Ridge, Waco, Robert Hanssen, Wen Ho Lee, and 9/11 typically require no further description and serve as enduring images of spectacular FBI failures.

¹⁵ Burns, *Leadership*, 425-426.

The debacle at Ruby Ridge resulted in the death of a Deputy United States Marshall, a young boy, and his mother; who was also the wife of federal fugitive, Christian Identity movement advocate, survivalist, and ex-Green Beret, Randy Weaver. The ensuing review of FBI actions taken at Ruby Ridge resulted in disciplinary actions against twelve FBI employees. One FBI senior executive was indicted and convicted of obstruction of justice charges for destroying documents. The others received disciplines that ranged from verbal and written reprimands to suspensions without pay. Former FBI senior executive Danny Coulson, who was one of the employees disciplined after enduring a two year suspension, later described his frustration when he wrote, “Whatever bitterness I felt wasn’t directed toward the institution or its people but to its leadership, which allowed us to sink into this sorry state.”¹⁶ Subsequent to the tragedy, then FBI Director Louis Freeh changed almost every aspect of the FBI’s crisis response structure and altered or adopted new policies and procedures to address the shortcomings identified by the litany of hearings, inquiries, and investigations that followed. Freeh’s reforms included ending the use of rules of engagement by the FBI and relying on a comprehensive deadly force policy to govern the actions of FBI agents during critical incidents, revamping shooting incident review policies, creation of the Critical Incident Response Group as an integrated structure to manage crisis situations and ensure accountability by senior managers, and increase crisis management training for senior executives.¹⁷ These reforms were necessary and have probably improved the overall operational capacity of the FBI, but did they go beyond fixing organizational issues and identify underlying leadership problems?

The siege at the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas and deaths of four ATF agents and 80 Davidians further amplified debate about the FBI’s capacity to effectively handle crisis situations. After a DOJ review, Congressional inquiries, review by the Danforth Commission and despite allegations of FBI cover-ups, the FBI was

¹⁶ Danny O. Coulson, *No Heroes: Inside the FBI’s Secret Counter-Terror Force* (New York: Pocket Books, 1999), 560.

¹⁷ Louis J. Freeh (Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation), “Opening Statement before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology, and Government Information, Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, October 19, 1995,” <http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/congress/1995-h/s951019f.htm> [Accessed November 25, 2005].

exonerated of any wrongdoing. Once again, the FBI looked at its procedures concerning crisis management and initiated institutional and organizational changes to better resolve such events in the future. While these changes were later proven to be effective as evidenced by the manner in which the FBI successfully handled the Montana Freeman standoff, these changes also failed to address underlying leadership issues relating to the FBI's actions. FBI senior executive Buck Revell, wrote about Waco in his memoirs and while lauding the acceptance of responsibility by U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, Revell further opined. "...But we all knew the FBI should have given her better advice. We should have had a better plan. We should have taken into the account the possibility of mass suicide, and should have been prepared for the fire."¹⁸ Did the events at Ruby Ridge and Waco lead the FBI to attempt to address the underlying leadership problems at the executive levels of the FBI? Not according to retired FBI Special Agent in Charge (SAC) I.C. Smith who wrote, "But the major crisis for the Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) was the crisis of leadership, and it was a failure of the selection process and of leadership that led to the events of Ruby Ridge and Waco that will haunt the FBI for generations."¹⁹

The specter of FBI traitor Robert Hanssen as the most damaging spy in U.S. history again left the Bureau in an unenviable spotlight. Hanssen's unveiling and ultimate arrest led to the usual oversight hearings and commission reports. Hanssen spied for the Soviet Union and the Russians for over twenty years. He excelled as a double agent and despite being uncovered and ultimately prosecuted through excellent work conducted by the agency he betrayed; he successfully and intractably marred the image of the FBI. According to author David A. Vise, Hanssen viewed the FBI as a corrupt father figure, detested its hierarchy, and filled with unrealized ambition, turned to the Soviet and Russian intelligence services to validate his own intelligence and importance.²⁰ The FBI reacted predictably and revamped its security program. Significant institutional and organizational changes included institution of a nationally directed counterintelligence

¹⁸ Oliver "Buck" Revell and Dwight Williams, *A G-Man's Journal* (New York: Pocket Books, 1998), 428-429.

¹⁹ I.C. Smith, *Inside: A Top G-Man Exposes Spies, Lies, and Bureaucratic Bungling Inside the FBI* (Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson Current, 2004), 337.

²⁰ Vise, *The Bureau and the Mole*, 225-226.

program centralized at FBIHQ, establishment of a unit in the counter espionage section dedicated specifically to uncovering “moles,” establishment of a security division to consolidate all security functions, institution of new audit and review processes including expanded polygraph use, expanded financial disclosure requirements, and expanded review of five-year security re-investigations. Additional security related training and improved coordination with intelligence community partners has also been mandated.²¹ While these reforms represent institutional and organizational changes that will undoubtedly improve the FBI’s counterintelligence posture, they do not address the underlying system that allowed Hanssen to continue to rise through the ranks at FBIHQ and placed him in a position where he had access to the most damaging material. If the FBI had a viable management selection, evaluation and professional development program, it is possible Hanssen’s access to critical information might have been limited or he could have been dissuaded or prevented from spying altogether.

The tragic events surrounding the heinous attacks by the international terrorist organization known as al Qaeda on September 11th, 2001, led to the all too familiar pattern of internal and external reviews of the FBI. The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, commonly referred to as the 9/11 Commission, found that despite attempting several reform efforts in the counter-terrorism arena, the FBI failed to implement organization-wide institutional change. The report criticized the FBI for failing to implement an effective preventative counter-terrorism strategy. The 9/11 Commission report cited deficiencies in the FBI’s analytical capabilities, information sharing capacity, counter-terrorism training, legal barriers, and inadequate resources.²² The FBI has responded with unprecedented reforms including a 111% increase in agents assigned to terrorism matters, an 86% increase in intelligence analysts, a 117% increase in linguists, establishing or revamping existing infrastructures including a National Joint Terrorism Task Force to coordinate the activities of 84 Joint Terrorism Task Forces being run by FBI field divisions (now over 100), a terrorism financing

²¹ Robert Mueller (Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation), “Statement Regarding the Inspector General Report on Robert Hanssen Dated August 14, 2003,” <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel03/hans081403.htm> [Accessed November 25, 2005].

²² Thomas H. Kean, et al. *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2005), 76-77.

operations section, terrorism reports and requirements section, foreign terrorist tracking task force, terrorism screening center, counter-terrorism analysis section, operational fly teams, enterprise wide intelligence program and field intelligence groups, FBI intelligence bulletin and national alert system, and expansion of FBI overseas legal attaché offices.²³ This is an impressive response to the criticism levied upon the FBI post-9/11 and as with the reforms highlighted previously, will undoubtedly strengthen the FBI. But these institutional and organizational changes are only as strong as the individuals who are placed in charge.

The FBI is an agency besieged with problems. In addition to the events highlighted above, other events such as the Wen Ho Lee spy investigation, the compromise of an FBI supervisor in Los Angeles by a known Chinese agent, investigation of corrupt FBI employees in Boston and Las Vegas who had been co-opted by the Mafia, problems at the FBI laboratory, revelations of 184 missing or misplaced computers, and 449 missing or misplaced weapons due to poor record keeping and accountability, non-disclosure of documents in the Oklahoma City bombing investigation which led to a delay in the execution of Timothy McVeigh, the well-publicized failure of the FBI's information technology program known as Trilogy and other miscues have served to undermine the confidence of the American public in the FBI. Former U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft subsequently appointed a separate Office of Inspector General to independently investigate mismanagement and malfeasance at the FBI. A series of Congressional oversight committee hearings with titles like, "Reforming FBI Management: Views from the Inside and Out," and "Oversight: Restoring Confidence in the FBI" have been held. The Leahy-Grassley FBI Reform Bill (S. 1974) was approved by committee as an initiative to push FBI transformation, but has never been passed by the whole Congress or signed into law. Today the FBI is subject to more oversight than at any other time in its ninety-nine year history. Its failures have been spectacular, have had dramatic consequences, and have been very public. At their heart, all failures are ultimately leadership failures and while recent reforms within the FBI have made it a

²³ Press release concerning testimony of FBI Executive Assistant Director John Pistole at a Congressional hearing on the 9-11 Commission Report, August 4, 2004, <http://www.fbi.gov/page2/aug04/pistole080404.htm> [Accessed November 25, 2005].

better organization, they fall short of addressing the underlying factor that continues to plague the FBI and keep it from operating at its maximum potential. How can the FBI effectively address its problems when it selects its leaders primarily through volunteerism?

C. EVIDENCE OF LEADERSHIP AS THE CORE ISSUE

Leadership based primarily on self-interest and personal relationships may be a limiting factor for the FBI as it does not effectively provide for systematic professional development or deliberate succession planning.

Former FBI Special Agent and whistleblower Mike German describes leadership as a problem in the FBI when he writes:

The FBI needs to reform its management practices. Effective reforms might include enforcing eligibility requirements of at least five years of field experience and a record of true accomplishment before entering the management program; ending self-nomination for supervisory positions and instead mentor and select effective field agents for supervisory positions; developing an objective test, based on FBI rules and procedures, for the selection and promotion of supervisors; reforming the career path to require supervisors to remain in one position for at least five years to develop competence before moving on to the next position; training supervisors to support agents as leaders rather than managers; or holding supervisors responsible for the success of investigations.

The FBI should also empower its greatest asset: FBI agents. FBI agents are the most honest, intelligent, capable, and dedicated employees in government, but too much of their talent is wasted by mismanagement. It is the hard work of agents in the streets of America and around the world that makes the FBI famous. The FBI agents described in the 9/11 report performed admirably. The FBI should take advantage of this resource and look to the agents to help the FBI reform. Agents know more about what they need to conduct better investigations than any Headquarters supervisors, and they should be encouraged to participate in policy development. Agents should be encouraged to report mismanagement and should be protected from retaliation. A mandatory practice of conducting candid after-action reviews for every investigation, successful or

unsuccessful, would go a long way toward forcing managers to listen to the agents, identifying management failures that hinder investigations, and educating managers on the proper use of their authority.²⁴

German was a decorated FBI Special Agent who worked a number of high profile undercover investigations, including the successful infiltration and prosecution of a white supremacist group in Los Angeles that was engaged in a racially motivated bombing campaign. German resigned from the FBI in 2004 in protest of what he saw as continuing leadership failures and amid accusations of retaliation from FBI managers after he became vocal about his concerns.

Former FBI Special Agent Coleen Rowley, best known for her thirteen page letter to Director Mueller in the wake of 9/11 bemoaning inaction at FBIHQ relating to the Minneapolis field division's investigation of terrorist Zacharias Moussaoui, also said, "The bureau is full of so many examples of mismanagement that agents have been desensitized." Rowley added that many qualified agents do not want to become managers at the bureau because of the problems they experienced.²⁵

Senator Charles Grassley in an opening statement for an FBI oversight hearing of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee on May 2, 2006 spoke of the Moussaoui case as well when he stated,

Protecting careers has to take a back seat to protecting the American people. Unfortunately we have seen examples where those priorities aren't in order. A few weeks ago, Minneapolis FBI agent Harry Samit testified during the sentencing hearing for Zacharias Moussaoui. What he said was startling. Agent Samit said that he warned his FBI supervisors more than 70 times before 9/11 that Moussaoui was a terrorist...In his sworn testimony Agent Samit described the failures of FBI management as "obstructionism, careerism, and criminal negligence.

As a result, Agent Samit was unable to obtain the warrants he sought. Moussaoui's computer and apartment were not searched until after 9/11. We can only guess whether the 3,000 victims could have been spared by a more aggressive investigation of Moussaoui pre-9/11. However, it is

²⁴ Mike German, "An Insider's Guide to the 9/11 Commission Report," <http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/report2005guide-iii.htm> [Accessed February 3, 2007]..

²⁵ Chris Strohm, "Former FBI Officials Decry Bureau Management," *GovExec.com Daily Briefing* <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0105/012602cl.htm> [Accessed February 18, 2007].

certain that those who blocked the Moussaoui investigation have been rewarded rather than held accountable. The supervisor who failed to support Agent Samit's Moussaoui investigation is now in charge of the Joint Terrorism Task Force in one of our nation's largest cities.

Grassley concludes,

The FBI's culture limits its potential for success by putting too much emphasis on protecting its own jurisdictional turf, protecting management from allegations of misconduct, and protecting individual careers. Instead, the FBI should be focusing more on protecting the American people. We've been calling for changes in the FBI for long enough. I hope we are going to start seeing some results.²⁶

Jeff Stein wrote an article for *Congressional Quarterly* magazine questioning the ability of the FBI's leadership to change the culture of the organization from that of a primarily law enforcement organization to a multi-mission agency that is intelligence driven and adept at both law enforcement and national security investigations. Stein wrote his article around revelations about depositions taken from senior FBI counterterrorism officials during a whistleblower lawsuit filed by an Arab-American FBI agent. According to the article, the testimony of the FBI's counterterrorism experts showed a lack of depth, experience, and subject matter expertise concerning terrorism matters. Stein reported Senator Patrick Leahy in a letter to FBI Director Mueller, asked, "How can we reform the FBI, if it insists that traditional law enforcement experience is all that is needed to prevent and prosecute acts of terrorism?" The FBI's public affairs officer, John Miller responded to the criticism by listing all the FBI's new counterterrorism initiatives. Miller stated, "We can show you....all the tangibles. You know-this many are hired, this many are in place, these programs have been started, these structures are in place. Because it's brick and mortar, it's easy to identify. The less tangible things are not how you change the structure of an organization, it's how you change the way people think."²⁷

²⁶ Charles Grassley (Senator), "Statement before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee FBI Oversight Hearing on May 2, 2006," http://judiciary.senate.gov/print_member_statement.cfm?id=1011 [Accessed February 18, 2007].

²⁷ Jeff Stein, "Under the Gun," *Congressional Quarterly Magazine* (May 1, 2006): 1152-1159.

Clearly there is recognition in the FBI that leadership lays at the center of its problems. As Director Mueller testified in the above referenced Senate Judiciary Committee FBI Oversight hearing,

“Finally, I know that one area of concern for this Committee has been the rate of turnover among the FBI’s leadership ranks. As recognized by the National Academy of Public Administration, we have launched a number of initiatives to address this issue. Representatives of the FBI’s Executive Development and Selection Program are working with the RAND Corporation to develop a database designed to assist SES succession planning. In addition, the FBI’s Training and Development Division is formulating an ‘FBI Leadership Training Framework’ that will provide the basis for a comprehensive leadership development program.

Another piece of the FBI’s leadership development strategy is the Strategic Leadership Development Plan, which will provide techniques for identifying leadership needs and problems, articulate a program designed to enhance leadership knowledge, skills and abilities throughout an employees career, and relate leadership development to the FBI’s strategic mission in its top priority programs. The FBI is evaluating several possible measures to lengthen tenure in SES positions, particularly at FBI Headquarters, including the increased use of retention bonuses and other incentives to encourage SES employees to remain in these positions longer. With strong, steady leadership, we will be better poised to achieve our mission of protecting America.”²⁸

The solutions outlined by Director Mueller go to the core of the problem by identifying leadership development and succession planning as key issues. The solutions outlined are in development and have not been fully implemented. Will they represent the type of overarching solution required to repair the FBI’s faltering leadership or will they merely serve as more transactions that have a short term impact with no real lasting result? How can the initiatives recently outlined by Director Mueller address the issue of leadership when they are not taken together as a whole system? Do the solutions outlined

²⁸ Robert Mueller (Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation), “Testimony before the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary hearing on FBI Oversight on May 2, 2006,” http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2006_hr/050206mueller.html [Accessed October 3, 2006].

by the FBI Director address the central question concerning FBI Special Agent leadership? The central question or issue will be explored more fully in the next section.

D. DEFINING THE CENTRAL QUESTION

One of the most common phrases uttered by FBI agents in bullpen discussions about the FBI's leadership is, "The FBI is the only agency in the federal government that has 10,000 people fighting to stay at the bottom." What factors or drivers contribute to the reluctance of FBI agents to commit to the supervisory ranks and why is it important for the FBI to review its policies and practices relating to selecting its Special Agent managers and leaders? What are the strategic implications for an FBI that continues to be poorly led? Why is all this important?

FBI Special Agents (SA) eschew the management/leadership path due to actual and perceived familial hardships, specifically inevitable transfer to the high cost Washington D.C. metropolitan area and additional transfers and subsequent moves as the candidate continues to move up in the leadership ranks. An FBI SA manager can expect an average of five to seven moves, with at least two of those moves to the Washington D.C. metropolitan area during a career, as opposed to an average of three moves for the journeyman agent. The typical path for an FBI Special Agent manager/leader is to spend three or more years as a "street agent" before applying for leadership/management positions at FBIHQ or in the field at the GS-14 level. Assignment to FBIHQ is the more common entry point for Special Agent managers. Until recently, GS-14 Supervisory Special Agent assignments in the field could be designated non-stationary or stationary. Non-stationary candidates could be selected Bureau wide, while stationary jobs were for candidates serving in that particular FBI field division. FBI Special Agents in Charge (SAC's) could designate 50% of their supervisory positions as stationary. Typically, stationary positions went to senior agents who demonstrated exceptional leadership potential. As of 2004, all GS-14 jobs were awarded with a five-year term limitation that required the candidate continue to move up in the organization or return to investigative duties when their term is completed. This step was enacted to ostensibly create movement between FBIHQ and field supervisory jobs.

Several FBI SA's and SSA's view FBIHQ assignments as unrewarding, particularly at the GS-14 level, due to the fact that, while they are given a lot of responsibility, they have very little authority. Furthermore, they lose the autonomy they enjoyed in the field and some of the privileges, such as an assigned government vehicle. Consequently, the FBI has in recent years had a very difficult time filling GS-14 and GS-15 vacancies at FBIHQ. The FBI has taken unprecedented measures to attract qualified individuals to FBIHQ including a recently implemented program which brings SA's to FBIHQ on a temporary duty basis for eighteen months as term GS-14's. While this program has filled critical vacancies, it has done little else. This will be discussed in greater detail below in the section that explores comprehensive solutions.

Whether the entry supervisory job is at FBIHQ or in the field, the SSA must complete the opposite assignment to become eligible for promotion to an Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) position at the GS-15 level. Other non-ASAC GS-15 positions do not require time as a field supervisor. Upon completion of GS-14 level assignments the manager/leader can apply for GS-15 positions at FBIHQ (Unit Chief and Assistant Section Chief jobs) or if the individual has completed a command assignment in the field as a GS-14 supervisor and is inspection certified (e.g., served as an assistant inspector in place or done a tour at the FBI's inspection division), the candidate may apply for an ASAC position. Upon successful completion of a second leadership tour in the field this time as an ASAC, the individual is eligible to compete for SES jobs at FBIHQ or in the field as a Special Agent in Charge.

The financial compensation packages for FBI leaders/managers do not represent a significant increase in benefits over the senior journeyman agent level, particularly when taken over the course of a career and in the context of the potential additional expenses related to numerous additional relocations. Furthermore, federal salaries at the non-SES level are subject to a cap and a GS-13 with enough years of service can get to the salary cap. Their retirement income will be very close to the retirement income of a GS-15 who is also capped by law and may have endured twice as many transfers. The September 2005 NAPA report on transforming the FBI's human capital program opines, "Numerous agents are pay capped and the lack of effective pay incentives to encourage agents to

move to high cost areas is contributing to high vacancy rates in cities, especially Washington, D.C., with critical staffing needs.”²⁹ This is a tremendous disincentive for many agents.

The relevance and importance of a discussion concerning the identification, selection, development, evaluation and placement of FBI leaders revolves around the awesome responsibility the FBI has to the American public. It is a multi-mission agency whose long history has shown an ability to adapt to changing threats. Today the threats to American society are among the most complicated and egregious ever faced. We live in an era of globalization that has left us vulnerable to wide ranging threats. Americans are no longer protected by the oceans surrounding them. The advent of air travel and the Internet has changed the very nature of crime and terrorism. The FBI made its reputation through its expertise in the investigation of interstate crime. Today, the FBI must become adept at investigating in a transnational environment. FBI Director Robert Mueller succinctly described the nature of the FBI’s current operating environment in a speech before the Council on Foreign Relations when he said,

Technology and travel have made the world smaller than ever. Criminal activity not only crosses state lines, it traverses international boundaries at the stroke of a computer key. Crime is more diverse than ever before. It includes terrorism, corporate fraud, illegal weapons trade, and the trafficking of human beings.

And there is a growing convergence of these threats both old and new. We see organized crime laundering money for drug groups. Drug groups selling weapons to terrorists. Terrorists committing white-collar fraud to raise money for their operations.

Today's threat is increasingly asymmetrical and complex. During the Cold War, the United States had in the Soviet Union a relatively predictable enemy which it fought in relatively predictable ways. Like chess, it was complicated, but there were only two sides and a limited number of moves available to each. Now, the dynamic more closely resembles the latest computer game than an old-fashioned chess game.

²⁹ Thornburgh, *Transforming the FBI: Roadmap to an Effective Human Capital Program*, 35-36.

The international threat of criminal and terrorist organizations is the product of the modern world in which we live. Today, terrorists and criminals use sophisticated business practices to achieve their goals, not unlike that of legitimate multinational corporations.³⁰

FBI managers and leaders must develop both subject matter expertise and have an overall understanding of all FBI investigative programs, techniques, and capabilities to remain effective in the modern era of the FBI. They must also demonstrate soft leadership skills identified as the eight core competencies listed below:³¹

- (1) **Leadership**: The ability to motivate and inspire others; to develop and mentor others; to gain respect, confidence, and loyalty of others; to articulate vision, give guidance, and direct others in accomplishing goals.
- (2) **Interpersonal Ability**: The ability to deal effectively with others; to establish and maintain rapport with management, colleagues, and subordinates; to treat others with respect and courtesy; and to recognize and show sensitivity to differences in the needs and concerns of others.
- (3) **Liaison**: The ability to establish contacts and to interact effectively with federal, state, and local investigative agencies; government officials, the media; the community (business, academic, local); internal Bureau contacts; and other organizations and agencies.
- (4) **Organizing and Planning**: The skill to establish priorities, timetables, and goals/objectives; to structure a plan of action for self and/or others; and to develop tactical and strategic plans.
- (5) **Problem Solving/Judgment**: The ability to critically evaluate conditions, events, and alternatives; to identify problems, causes and relationships; to base decisions or recommendations on sound data or sound reasoning; and to formulate objective opinions. Included is the ability to make effective decisions without undue hesitancy, to defend decisions when challenged, and to accept responsibility for decisions made.
- (6) **Flexibility/Adaptability**: The ability to respond positively to and successfully manage changes at work; to willingly accept new priorities, procedures, or goals; to adapt to unanticipated problems or conflicts; to respond positively and productively to work challenges.
- (7) **Initiative**: The ability and willingness to begin projects/work or to address issues/problems; to persist and follow through to complete all aspects of work; to respond proactively/creatively to problems/issues/tasks.

³⁰ Robert Mueller (Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation), "Speech to Council on Foreign Relations, June 22, 2004," <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/speeches/speech062204.htm> [Accessed November 25, 2005].

³¹ Larry G. Nicholson, "A Survey of External Executive Leadership Programs," (Quantico, Virginia: FBI Academy, 2003) working papers.

- (8) **Communications:** The skill to express thoughts and ideas clearly, concisely, persuasively, and effectively orally and in writing; to interpret and understand verbal or written communications; and to tailor the communication to the experience, exposure, or expertise of the recipient.

The core competencies for FBI leaders listed above are the results of a job task analysis performed by the FBI Executive Development and Selection Program (EDSP) in 1991 and re-validated in 2002.

These competencies are in addition to mastering the ten core competencies previously demonstrated at the Special Agent (GS-10 to GS-13) level, identified as:

- (1) Writing Effectively
- (2) Organizing, Planning, and Coordinating
- (3) Communicating Orally
- (4) Relating Effectively with Others
- (5) Attending to Detail
- (6) Critical Thinking and Information Evaluation/Judgment and Decision Making
- (7) Initiative and Motivation
- (8) Adapting to Changing Situations
- (9) Maintaining a Professional Image
- (10) Physical Requirements

So how does the FBI measure the core competencies, subject matter expertise, and leadership potential of its future Special Agent leaders and managers? They basically take your word for it.

The current or “As Is” system of leadership development in the FBI is a system based on volunteerism, individual desires, and personal relationships. It is application based whereby an individual interested in moving up submits an application listing his or her qualifications that is verified by individuals chosen by the applicant. Under this system, some excellent leaders emerge; however, this occurs in a happenstance manner with little regard for the overarching needs of the organization.

Wouldn't the FBI benefit more from a system that is evaluation based? What if the FBI instituted a system that identified its highest potential individuals and encouraged them to become leaders? What if the FBI competitively selected, provided continuous professional development at all levels of leadership, constantly evaluated, provided constructive developmental feedback and intelligently placed its leaders in positions where they would have the most benefit to the organization? If the FBI is to achieve a strategic vision of being led by the world's best law enforcement and national security leaders, what strategic actions must the organization take? The central question to be asked and answered is should the FBI move from the current or "As Is" system of individual career management to a future "To Be" system of institutional professional development or a "leadership pipeline" model?

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III. UNDERSTANDING THE RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The best vision is insight.

-Malcolm S. Forbes

A. ANALYSIS OF FBI STAKEHOLDERS AND POST-9/11 STRATEGIC SHIFT

Why is a strategic change important? What are the factors, forces, and drivers pushing the FBI toward a strategic shift? Figure 1 graphically depicts the many different internal and external stakeholders having a vested interest in how well the FBI is led.³²



Figure 1. Stakeholder Analysis (After Bryson, *Creating and Implementing Your Own Strategic Plan: A Workbook For Public and Nonprofit Organizations* 2nd Edition)

³² John M. Bryson and Farnum K. Alston, *Creating and Implementing Your Own Strategic Plan: A Workbook For Public and Nonprofit Organizations* 2nd Edition (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2005), 57.

Internal stakeholders or those stakeholders residing within the FBI include the FBI employees and the individuals directly impacted by the FBI's leadership, specifically the families of FBI employees. Internal stakeholders include FBI executives, FBI leaders and managers, FBI Special Agents, FBI non-agent employees, contract employees and special interest groups such as the FBI agent's association that collectively constitute the FBI.

External stakeholders, on the other hand, are those individuals and entities whose operations, interests, or environment are impacted in some way by the FBI. They include a much broader and more diverse group. Some are impacted directly by the FBI on a day-to-day basis while others are impacted infrequently or indirectly. They include the FBI's traditional law enforcement partners, the FBI's traditional adversaries, and the people the FBI depends upon to effectively carry out its many missions. External stakeholders have a vested interest in the overall functioning of the FBI and as such can put pressure on the organization to change. External stakeholders can be powerful allies and can also become powerful foes. The relationships the FBI fosters with its external stakeholders can influence its future. Failure by the organization to recognize the importance or to create trust with its external stakeholders could have disastrous consequences for the Bureau. The ability of the FBI to influence its external stakeholders in a positive way cannot be overemphasized, particularly during periods of strategic change such as is occurring right now. The FBI is in the midst of an unprecedented strategic shift triggered by the tragic events of 9/11 and the call by internal and external stakeholders to transform.

External stakeholder Ed Stephenson of the National Academy of Public Administration has conducted extensive research concerning the FBI's transformation in the post-9/11 world and provided the following observations:

"The Bureau continues to be faced with the need to transform its basic culture from the preeminent criminal investigative organization to an organization focused on counter-terrorism and intelligence. An important component in this transformation is the development of its leaders...A leadership development program must be multi-faceted to include challenging assignments, learning from others, going through crises or hardships,

and other ways. Classroom training results in only ten percent of the development needed for effective leadership. Again, the most important thing the Bureau can do is to develop a strong succession planning program that identifies potential leaders early in their career, ensures they have the needed assignments and training, and then ensures they stay with the Bureau through incentives and positive rewards programs.”³³

Figure 2 below graphically depicts the FBI’s strategic shift:

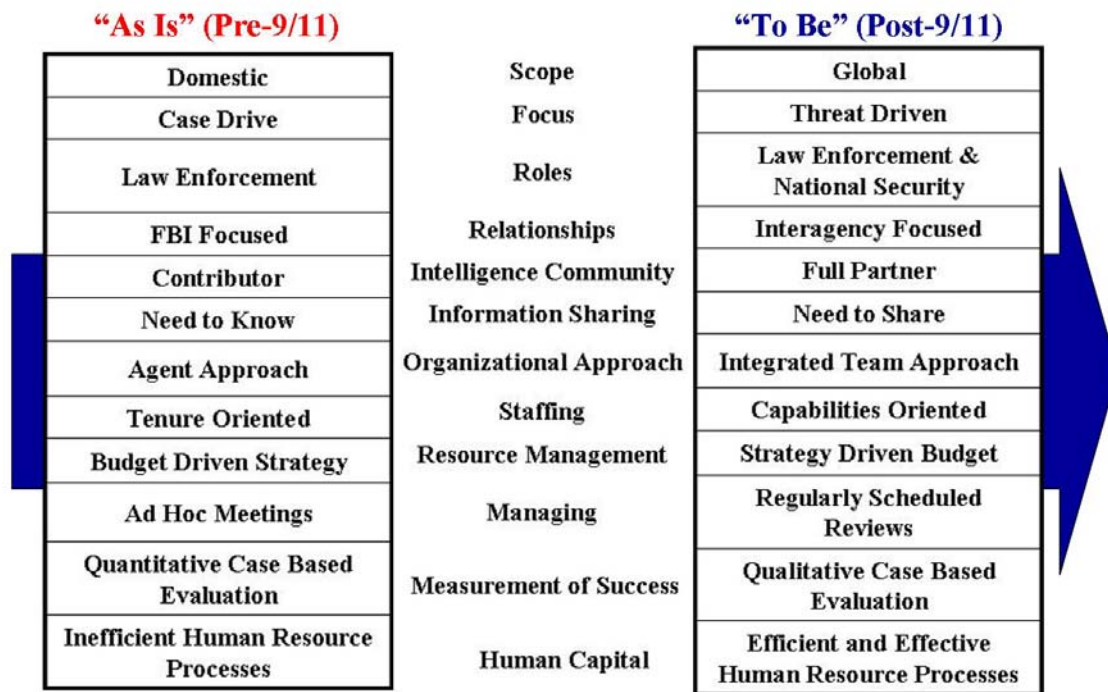


Figure 2. FBI Strategic Shift (After Briefing Slides Presented at the FBI Executive Development Institute, Quantico, Virginia, August 2006)

The FBI’s strategic shift is defined by a scope that is now global in nature with an increased presence overseas to combat the existing transnational threats of crime, terrorism, and hostile intelligence services. Indicators of the FBI’s ability to adapt to this new threat include the expansion of the FBI’s Legal attaché program to over 60 offices, the embedding of FBI agents in military operations being conducted worldwide as part of the Global War on Terror, and the increasingly common deployment of FBI agents

³³ Edward Stephenson, interview by the author via telephone and e-mail, Washington, D.C., February 8, 2007.

outside of the U.S. to conduct transnational investigations. It naturally follows that the change in scope requires new skills on the part of FBI agents and their leaders. FBI employees must have a better understanding of the global environment, including cultural sensitivities and language abilities to effectively operate. Leaders must understand the nuances of diplomatic relations and be adept at forging non-traditional alliances in foreign environments.

The shift of the FBI from a case-driven to threat-driven organization requires increased intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination capabilities as a risk or threat-driven focus is naturally fueled and dictated by intelligence requirements and handling. Leaders must have an understanding of the intelligence cycle, intelligence collection, dissemination and reporting requirements and experience in focusing resources based upon the identified threat.

The new emphasis the FBI places on being a full partner in the interagency process requires Special Agent leaders to become more adept at developing relationships with traditional and non-traditional partners within and outside of government. Unlike the law enforcement culture, many of these partners may have distinct cultures of their own that enlightened FBI leaders will need to understand in order to be effective. Future leaders would benefit from exposure to different organizational cultures and that has tremendous implications for how the FBI should develop its next several generations of leaders, to include the possible mandating of interagency assignments for the highest potential leaders.

Moving from an Agent-centric approach to investigations where the agent sets the course of the investigation and other employees support his or her efforts to an integrated team approach will likely present a tremendous challenge for FBI Special Agent leaders. When Maureen Baginski, a former executive at the National Security Agency, came to the FBI as the architect of the newly created FBI National Security Branch, she was reported to have observed, “At the FBI, there’s agents, and there’s furniture.”³⁴ Today’s FBI requires an integrated team approach where intelligence analysts, computer specialists, linguists, other professional support employees, and agents all work together

³⁴ Stein, “Under the Gun,” 1156.

in a coordinated approach that is intelligence-driven . All this must be choreographed by an astute leader who understands and values the individual contributions of each of the elements of the team. Leading diversified teams of employees with different skills, some of which are highly technical, will require new skills for future FBI leaders.

Finally, while tenure is important in the establishment of a baseline of experiences, it should not be the basis for staffing in the new FBI. Staffing needs to be tied directly to the demonstrated capabilities of the individuals selected for jobs within the organization. Capabilities should be measured by a combination of education, training, meaningful experiences and fair evaluation. Staffing should ultimately be driven by the overarching needs of the organization and not the desires of individuals so the FBI places the right person with the right skills in the right place at the right time.

B. DEFINING THE CENTRAL QUESTION AS A STRATEGIC ISSUE

Why is the development of a new way of looking at leadership important to the FBI? The Bureau has undergone enterprise-wide change in the aftermath of 9/11. Its missions are being redefined and the priorities of the organization have changed dramatically. Exceptional leadership is fundamental to changing organizations and the future of the FBI will likely see a need for the organization to remain resilient while having a tremendous capacity to adapt to changing environments. Leadership is a fundamental issue and critical challenge for the FBI. In order to define leadership as a strategic issue central to the survival of the organization, it is important to differentiate between issues that are operational, that is specific issues that can be addressed incrementally or by enacting specific transactions to repair a gap in an individual practice and those issues that are truly strategic in that they impact all programs, business practices or leadership lines, and the overall identity of the organization. Table 1 helps define leadership as a strategic issue by asking critical questions and reviewing the answers in the context of an operational verses strategic continuum.

OPERATIONAL VS STRATEGIC

CRITICAL QUESTION

CONTINUUM

ANALYSIS

1. Is the issue on the Director's Agenda?	No	Yes				
2. When will the issue challenge the organization?	Now	Next Yr	Next 2 Yrs			
3. How broad an impact does this issue have?	Unit	Div	Org			
4. What is the lowest level of management that can decide how to deal with this issue?	SSA	SC DAD AD	DIR DD EAD			
5. How many stakeholder groups must be involved in its resolution?	None	1-3	>4			
6. How important is this issue relative to organizational, political, and cultural values?	Not	Some	Very			
7. How apparent is the best approach for issue resolution?	Not	Some	Very			

OPERATIONAL VS STRATEGIC CONTINUUM		ANALYSIS	
CRITICAL QUESTION			
8. Will strategies for issue resolution likely require: a. Change in Mission b. Legislative Action c. Staff, Technology or Facility Changes d. Significant Funding or Reallocation of Existing Funding e. Development of New Programs or Reengineering of Existing Programs		     	
9. What are the potential consequences of not addressing this issue?	Inefficiency? Organizational Restructuring? Mission Change/Loss?	  	
OVERALL ASSESSMENT OPERATIONAL VS STRATEGIC		STRATEGIC ISSUE	

LEGEND		
 PRIMARY OPERATIONAL ISSUE	 BOTH OPERATIONAL & STRATEGIC	 PRIMARY STRATEGIC

Table 1. Framing FBI Special Agent Leadership as a Strategic Issue (After Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organizations*)

The table graphically depicts primarily operational issues in blue, issues that are both strategic and operational in green and predominantly strategic issues as yellow. In doing so, Table 1 frames the issue of FBI Special Agent leadership as an organizational strategic issue for the FBI.³⁵

The overall issue is defined as strategic and therefore requires a strategic framework to address. The problem impacts the entire organization, involves a large number of stakeholders inside and external to the FBI, is an issue currently challenging the organization and is one that will likely challenge the FBI well into the future. The issue of leadership is certainly on the Director's agenda as evidenced by ongoing initiatives relative to the Bureau's human resources capacity including organizational changes such as the creation of a human resources branch under an Executive Assistant Director that encompasses previously separate functions that were under the Administrative Services division and the Training and Development Division. Other changes implemented by the Director have included numerous programs such as term limits for supervisory special agents and eighteen month temporary duty assignments of term supervisory special agents to FBI Headquarters designed to encourage the development of FBI special agent supervisors, managers, and leaders as well as encourage individuals to consider serving in the leadership ranks of the FBI. The implementation of these transactional fixes to the FBI's leadership woes has had mixed results and the issue of leadership remains one that has no obvious solution. Resolution of the issue will likely require development of new programs or approaches, may require significant funding or reallocation of existing funding, will likely result in additional changes in staff, technologies and facilities, and could require legislative actions. The issue will likely require the support and attention of the highest levels of executive management in the FBI and is essential to the future of the organization as the consequences for not getting the FBI's leadership framework in order would likely include significant organizational restructuring, mission change or even mission loss.

³⁵ Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, 175.

C. ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL AGENT WORKFORCE AND LEADERSHIP POOL

What does the current FBI Special Agent leadership pool look like? Is it full of eager, yet inexperienced self-promoters? What is the all-volunteer workforce made up of and how is it dispersed throughout the FBI? Finally, how has the workforce evolved or changed during the past decade and what are the potential implications of this change? This section will attempt to answer these questions and provide a detailed analysis of the current Special Agent leadership workforce.

The table below depicts the growth in Special Agent resources within the FBI over the past ten years.

FBI Special Agent Workforce Comparison

POSITION	1997	2001	2007
Special Agent	8435	8985	9684
Special Agent Supervisor (GS-14/GS-15)	1565	1980	2679
Special Agent Executive (SES)	190	157	163
Total Special Agent Workforce	10190	11122	12526

Table 2. FBI Special Agent Workforce Comparison

A review of the above chart reveals the FBI's total cadre of Special Agents has increased by around 15% over the last ten years while its leadership has grown by 71 % at the mid-level, GS-14 and GS-15 ranks. Interestingly, the number of Senior Executive Service level jobs for FBI Special Agents has declined by 14 % during the last ten years. A look at the Special Agent leadership during 2001 shows the number of special agent

leadership jobs at around 24% or one quarter of the total agent population of the FBI. Today, approximately 30% of the total FBI agent population is in a management or leadership position at the GS-14 grade or above. This seems excessive.

**Comparison of Age and Years of Experience for FBI
Supervisory Special Agents (GS-14)**

		Years of FBI Experience				
		<5	5-10	10-15	15-20	>20
Age	>50			4	94	249
	45 - 49		21	95	295	131
	40 - 44		227	262	210	4
	35 - 39		349	143	7	
	30 - 34		42			
	25 - 29					
	Total:		639	504	606	384

Table 3. Comparison of Age and Years of Experience for FBI Supervisory Special Agents (GS-14)

In looking at the chart above, it appears 38 % of the GS-14 Supervisory Special Agent workforce is older than 45 years and will be eligible to retire within the next five years.³⁶ This chart also shows a great deal of experience at the mid-level supervisory ranks with 1796 of the 2433 or 74% of GS-14 supervisors having ten years or more on the job.

³⁶ Data for Tables 2 to 6 was provided by the National Association for Public Administration.

Comparison of Age and Years of Experience for FBI Supervisory Special Agents (GS-15)

		Years of FBI Experience				
		<5	5-10	10-15	15-20	>20
Age	>50				37	89
	45 - 49		3	22	106	71
	40 - 44		14	60	87	
	35 - 39		30	22	1	
	30 - 34		1			
	25 - 29					
	Total:		48	104	231	160

Table 4. Comparison of Age and Years of Experience for FBI Supervisory Special Agents (GS-15)

Like Table 3, the Table 4 above shows an experienced managerial workforce in the FBI. 391 of 543 or 72 % of FBI GS-15 mid-level managers have 15 or more years of experience. The number of supervisors serving at the GS-15 level with less than ten years in the FBI is a little surprising and probably represents the recent practice of allowing FBIHQ supervisors to compete for FBIHQ GS-15 jobs prior to serving as a field supervisor. This may save a manager/leader a move back to the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, but is it in the best interest for the organization to promote an individual to a higher level position with greater responsibilities at the GS-15 level without having proven themselves capable as a field supervisor? This does not seem to follow a logical developmental model as in the past, GS-15 level supervisors serving as Unit Chiefs at FBIHQ had all been field supervisors and were in the process of preparing for their next job as an Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC). The current practice of allowing GS-14 FBIHQ supervisors to compete for a Unit Chief Job without having

been field supervisors creates the potential of having individuals rate other GS-15 employees who have already held field supervisory positions and will be eligible to compete for ASAC jobs in the very near future. Raters who are rating officials for individuals that have already held the position the rater is going to does not seem to have a logical professional development sequence in mind.

Comparison of Age and Years of Experience for FBI Senior Executives (SES)

		Years of FBI Experience				
		<5	5-10	10-15	15-20	>20
Age	>50				12	57
	45 - 49			1	27	44
	40 - 44				20	1
	35 - 39		1			
	30 - 34					
	25 - 29					
	Total:		1	1	59	102

Table 5. Comparison of Age and Years of Experience for FBI Senior Executives (SES)

A review of the Table 5 above shows the majority of FBI SES Special Agent leaders, or around 86% are older than 45 years and are eligible to retire in five years or less. It also shows an extremely experienced workforce with all but two of the total SES employees serving for 15 years or more in the FBI. Viewed in context, having this large a percentage of SES employees at the retirement eligibility age should not be disturbing. In fact, all of the more than 350 General Officers in the United States Army are technically eligible to retire. The Army has designed its succession planning so that officers are

selected for the General Officer ranks after reaching retirement eligibility. Upon being selected they are required to commit to a minimum number of years of additional service at the General Officer ranks. As long as there is a full pipeline of qualified leaders ready to step in at the SES levels of the FBI, which based on the tables above is apparently the case, having such a large percentage at or close to retirement age should not be disturbing. A larger problem is the problem relating to inducing leaders at the SES level to continue their service to the FBI beyond reaching their “high three” salary at the SES level.

So why is there such concern by internal and external stakeholders about the excessive turnover of FBI executives? Perhaps the key phrase is “qualified” leaders. Has the organization prepared the leaders in the pipeline for the complex challenges of leading an organization? Just because there are the right numbers of potential applicants doesn’t mean the existing candidates possess the right education, background, skills, knowledge, and experiences to be effective. And if the organization does not have enough qualified leaders, what can and should it do to start growing or developing them?

According to NAPA, “...The median tenure in the current assignment of Special Agents-in-Charge (SAC) of FBI field offices is only 15 months, while that of current SES assignments in headquarters assignments is just 13 months. The FBI needs greater leadership stability and experience to support effective transition...various FBI executives say that the minimum tenure of SAC’s should be 36 months, although there can be exceptions. These officials explain that any shorter tenure hampers field office consistency and makes it extremely difficult to develop effective relationships with state and local officials-a key role for SAC’s. Several FBI officials say the headquarters executives need three to five years to ensure management initiatives are implemented.”³⁷

Jim Trinka, PhD., recently served as the Assistant Director of the FBI’s Training and Development Division. Trinka believes the FBI relies too much on what he refers to as the “Hero” model of leadership. When asked if he felt the FBI had enough leaders in its queue to effectively fill the SES ranks of the FBI, Trinka responded,

³⁷ Thornburgh, *Transforming the FBI: Roadmap to an Effective Human Capital Program*, 42-43.

...the FBI has many "hero leaders," but not enough to go around. The few that perform well in that role get burned out by the 18-20 hour days, the heavy weight of responsibility, and the constant scrutiny involved by undertaking that leadership style. It's not a "wrong" style, it's just difficult to maintain throughout an entire career and difficult to attain for those few who do aspire to leadership ranks. The solution lies in identifying a "desired" leadership model to ensure FBI future success and then developing the leadership competencies related to that style in all current and prospective leaders. Then the style must be reinforced by performance management practices, leadership career board selections, and other bonus/reward calculations.³⁸

Dr. Christopher Bellavita, a professor at the United States Naval Postgraduate School describes the framework of a "Hero's Journey" to analyze the experiences of administrators who helped revitalize the public sector. Bellavita looked at several public administrators who overcame obstacles to achieve success and observed each of the administrators embarked on a similar "journey" to reach accomplishment beyond what was expected. Bellavita opined the metaphor of the "Hero's journey" can provide a model for other administrators to emulate.³⁹ Bellavita and Trinka both talk of the sacrifices that go along with public service in the context of Hero leadership. Trinka believes the paucity of Hero leaders and the unrealistic expectation of internal and external stakeholders that all leaders be heroic, sets organizations up for revolving door leadership as heroic leaders simply cannot meet the expectations we place on them. Bellavita believes we can learn valuable lessons by studying the hero's journey and find behaviors worth emulating and perhaps even institutionalizing. While their views may appear at first glance to be diametrically opposed, upon reflection, they may both be correct. But before we can discuss what traits or principles should be exhibited by an FBI Senior Executive, it might be valuable to continue to look at the distribution of leaders currently residing in the FBI leadership system.

³⁸ Jim Trinka, interview by author conducted via telephone and e-mail, Washington, D.C., February 8, 2007.

³⁹ Christopher Bellavita, "The Public Administrator As Hero," *Administration and Society*, vol. 23 no. 2 (August 1991): 155-183.

Interestingly, the Senior Executive Service Unit (SESU) of the FBI's Human Resources Division recently conducted exit interviews of fifty FBI Senior Executive Service (SES) employees who left the FBI between 2003 and 2006. Several common or recurring themes appeared as factors influencing the decisions of the senior executives to leave the FBI. Around 31% of the respondents indicated they left due to recruitment by the private sector and the opportunity to make more money or other financial incentives. The overwhelming majority or 69% of the executives provided quality of life and/or career satisfaction related reasons for departing. The recurring themes included family issues (27%), organizational change (15%), diminished sense of value to the FBI (13%), stress or burn-out (10%), and being unable to make a difference or contribute further, due to circumstances beyond their control (4%).⁴⁰ Perhaps the FBI needs more "Hero-Leaders" at the SES level as described by Trinkka and Bellavita.

Mike Ferrence, a retired FBI Supervisory Special Agent and Unit Chief of the Leadership Development Unit offered the following observations,

While I firmly believe change is critical, I would want to know what gets in our way of producing the outstanding leaders we're capable of. What is being rewarded, what is being punished or not punished, what is being modeled by those currently in leadership positions that people want to replicate or want to avoid, in what ways the issues of litigation (or the fear of litigation) are preventing us from making decisions that will take us to the top of our game.

I firmly believe, as I've said before, it is not a lack of knowing what to do; it is the resolve to commit to having leaders that allow the organization to reach its potential. I also believe, and I have a bias, that the mindset of so many lawyers in senior positions, Director, Deputy Director, etc. as well as an army of lawyers in our Office of General Counsel has created a transactional mentality. Lawyers move ahead by staring in the rear view mirror. They see things rather than visions.⁴¹

Table 6, below, looks at the dispersion of FBI leadership positions at FBI Headquarters and in the field over the past ten years.

⁴⁰ Dave Bennett, interview by the author via telephone and e-mail, Washington, D.C., February 20, 2007.

⁴¹ Michael Ferrence, interview by author via telephone and e-mail, Morganton, North Carolina, February 7, 2007.

FBI Special Agent Leadership Staffing Comparison

	1997		2001		2007*	
GRADE	Field	FBIHQ	Field	FBIHQ	Field	FBIHQ
SES	63	127	73	84	76	87
GS-15	114	137	176	216	232	314
GS-14	880	434	964	624	1344	789
Totals:	1057	698	1213	924	1652	1190

*Data as of May 2006

Table 6. FBI Special Agent Leadership Staffing Comparison

A review of Table 5 shows some interesting trends over the past decade. The total number of leadership positions in the Special Agent ranks has increased by 62 %, as compared with a 15 % increase in total agent personnel. The largest increase has been at the GS-15 level at 118%, with an increase in 59% at the GS-14 level. Interestingly, the number of SES positions for Special Agents decreased by 14%.

The significant increase in supervisory personnel is likely explained by Director Mueller's vision of centralized planning and decentralized execution of operations in the post 9/11 FBI. It can also be explained by the creation of numerous new Headquarters units to combat terrorism and facilitate the FBI's transition to an intelligence-driven organization. Finally, the bifurcation of national security and criminal responsibilities in field divisions has seen the creation of several new Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge (ASAC) positions, leading to the creation of 56 new ASAC positions in the field since 2001.

So what does this mean? It means there is a much larger pool of candidates eligible to compete for the SES ranks of the FBI. It also means many of the individuals in ASAC positions will be unable to move up and as they remain in their positions longer, it will be difficult for rising GS-14 supervisors to compete for ASAC positions. This compression of leadership at the GS-15 level potentially develops a rich pool of candidates for temporary duty assignments to FBIHQ and to support counterterrorism and other priority program initiatives in the U.S. and abroad. It develops a large pool of qualified individuals to hold GS-15 jobs at FBIHQ. Once this pool of leaders is stabilized, there should be no reason to promote a GS-14 to the GS-15 level without having successfully completed a field supervisory assignment. FBI Special Agent supervisors who are unable to compete for positions at the next higher grade should be provided additional developmental opportunities at their existing grade. Finally, a robust cadre of GS-15 personnel should provide opportunities for the “best and the brightest” to be afforded outside educational opportunities to further develop them for the SES level. With most offices having at least two ASAC positions, there seems to be little reason for the top ten percent of the ASAC cadre to be prohibited from attending external executive development programs in preparation for the SES ranks. This will be important to improve the quality of the SES candidate pool as increasing the size of the pool does not necessarily mean the number of quality SES candidates increases nor does it mean the candidates have been armed with the requisite skills to be successful at the SES level.

Review of Table 6 also shows the total percentage of supervisors assigned to FBIHQ to be around 42%. The smallest percentage of leaders assigned to FBIHQ is at the GS-14 level with 37% of the positions located at headquarters. The largest percentage of leadership positions at FBIHQ is at the GS-15 level with 58% and 53% of the SES cadre calls the Washington metropolitan area home. While the smallest percentage of leaders at FBIHQ belongs to the GS-14 level, it represents the largest number of individuals. This may explain why so much effort and expense has been expended by the FBI to get individuals to come to FBIHQ. The 18-month temporary

duty program and five year “up or out” plan were designed to help fill vacancies in supervisory jobs at FBIHQ. Tom Shoop in an article he titled. “Promotion or Pink Slip” for *Government Executive* magazine writes,

In May, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on the FBI’s attempt to force field office agents to accept positions at Washington headquarters. About one fifth of the 1,500 top FBI jobs in Washington are vacant, the paper reported-partly because of the positions Director Mueller has created in recent years to beef up the agency’s counterterrorist capability. So the FBI is requiring field agents with five years managerial experience to apply for supervisory jobs in Washington. Those who refuse are dropped out of the managerial ranks and handed a pay cut...

...The FBI’s action comes at a time when many corporations, concerned about the ongoing threat of terrorism, are in the market for high-level security officers. FBI agents-especially those with management experience-are prime candidates for such jobs.⁴²

Former FBI Senior Executive Kevin Kendrick served at the SES level as the Deputy Assistant Director (DAD) of the Administrative Services Division (ASD) and as a Special Agent-in-Charge (SAC) of one of the FBI’s 56 field divisions. As such, Kendrick has seen the issues associated with FBI policies for getting qualified leaders into the system and the results or unintended consequences these practices have had on field operations. Concerning the five year “up or out” policy and the eighteen month temporary duty plan, Kendrick offered the following observations,

Although I believe progress has been made in addressing some systemic problems in terms of the voluntariness of our system, I do not believe the current manner in which careers are managed will serve the best interests of the FBI in the long-term. Our current management of the career development system seems to be reactive and not one in which individuals are given the skills or more importantly, the time, they need to develop leadership qualities which will hopefully serve them and their co-workers in the future. I base this qualified response on the following: the five-year “up or out” plan was necessary in order to ensure continued development of our future leaders in positions of higher responsibility. It sent the message that no longer would supervisors be allowed to sit in a particular office and aspire to nothing further as it relates to increased management responsibility. One might even argue that because there were no “continuing education” requirements for sitting supervisors, their ability to

⁴² Tom Shoop, “Promotion or Pink Slip,” *Government Executive* (June 15, 2006): 66.

perform their jobs in a manner consistent with prevailing law and Bureau rules might be impaired due to a lack of currency relative to skills acquisition. It is in this vein that I believe certain aspects of the system were at least, well-intentioned if not in fact, beneficial to the organization. On the other hand, career development was severely hampered when the Bureau instituted the “18-month” plan wherein individuals from field offices were eligible to receive supervisory credit for serving 18 months at HQ in a temporary duty capacity. This reaction to a shortage of applicants for HQ positions effectively created a caste system at HQ and bred much resentment (and rightfully so) on the part of those individuals who sought management responsibilities in the traditional fashion.⁴³

Dr Trinka believes the true impediment toward establishing leadership succession up to the SES level in the FBI lays in the inability of the organization to define what it wants its leaders to look and act like. Trinka advised,

No one has specified the “desired” leadership style for FBI leaders in terms of behavior and competencies. The 8 current competencies are so general as to be inconsequential (e.g., leadership is one...what isn't in that category?). Because of the lack of specificity in this regard, an unofficial “accepted” style of leadership has emerged and it is what I call “hero leadership.” In this model, the leader has to have the capacity to know everything about each situation, make all the decisions about plans and operations, be responsible for everything, be a great communicator, have a command presence, and generally rush into every situation and “rescue” the organization. That unofficial model is expected by both senior leadership and employees, encouraged, rewarded, promoted, and in fact demanded by all stakeholders. The truth is that few leaders can meet these expectations and there aren't enough of these types to fill all leadership posts. Because the apparent standards are so high, a decreasing number of agents aspire to leadership ranks and prefer to perform investigative duties that they love. Until this changes, nothing will change.⁴⁴

The FBI needs to develop a leadership culture and institutionalize leadership in a way that its best and brightest will unhesitatingly answer the call. Developing “Hero-Leaders” may represent a bridge too far as such leaders emerge infrequently and typically represent a small percentage of any organization’s leadership. Institutionalizing heroic behavior on the part of all leaders may represent an unattainable goal. However, developing a culture of leadership in the FBI’s Special Agent ranks would undoubtedly

⁴³ Kevin Kendrick, interview by author, conducted via telephone and e-mail, Midland, Michigan, February 19, 2007.

⁴⁴ Trinka, interview.

represent a move in the right direction for the agency. Once a leadership culture emerges, the organization will have an obligation to prepare them for the rigors of leadership tailored for each successive level. Leaders will need to learn how to lead themselves, how to lead others and ultimately how to lead the organization. The next section will attempt to articulate the strategic vision for FBI leadership and define a specific strategic goal that if realized will represent the “just one thing” necessary to drive the FBI toward attainment of its strategic vision.

D. JUST ONE THING: DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGIC VISION AND STRATEGIC CHANGE GOAL

Shortly after 9/11, a management study of the FBI commissioned by the Department of Justice and conducted by Arthur Anderson Consulting, LLP was released. The executive summary prophetically described the new normalcy of the post 9/11 Bureau:

Today, the FBI faces its most serious crisis in history, yet the Bureau is faced with another important challenge; to support its agents with everything they need to perform their jobs. As serious as the current crisis is, it will not be the only crisis the organization will face in the coming years. The lack of an effective organization structure, inadequate information technology, poor personnel practices and crisis management deficiencies are no longer just good government issues. They have a real impact on the operations of the Bureau. Especially in the wake of September 11, 2001, the Bureau does not have the luxury of ‘business as usual’.

The report goes on to say some of the recommendations will require significant financial and human resources and will require top-level commitment and support to resolve. It identifies several Bureau-wide issues including the need to ensure accountability, the need to capture best practices and a greater focus on management issues and on strategic thinking. While the report recognizes the complexity and diversity of the FBI’s mission, it opined a lack of commitment by the FBI to make changes would see the organization not only fall short of being the world’s pre -eminent law enforcement agency, but would prevent it from becoming a well-managed world class organization with recognized best practices.

Finally, the report identified a single compensating strength that offset the FBI's weaknesses in a time of crisis. The report identifies the employees' dedication to the mission and the agent's esprit de corps as the backbone of the organization. The report conceded without the remarkable ethos of the FBI agent, the ineffective organizational structure would likely lead to even more serious consequences.⁴⁵

Ed Stephenson of the National Academy of Public Administration has looked at the FBI's human resources practices and is of the opinion,

The Bureau has an incredible set of potential leaders that could fill all the needed requirements. However, the Bureau does not have a process to identify, develop, and select the right leader for the right position.⁴⁶

FBI whistleblower Mike German was more pointed in his assessment of the FBI's leadership ranks. When asked if the current system of individual career management was adequate to staff the FBI's leadership needs, German stated:

No. The only leaders I ever saw in the FBI were the experienced GS-13s out in the field. They were the ones who knew what needed to be done to work the cases, big and small, that make the FBI the successful organization it is. They were who the GS-14s, GS-15s and SACs relied on to get everything done. That the GS-13s had to accomplish this in spite of an obstructionist bureaucracy, particularly at headquarters where supervisors with the least knowledge of the situation often impeded or delayed investigations, further demonstrates the talents these agents bring to the FBI. But there was no incentive for these agents to go into management, and in fact great disincentives- multiple moves, no autonomy, dull work, no actual authority. In my experience the individuals who went into management were often agents who were less than successful on the street, bored or unhappy with agent work, and looking for an opportunity to move to another part of the country (rather than to innovate or to further develop bureau programs). The management system as it existed when I left the FBI prized unquestioning compliance with the directives of their superiors above all else, regardless if doing what their superiors said was appropriate or not. This meant the worst possible leadership traits survived as individuals moved up the ladder.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Arthur Anderson Consulting, LLP, *Management Study of the Federal Bureau of Investigation* (Washington, D.C.: Arthur Anderson, 2001), 1-4.

⁴⁶ Stephenson, interview.

⁴⁷ Mike German, interview with author, via telephone e-mail, February 19, 2007.

Mike Ferrence is a retired FBI supervisor and the former Unit Chief of the FBI's Leadership Development Unit. His background and experiences make him an FBI insider that is uniquely qualified to comment on the state of the Bureau's leadership. When asked if the FBI is well-led, Ferrence very candidly observed,

As in all organizations the FBI has a range of leaders from outstanding to very poor. The crisis it faces is in the inconsistency of leadership skills and abilities. The range between the best and the worst has to be narrowed toward the top of the range. We generally hire individuals who are successful in what they were doing prior to employment with the FBI. Some were excellent in their technical fields or outstanding in their professions, neither of which necessarily equates to excellence in leadership. We sometimes confuse technical proficiency, well developed communications and interpersonal skills as leaders.

What I believe we should consider is an analysis of current and former leaders based on success criteria that was identified by General Colin Powell when he defined leadership during a presentation at the FBI Academy several years ago. He said, 'Leadership is having people follow you around a corner just to see where you are going next.' Leadership does not exist without follower. There has to be trust, confidence in your ability, and a track record of success.

Often we look for someone else, or another profession (Military, Politicians, Private Sector Executives, Academia, etc.) to define what leadership is, and hence what we should be. While they all have great models and examples of what leadership is, I believe leadership is defined in a context. We are not military generals fighting a war, Congressmen and Senators serving our constituents, Fortune 100 CEOs building an economic empire, Scholarly Professors lighting the way for the next generation, we are all of them at one time. As we continue to find the great solution, we fail to understand the making of a great leader in the FBI as a patch work of skills, talents, intuition, emotional intelligence, and much more. Further, it is a continuous process, a journey to excellence rather than a finite state.

As in all organization, we tend to regress to the mean. Our great leaders are held back by the mistakes of poor leadership, by external forces that constantly look for 'who screwed up', rather than trying to understand the system forces that created the problem in the first place.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Ferrence, interview.

If the FBI redefined the mean through a structured and professional leadership development program tied to meaningful work experiences and evaluated in a fair, consistent and unbiased manner designed to provide feedback and encourage improvement, the FBI could redefine its mean as a culture of leadership excellence.

Another alumni of the FBI Leadership Development Unit is recently retired Supervisory Special Agent Roger Trott who currently serves as the Executive Director of the FBI National Academy Associates. Trott championed the cause of adopting the professional military education model as a method to professionally develop FBI Supervisory Special Agents and several of the initiatives occurring in recent times have happened as a result of Trot's foresight. When asked if the FBI is an organization that is well-led, Trott had the following to say,

The FBI has some extremely capable leaders; however, it does not have the wide-spread and consistent level of outstanding leadership necessary to meet the post 9/11 complex demands on the organization. These demands require that the FBI simultaneously restructure internally, acquire the operational capability of an intelligence service, maintain its traditional law enforcement mission, combine the new and old missions to thwart terrorism, and rapidly strengthen its cyber and technological wherewithal.

The FBI hires highly qualified individuals into the agent work force. These individuals, for the most part, either already possess honed leadership skills or are capable of acquiring them rapidly. The FBI's agent selection process, the extremely large number of highly qualified applicants, and the relatively small number of agents hired has traditionally resulted in a very competitive and highly selective hiring process. This has resulted in the average hiring age of new agents to remain between 29-31 years of age for the past thirty years, (although they are eligible to hire at 23) and has led to very experienced, well educated, and highly motivated individuals entering the agent work force. Unfortunately, after hiring these individuals their professional development is, for the vast majority, determined almost exclusively by their on-the-job experiences and personal initiative. Similarly, those agents entering the career development program to take on additional leadership and management responsibilities, along with the more complex operational and strategic organizational problems, will historically get very limited opportunities to improve their higher level thinking skills and

increase their professional job knowledge. Again their professional development will be based upon their on-job-experiences and an occasional leadership seminar.⁴⁹

Interesting that the comments of former FBI supervisors suggest the FBI does not have enough qualified leaders and argues for bringing up the mean through a systematic approach as an alternative to the FBI's current leadership woes. If the FBI is an organization full of leaders, why is it apparently so poorly led? What are the dynamics that prevent it from going from good to great? The FBI must learn to effectively harness the incredible talent residing in its Special Agent workforce in order to create a culture of high performing leaders.

Clearly there are some outstanding leaders emerging in the FBI. It is just as clear that this is not occurring as a result of any effort on the part of the FBI, but rather in spite of it. Outstanding leaders develop through their own initiative in today's FBI. They are constantly being challenged to "save" the organization and have successfully compensated for the organization's demonstrated shortcomings. So what if the FBI made a commitment to bring up the mean? The Bureau needs to concentrate its leadership development efforts not on the high performer or high potential leader, but on the lowest common denominator. That simple step would relieve some of the pressure on today's "Hero-Leaders." Such an investment in the FBI's leadership would drive the FBI to achieving its optimal performance as an organization. So how do we get started?

The first step might be to envision an end-state. What can be achieved by creating this culture of leadership excellence? While it would be nice to set an overarching goal that is achievable, the real value of this exercise is to establish something to continue to strive toward, even if it is unattainable. For the sake of argument and in order to further develop our thoughts, the strategic vision needs to be defined as something truly great and something easy to understand. To drive our discussion, the strategic vision for the Bureau is: ***"An FBI led by the world's best law enforcement and national security leaders."***

⁴⁹ Roger Trott, interview by author via telephone and e-mail, Quantico, Virginia, February 13, 2007.

Okay. So how does the FBI move closer to that end-state? What is the “just one thing” preventing the FBI from perfection or at least becoming the pre-eminent law enforcement and national security agency that is emulated the world over? What is the best first step toward a renewed “Brand FBI,” remade through a culture of excellence in leadership?

FBI Executive Assistant Director (EAD) Don Packham, the FBI’s Chief Human Resources Officer, has tremendous experience in the transformation of human resources in a large organization, having served in a variety of human resource roles, most recently with British Petroleum where Mr. Packham was Senior Vice President of Human Resources for the Americas, overseeing human resources for over 50,000 employees. Mr. Packham graciously commented on the current system of individual career management at the FBI:

Taking the definition of leadership in the FBI to mean SES level posts, the current approach of individual career management has limitations. The process relies on individuals applying for leadership positions using a self-assessment tool detailing their qualifications in the five core competencies of leadership and management. A Board reviews the candidates and recommends appointments to the Director. The strengths of this process include individual preference, competency based decisions, and sourcing that takes advantage of the depth and breadth of experiences from bureau and non bureau perspectives. The limitations are bounded by a reactionary approach to a vacancy, lack of a total understanding of the bench strength and an insufficient opportunity to provide training and development for a specific post. A more deliberate approach to development of leaders would more likely provide a richer pool of candidates. The system today relies on volunteers in the main the future could better be served with a mix of volunteers and recruitment into the senior ranks.

EAD Packham further commented on some of the impediments to change in the FBI Special Agent leadership system when he stated,

The impediments to change are our past practice, concern over past lawsuits, assumption that past experience is a predictor of future success as a leader, and resistance to early identification of hi potential leadership talent. Most significantly the leadership roles require more than just managing but rather it involves leadership through setting the vision or context, sharing and setting direction, outlining boundaries and holding

people accountable for their deliverables. While early on in a career, an individual may display outstanding traits of leadership we may not acknowledge or have awareness of that potential. To tell an employee they have EAD potential would be pre-selection and not allowed in the current system. Early identification would enable a set of experiences and development options along a path to leadership.

Leaders must also have some degree of subject matter knowledge. Selecting an agent with a CPA to be AD Finance on the basis that they have been an ASAC, SAC is probably lacking in the full breadth of experience required to be a leader who inspires vision and direction from a world of finance and accounting. Sometimes we may be mixing a management role and a leadership role.⁵⁰

Roger Trott offered the following observations concerning impediments to change in the FBI's leadership:

Some would argue that the current amount of simultaneous organizational change at the headquarters level in the FBI has reached the point of chaos. The number and scope of personnel, operational, and administrative changes are often poorly coordinated, and in some cases the results of one new initiative are contrary or even counter to another. In this environment of chaotic change it has become extremely difficult for executive leadership to identify and act on priority strategic initiatives such as comprehensively developing its leaders and successfully drive these high priority initiatives to fruition. There are a number of significant obstacles to be overcome. Career advancement in the FBI is tied very closely to the number and frequency of relocations that a leader and his family can bear. Below the SES pay grades there is also considerable pay compression which when combined with relocation and now a new, "up or out policy" provide ample reasons for many qualified leaders to step aside and not pursue long-term career advancement.⁵¹

Retired FBI executive Kevin Kendrick observed,

I do not believe our current system of career management is adequate to fill the leadership needs the Bureau currently has or will have in the future. Our leadership development is situational and is geared neither toward identifying potential leaders nor creating an atmosphere in which situational leadership attributes can be developed. The basic problem is that we have had far too many changes in the career development system and far too many improvisations to "build" a system that will meet this

⁵⁰ Donald Packham, interview by author via e-mail, Washington, D.C., February 11, 2007.

⁵¹ Trott, interview.

need. We have far too many people being promoted after increasingly abbreviated tenures in supervisory/management roles and consequently, the opportunities to exhibit leadership are literally few and far between.⁵²

Kendrick further commented on the impediments or obstacles he believes are inhibiting the manner, FBI leadership practices are being emplaced or changed,

There are numerous obstacles inhibiting the FBI's ability to identify, select and develop candidates. Among these are the desire to "be all things to all people" and instilling a false sense of urgency in everything we undertake. Adding to this is the unceasing litany of oversight provided to the FBI, primarily through Congress, which necessitates adherence to artificial deadlines; taking away time which could be better utilized providing developmental opportunities for our prospective leaders. Most significantly, however, the Bureau has historically subscribed to the notion that it had to be the architect of everything used by the Bureau (e.g., the 10 MM pistol). That same mentality was applied to our career development processes and consequently, methods tried and true in the private sector and other parts of government were eschewed for internal fixes.⁵³

Finally, Kendrick believes the current constant movement of SES level leaders is having a deleterious impact on the FBI, particularly in the field. Kendrick explained,

The movement of managers in our SES ranks is having a tremendously negative impact on our relationships in the field. I don't believe HQ has examined this phenomenon adequately enough or seriously enough. The attitude seems to be one of "the locals will get over it" as opposed to looking at the credibility gaps we've created. I see this as a serious threat to the FBI's long-term ability to accomplish our mission as (Police) Chiefs and others see that door continue to revolve.⁵⁴

Moving the FBI from a system of individual career management to a system of organizational or institutional professional development through a leadership pipeline model appears to be the most logical way for the Bureau to close the leadership gap between outstanding and very poor in its Special Agent leaders toward the higher end. Providing emerging leaders with structured opportunities spaced over a twenty to thirty year career in a predictive manner not only sets conditions for the success of the individual, but also provides the organization with a framework to develop effective

⁵² Kendrick, interview.

⁵³ Kendrick, interview.

⁵⁴ Kendrick, interview.

organizational leadership development and succession planning around. As the National Academy of Public Administration report on Human Capital in the FBI recently pointed out,

Successful transformation of the Bureau's human capital management will require leadership that is characterized by continuity, experience, organizational knowledge, and technical competence, as well as the ability to inspire confidence and respect...Achieving some degree of stability in leadership is a key challenge for the Bureau.⁵⁵

To that end, the FBI needs to establish a strategic change goal of quickly moving the FBI from the current or "As Is" system of individual career management to a "To Be" system of organizational or institutional professional development manifested as a leadership pipeline. This represents the "just one thing" that will likely produce immediate transformational results and work toward the establishment of a leadership culture within the FBI, a culture that has as its vision an FBI led by the world's best law enforcement and national security leaders.

⁵⁵ Thornburgh et al., *Transforming the FBI: Roadmap to an Effective Human Capital Program*, 20.

IV. EXPLORATION OF COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS

Don't find fault, find a remedy.

-Henry Ford

A. THE STRATEGY CANVAS: A COMPARISON OF LEADERSHIP SYSTEMS

As of today, the FBI does not have an adequate or comprehensive leadership selection and development program or succession plan. In fact, the National Academy of Public Administration recently completed a comprehensive review of the FBI's human capital plan and found that a significant obstacle to the success of the FBI's overall transformation efforts is its unwieldy human capital plan.⁵⁶

The American public would likely be shocked to know that the primary prerequisites for advancement are three years as an FBI Special Agent (two of which are spent as a Probationary special Agent or PSA), a "Meets Expectations" performance appraisal, and completion and verification of a job application. They would further be surprised to find out that while management applicants are required to take a Leadership Skills Assessment test, until very recently they were not required to pass the test in order to advance. Managers/leaders basically volunteer for the Executive Development and Selection Program (EDSP) and apply for specific jobs. They are selected through review of an application they submit that is verified by individuals the applicant identifies. There is no interview or review of personnel records or performance appraisals as an indicator of future performance. The application is reviewed and compared against other applications submitted for the same position by a career board convened by the hiring entity and validated by an FBIHQ career board, so it is not without some oversight. As of 2003, applicants for Special Agent management positions were required to take the Leadership Skills Assessment (LSA), a test instituted as a result of a lawsuit. However, applicants were not required to pass the LSA and test scores are not available for review by career boards. Therefore, the only logical reason for taking the test was to meet the

⁵⁶ Thornburgh et al., *Transforming the FBI: Roadmap to an Effective Human Capital Program*, xiii.

requirements mandated by the Court as a result of the lawsuit. Most major metropolitan police departments in the United States have developed a legally defensible “Sergeant’s Exam” to identify and screen applicants for management and leadership positions within their organizations. Intelligence services have similar systems to identify and promote people. This is a recognized industry standard to try and obtain the most qualified and best individuals to lead an organization. Is there any reason America’s pre-eminent law enforcement agency shouldn’t be able to do the same? The institution of the LSA has served as a good first step toward the development of a valid entry mechanism into the leadership ranks of the FBI, but it has not been without controversy. The LSA and the career board process continue to have problems with transparency in the way they are utilized to identify and select leaders in today’s FBI.

Psychological, personality, and leadership style testing should be part of the leadership selection process at all levels. It helps identify individuals who may have flaws that could be problematic in a specific position or set of circumstances. If former FBI employee and convicted spy Robert Hanssen had been psychologically tested, he may have been uncovered before he was in a position to do harm. Certain personality types do not do well under pressure. Is that the type of individual the FBI wants leading a contingent in Baghdad? Furthermore, periodic retesting can serve as indicators of changed circumstances and might assist in prevention of stress related health issues or agent suicides. The FBI mandates psychological testing for its undercover agents. Why shouldn’t similar testing be mandated for its decision makers? Such testing could also serve as a developmental tool providing valuable feedback for managers/leaders to make adjustments and improve their effectiveness. It might also mitigate some of the work-life issues or job dissatisfaction issues recently departed SES personnel identified as driving their decisions to depart the FBI.

As recommended by the National Academy of Public Administration, the FBI should establish a leadership development program and succession plan. The FBI does not currently have a comprehensive succession planning or leadership development strategy for SES or for subordinate levels of Special Agent managers. Positions are filled on a case-by-case basis and the successor usually arrives well after the incumbent leaves,

providing for no continuity of leadership. There is no formal SES candidate development program and formal leadership development at the GS-14 and GS-15 levels remains scant. Turnover at the FBI's SES level is excessive.⁵⁷

The FBI is well known for the leadership development opportunities it offers to its local, state, federal, tribal, and international law enforcement and intelligence service counterparts. The Leadership Development Institute at the FBI Academy offers courses for law enforcement and intelligence executives from outside of the Bureau. These courses include the prestigious eleven-week FBI National Academy (FBINA) that offers graduate and undergraduate level education courses for selected executives. Approximately 300 executives participate in this program four times annually. The FBINA is so highly regarded that many U.S. police agencies require FBINA graduation as a pre-requisite for executive management or Chief of Police jobs. Other executive management training courses offered by the FBI include the National Executive Institute (NEI), a program consisting of three one-week sessions for chief executive officers of the nation's largest municipal, county, and state law enforcement organizations; the Law Enforcement Executive Development Seminar (LEEDS), a two-week seminar for chief executives of the nation's mid-sized law enforcement agencies; Regional Command Colleges in twenty areas modeled after LEEDS; and the FBI Leadership Fellows Program, a year-long leadership development program with six months spent at Quantico and six months at the sponsoring agency.

Conversely, the FBI Leadership Development Institute (LDI) offers only two required courses for FBI Special Agent leaders/managers. These courses consist of the Supervisor Development Institute (SDI), a one-week seminar for new managers at the GS-14 level and a two-week Executive Development Institute (EDI) that is a pre-requisite for selection as an ASAC. What is preventing FBI Special Agent leaders from educational opportunities that are on par or exceed the opportunities the FBI provides for its local, state, federal, and international partners? The FBI recently began affording opportunities for its executives to attend the training programs it offers to outside agencies, but the number of FBI employees able to take advantage of these programs

⁵⁷Thornburgh et al., *Transforming the FBI: Roadmap to an Effective Human Capital Program*, xviii.

remains quite small. There are other competitive educational opportunities such as attendance at military command and staff schools, law enforcement command colleges, attendance at the Naval Postgraduate School and the like available for FBI managers, but these opportunities for Special Agent supervisors are the exception rather than the rule.

The FBI Strategic Plan 2004-2009 establishes several strategic goals relating to an overall human capital strategy. Among the three goals worth exploring are:

- Establish a human capital capability that ensures the FBI maintains a preeminent workforce at all times.⁵⁸

This lofty goal may be the driver behind the temporary duty assignments instituted to lure individuals to FBIHQ as term GS-14 supervisors for eighteen months. A review of the plan determined financial incentives significantly contributed to increased Executive Development and Selection Program (EDSP) participation with a total of 581 selections occurring during all of fiscal year (FY) 2005 compared to 464 selections during the first five months of FY 2006 after the plan was enacted and the financial incentives were approved.⁵⁹ While this plan filled an identified void at FBIHQ in the workforce, it did not address the larger issue relating to providing FBI managers/leaders with challenging assignments to further their career development. Eighteen months may be long enough to effectively learn a job, but it is doubtful any meaningful long-term change can be effected in such a limited period of time. A better fix would have been to make FBIHQ assignments more attractive by limiting them to three years and providing agents with a housing allowance to offset the prohibitive price of housing in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. The military successfully uses housing allowances to position their people in high-cost areas throughout the world without punitive effect. The FBI could use the same model to make assignment to high-cost areas more palatable. FBIHQ assignments need to be three years long to provide overall continuity to the implementation of the FBI's strategic plan.

⁵⁸ Robert Mueller (Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation), "Section III: Human Capital" in *Federal Bureau of Investigation Strategic Plan 2004-2009* (Washington, D.C.:FBI, 2004), 74.

⁵⁹ Bennett, interview.

- Develop a system that dramatically expands the total training and career development of the FBI's professional workforce.⁶⁰

The strategic plan identifies several actions to drive the realization of the above goal focused on expanding the Office of Training and Development, increasing training of new SA's in the priority programs of counter-terrorism, counterintelligence and cyber, capitalizing on latest technologies as training mechanisms, transforming the FBI National Academy, improving technology, and expanding partnerships and relationships with premier academic institutions to develop executive training opportunities that expose current and future FBI leaders to the latest theories and practices in management, leadership, and professional development. This is an excellent first step, but falls short unless the FBI develops a comprehensive internal management/leadership training program to develop its leaders at all levels and prepare them for successive levels of responsibility and command. The FBI should not depend upon outside institutions to train, evaluate, and educate its leaders. Outside training opportunities should enhance or augment the skills the FBI provides.

- Establish Career development and succession planning initiatives that identify future leaders, and that further forecast the matriculation of each new wave of senior FBI executives through important leadership positions within the organization to ensure continuity.⁶¹

The priority actions indicated in the strategic plan include evaluating and acquiring software to track career progression of future senior executives, formalizing a mentoring program, develop instruments to gauge skills and interests, and develop an executive council to track the careers of future executives. It falls short by not building in limits to address succession planning. Leadership positions in the FBI should allow enough time for an individual to be evaluated, a minimum of three years for most assignments as this is the length the FBI uses in its inspection process. Three annual performance appraisals and an inspection review would serve as an excellent indicator of future potential based upon past performance. There should also be overlap between outgoing and incoming personnel in all leadership positions in order to provide continuity to the overall strategic plan. Establishing term limits would provide predictability for the

⁶⁰ Mueller, *Federal Bureau of Investigation Strategic Plan 2004-2009*, 76-77.

⁶¹ Mueller, *Federal Bureau of Investigation Strategic Plan 2004-2009*, 81-82.

individual as well as for the organization. Forecast of future leaders should have as one of its components review or performance appraisals that are tied to rater profiles of how senior raters have rated all the employees under their command. Having the next job simply isn't good enough. Measuring performance at each and every job is essential to separating average or marginal leaders from enlightened leaders. It also serves to provide valuable developmental feedback to leaders.

Ed Stephenson, an employee of the National Academy of Public Administrators has looked closely at the FBI's human capital functions and opined,

The Bureau does not have a systematic way to identify, develop, and select its leaders. Such a process, often called succession planning, is critical to an organization's ability to maximize leadership and ensure continuity of operations. Instead, the Bureau relies on self selection of individuals to bid on executive openings. This results not only in a complicated, paper-intensive process, that often leaves critical positions with permanent leaders vacant, but also creates a high level of churn through positions. As NAPA has pointed out the resulting short time agents fill positions makes leaders less effective and makes developing relationships with State and Local law enforcement officials difficult. In addition, the continued use of agents in administrative management positions is questionable. Most agent executives who fill positions in such areas as [Human Resource] or finance have little expertise in the area, generally don't view the assignment as important to their career, and leave the position after serving only a year or two. This results in positions being filled by officials who don't know the subject and do not stay long enough to learn the basics, much less have the time to make needed changes to the administrative processes.⁶²

The FBI needs to start looking at its leadership in terms of an overarching system and move from the current system of individual career management to a system of institutional or organizationally driven professional development in the FBI's Special Agent workforce. This would represent the type of transformational change needed to secure the FBI's future as America's pre-imminent law enforcement and domestic intelligence agency. A renaissance of leadership in the FBI's Special Agent ranks is required if the organization is going to operate at its maximum potential. Leadership needs to become the essential system from which all other FBI systems, programs, and

⁶² Stephenson, interview.

activities flow. The question to be explored next is how should the FBI identify, select, develop, evaluate and place exceptional leaders? Those individuals in its Special Agent ranks with the greatest capacity to motivate and inspire, develop and mentor, articulate a vision and provide guidance and direction to achieve specific goals represent the future of the organization. What must the FBI do to achieve the strategic vision of being led by the world's best law enforcement and national security leaders?

As previously observed, a report conducted by a panel of the National Academy of Public Administration in September 2005 concluded the Bureau does not have a comprehensive leadership development strategy for the Senior Executive Service or for subordinate levels of management. The report further stated the FBI has recognized that succession planning must be driven by the needs of the organization and cannot rely on the voluntary career choices of individuals. To that end, the panel recommended the FBI should create a comprehensive and managed plan for designing and implementing a complete system for succession planning and leader development.⁶³

Despite these recommendations, the FBI relies on a system where individuals continue to drive their own succession planning. The implementation of initiatives such as the five year "up or out" policy or the eighteen month temporary duty program indicates the FBI continues to be wedded to previous practices and a system of volunteerism. These incremental changes look a lot like prior policies implemented by the FBI. Perhaps a better solution to be explored would be to look beyond the current system of individual career management based upon volunteerism, individual desires and personal relationships. The FBI should explore a more comprehensive solution that focuses more appropriately on the needs of the organization as its primary driving force. To that end, a comparison of the two systems of individual career management and organizational professional development is in order.

Figure 3 below graphically depicts two alternatives for succession planning and leader development in the FBI⁶⁴:

⁶³ Thornburgh, et al., *Transforming the FBI: Roadmap to an Effective Human Capital Program*, xv.

⁶⁴ W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne, *Blue Ocean Strategy* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Publishing Corporation, 2005), 32.

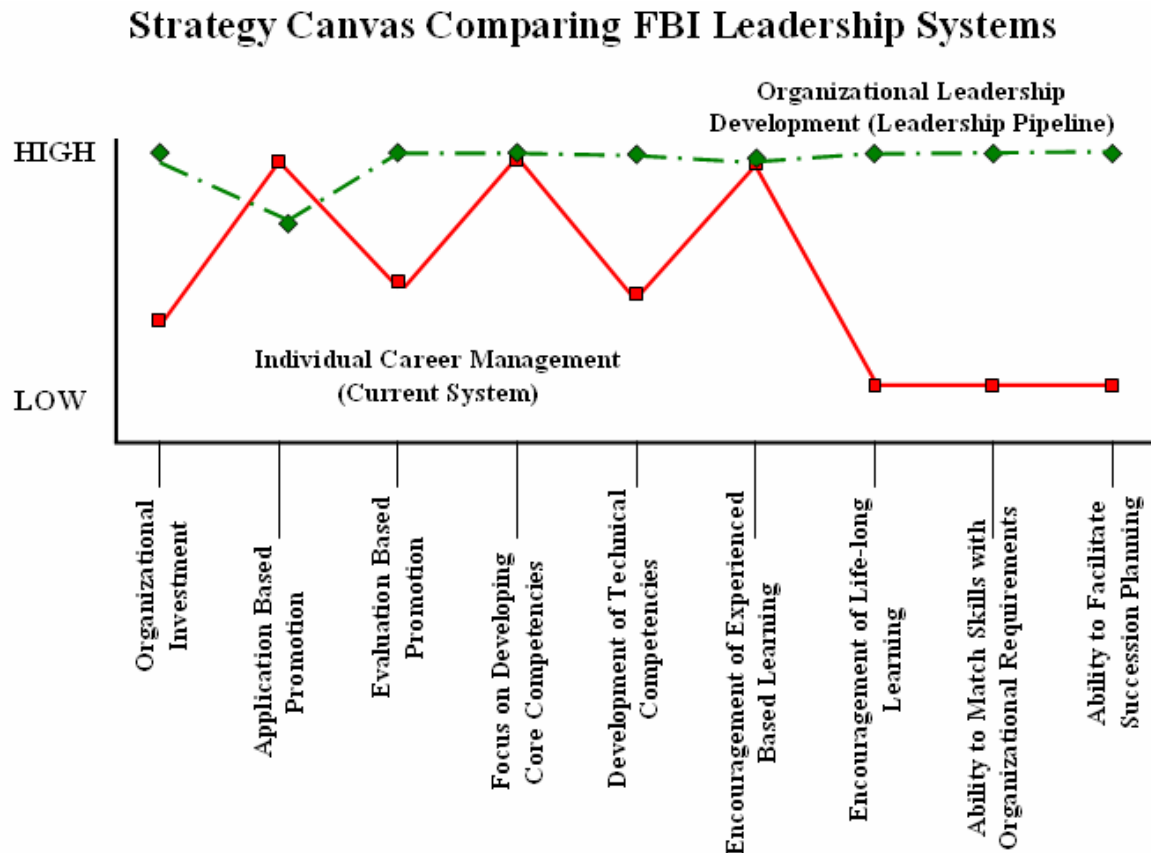


Figure 3. Strategy Canvas Comparing FBI Leadership Systems (From W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne *Blue Ocean Strategy*, 2005)

The strategy canvas as described by W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne in their book, *Blue Ocean Strategy* is an analytical framework that is both diagnostic and action oriented. The authors argue the value of a strategy canvas is its ability to capture the current state as well as provide an understanding of various factors impacting on the current state and the suggested alternatives.⁶⁵

Figure 3 adapted from *Blue Ocean Strategy*, depicts the “As Is” or current system of individual career management, represented by the solid red line compared with the “To Be” or a proposed system of institutional or organizational professional career development represented by the broken green line. The vertical axis of the strategy canvas assigns a value from low to high while the horizontal axis identifies specific items for comparison between the current and proposed FBI leadership systems.

⁶⁵ Kim and Mauborgne, *Blue Ocean Strategy*, 25.

The current system requires a minimal investment by the FBI as it relies on volunteers and requires minimal resources to manage selection, professional development, and placement. The proposed system will require additional investment by the FBI and may require significant increases in financial and human resources. The current system relies primarily on a review of an individual's verified application as the method for selection of a leader for the next level while the proposed system would require the submission of an application along with consideration of the individual's performance appraisals, interviews and letters of recommendation, including recommendations made by individuals from outside of the FBI, and would be a more thorough evaluation of the candidate's potential for advancement. This represents the differences between an application based assessment and one that is evaluation based. While both systems focus on developing and building on the FBI's eight core competencies for management, this may not be the best method for evaluating the potential of the FBI's future leaders as the competencies are fairly vague and are not tied directly to the current system to evaluate performance. The above chart illustrates how the two systems either are or could be tied to core competencies. Both systems also encourage experienced based learning as most of the learning occurs through on-the-job training in the current system and the proposed system would seek to maximize learning by placing the candidates in jobs that build on existing training, skills, and education while matching individual backgrounds, skills and experiences to organizational needs. The proposed system, by its nature, encourages life-long learning across all levels of leadership. Finally, the proposed system provides the framework for succession planning, while the current system does very little to promote succession planning. The strategy canvas serves as a starting point for comparing the two systems. Further exploration and analysis of the current and proposed leadership systems are required for the FBI to fully understand the implications of changing its current practices.

B. ANALYSIS OF STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS OR CHALLENGES FOR FBI LEADERSHIP SYSTEMS

The establishment of leadership as a strategic issue is merely the first step in instituting a strategic change. Before meaningful change can occur, it is necessary to

explore the internal and external environments in order to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats or challenges the organization faces.⁶⁶ Table 7 compares the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats or challenges between the FBI's existing "As Is" leadership system of individual career management with the "To Be" or proposed system of organizational professional development.⁶⁷ The graphical analysis further links each of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats or challenges to the various business or leadership lines or components that make up the leadership systems. The purpose of linking the analysis to the components of the two leadership systems is to further explore the value one system has over the other in making the argument for strategic change. For the purpose of this analysis and subsequent analysis of the "As Is" and "To Be" FBI leadership systems, the critical lines of business or "leadership lines" include *identification* of high performing candidates for leadership positions, the *selection* of these individuals through a competitive process, the professional *development* of these individuals through training and education linked to job-related experiences, *evaluation* of high performing leaders at every level as a predictor of future potential and as a developmental tool, and *placement* of the most qualified individuals in a deliberate manner to maximize their contributions to the FBI.

⁶⁶ Kim and Mauborgne, *Blue Ocean Strategy*, 150.

⁶⁷ Robert Bach, "Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats or Challenges for FBI Leadership Systems," (lecture presented at the Naval Postgraduate School on January 10, 2007).

Risks and Capabilities	"As Is" Performance (Individual Career Management)	Value Proposition and Critical Links	"To Be" Performance (Leadership Pipeline)
Strengths	-Volunteerism-Motivated Leaders -Application Based Promotion -Emphasis on Core Competencies	-Identification -Selection -Professional Development -Evaluation -Placement	-Results/Evaluation Based Promotion -Encourages learning and develops technical skills -Assists Human Resource Management and Succession Planning -Develops strategic agility
Weaknesses	-Unpredictable pool of Candidates -Development limited to Experiences -Performance Appraisals minimally linked to promotion	-Identification -Selection -Professional Development -Evaluation -Placement	-May require significant increase in funding and resources to implement -Individual choice limited
Opportunities	-Good leaders emerge -Allows for self-sufficiency of participants	-Identification -Selection -Professional Development -Evaluation -Placement	-NAPA recommendation for emulation of military model of leadership development/pipeline for government -Natural extension of post 9/11 transformation of FBI
Threats or Challenges	-GAO Recommended System	-Identification -Selection -Professional Development -Evaluation -Placement	-Replacement for system that has been in place for existing generations of current FBI leadership

Table 7. Analysis of Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for FBI Leadership Systems (From lecture by Dr. Robert Bach, Naval Postgraduate School on January 10, 2007).

The current system relies on volunteers to staff the leadership positions in the special agent ranks of the FBI. Core leadership competencies are stressed and in order to successfully compete for supervisory positions, candidates must have also demonstrated proficiency in the core competencies for the non-managerial Special Agent job category. Selection is primarily based on an application submitted by the candidate and compared with other applicants for the same position. Candidates who master the art of writing to specific "anchors" in the application process generally do better in the career boards. Selection is based more upon how well the application is written to the "anchors" than a comprehensive evaluation of the past performance or the actual or current qualifications of the candidate. Once an individual is selected for a leadership position, professional development in the form of education and training remains the responsibility of the

individual. There are some limited education and training opportunities available to FBI managers and supervisors and every Special Agent leader must attend the Supervisor's Development Institute, a one week in-service at the GS-14 grade level and the Executive Development Institute (EDI) at the GS-15 level. Development is almost entirely by experience. Good leaders emerge in this system and the system allows for individuals to plan their own futures, resulting in a self-sufficiency that may not be in the overall best interest of the organization.

The proposed implementation of a leadership pipeline would encourage life-long learning through a combination of term limit assignments preceded by education and training linked to the next job so the two build on each other. Promotion would be evaluation based and would include an application as well as letters of recommendation from non-bureau sources, review of performance appraisals as an indicator of future potential, and an interview process. All leadership jobs would have a beginning date and an end date (that is extendable for up to two years in one year extensions with advanced notice), and there would be a career counseling or assignments unit whose primary function would be to match individual skills and developmental opportunities for personnel with the overall needs of the FBI. Candidates would be given choices regarding the jobs they could apply for, but their choices would be limited so the needs of the organization drive choices above the desires of the individual. This would facilitate better succession planning and would allow for overlap between incoming and outgoing leaders, something beneficial to the organization as it provides perspective and continuity to the organization's operations.

As people are typically resistant to change and the new system would be weighted towards the needs of the organization and as all of the existing leaders in the Special Agent ranks of the FBI have benefited from the existing system, there will likely be significant resistance to transformational change in favor of the current practice of making incremental or transactional changes. Moreover, transforming the FBI's leadership practices to the leadership pipeline model may require additional funding and other resources, creating additional resistance, both internally and externally. Finally, once the new system is proposed and is in the process of implementation, it would need

to be evaluated. How would you know if the system is moving you toward the strategic vision of an FBI led by the world's best law enforcement and national security professionals? Before attempting to answer that question, a discussion of the proposed FBI Leadership Pipeline is in order.

C. A NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: THE LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

Shortly after becoming the Director of the FBI, Robert Mueller was interviewed by author Ronald Kessler who was conducting research for his latest book titled, "The Bureau." During the course of the interview, Kessler asked the Director about leadership. According to Kessler,

...Mueller got a gleam in his eye as he referred to his Marine Corps training. 'There are certain things you are taught in the Marine Corps that stay with you forever,' he said as he sat at the head of his conference room table. 'You don't ask people to do things you are not willing to do yourself. You work harder than those you would lead. You praise in public and criticize in private. You delegate.' The foundation of leadership is integrity, Mueller said. 'With that goes speaking your mind, not dissembling, being blunt. It's not easy to criticize people; it's not easy to move people. Those are all difficult things that are all part of leadership.'⁶⁸

The United States Marine Corps; indeed the entire U.S. military serves as an excellent model of a leadership pipeline. In fact, a symposium convened by the National Academy of Public Administration recommended transferring the military life-cycle career approach to civilian leadership development. The panel found,

The key reason the military does leadership development better is that the military is a career. It develops leaders with each assignment-assignments are made for the purpose not of just doing that job, but of developing the individual for the next job. Leaders are evaluated not just on how they are doing, but how they will do in the future. The entire personnel system in the military is geared toward leadership. However, it is far tougher to develop leaders on the civilian side where they are under the general schedule.'⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Ronald Kessler, *The Bureau* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 447.

⁶⁹ Bushnell, et al., *Can Government Grow Great Leaders?* 9.

The military is successful because it is a profession. A profession as defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary is, "...a calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long academic preparation."⁷⁰ Samuel P. Huntington describes the military officership as a profession in his work *The Soldier and the State* by defining the distinguishing characteristics of the military officer profession in terms of expertise, responsibility, and corporateness. Huntington argues the military officer possesses specialized knowledge and skill in a significant field of human endeavor that is obtained only through prolonged education and experience, is responsible, practicing expert that works and performs a service for the betterment of the society, and members of the military officer corps share a corporateness or group identity and sense of unity that is apart from laymen.⁷¹

Couldn't the same description be applied to the FBI Special Agent leadership corps? FBI Special Agent leaders possess specialized skills and knowledge in a significant field of human endeavor (law enforcement or criminal justice and national security matters), have a responsibility that is socially motivated (justice and the protection of Americans world-wide), that is essential to the functioning of society, and maintain a group identity, a "Brand FBI," that sets them apart from the rest of society.

If you accept the premise serving as an FBI Special Agent marks you as a professional, what separates the professional leader from the mere participant? Showing up and doing what is expected of you even if it requires hardships and personal sacrifice and expecting to be rewarded simply because you participated at various levels of leadership in the FBI marks you as a careerist. A true professional is a life-long learner and an authority in his or her profession. The professional constantly challenges himself and others. The professional lets his actions define him. Professionals care about the organization they are a part of and work to make it better. Careerists learn to manipulate

⁷⁰ Henry Bosley Woolf, et al., *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (New York: Pocket Books 1974), 554.

⁷¹ Samuel P. Huntington, "Officership as a Profession," in *A Study of Organizational Leadership* (Harrisburg, PA: Stakpole Books, 1976), 524-525.

the organization, its people and its systems for their own benefit. Careerists are inwardly focused, professionals look outward. Careerists feel entitled, professionals feel fortunate to have the opportunity to serve.

FBI whistleblower Mike German commented on the careerism of FBI leaders when he wrote,

The biggest obstacle is that the individuals who would institute the change are the individuals who would be hurt by the changes. Just before I left the FBI they changed the self-selection format to require listing the name of a supervisor who could verify the accomplishments claimed. This seems to make sense, except of course that the accomplishment could already be checked against the records, but it demonstrates who is putting in for these jobs. For an agent like me, with 15 years of experience, most of my supervisors had retired. For an agent with a minimum of experience, however, the application was easy as he or she only had one or two supervisors at most, and probably was still working under the same supervisor. That such a requirement would be placed shows that the supervisors creating the process have only their own frame of reference in mind, and are trying to promote people of like experience. Another impediment is that the FBI disdains experts. Since supervisors selected for a particular desk often don't have experience in working that violation, they can be easily embarrassed by their lack of knowledge. Danny Couslon's book discusses this environment at HQ. To avoid embarrassment these supervisors try to avoid bringing in-house experts who might challenge their authority into the room. Despite two successful DT UC Operations, the DT unit refused to debrief me- not only didn't request a debriefing, but actually refused requests I made on several occasions over the years. Finally the FBI disdains innovation. I told you about a white-collar crime squad supervisor I had in LA who complained to me that he was bored because the squad's work left little for him to do on a day to day basis. In the same conversation he complained that two young agents on the squad were doing a poor job interviewing witnesses and writing 302s, but since the experienced agents were busy with their own cases he couldn't spare these agents to go with the young agents and train them. I suggested he could cure both of his problems by going himself with the young agents, but he looked at me like I was crazy and said the ASAC would never allow him to go out on interviews. His absolute refusal to consider an obvious solution to his problems was indicative of the lack of initiative in management. That he was probably right that the ASAC wouldn't go along with such an initiative shows that

This was not just one lazy supervisor, but a system that would have a supervisor sitting at his desk doing nothing rather than acting like a leader and going out to show the young agents how to do their jobs.⁷²

Is the FBI being led more by the careerist or the professional? It seems the current leadership system based upon individual career management plays to the careerist. If that is indeed the case, the FBI must tip the balance toward leadership by the professional. The first thing that comes to mind to set conditions for the leader to become a professional is to institute a new framework to identify, select, professionally develop, evaluate and place its leaders. But before we can construct the framework, perhaps we need to look beyond the core competencies and define what we want our leaders to look like. We must define the guiding forces or principles we desire in all of our Special Agent leaders.

The United States Army Leadership Field Manual describes the army leadership framework in terms of what a leader must “Be, Know, and Do.” It clearly and concisely defines the characteristics of an Army leader. “Be” defines the values and attributes of the leader. “Know” defines the specific skills the leader will need to develop and “Do” is the leader’s action. The Army defines leadership as “influencing people-by providing purpose, direction, and motivation-while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization.”⁷³

What do FBI Special Agent leaders need to “Be, Know and Do”? They certainly need to “Be” by understanding and adhering to the FBI’s core values defined as:

- Rigorous obedience to the Constitution of the United States.
- Respect for the dignity of all those we protect.
- Compassion.
- Fairness.
- Uncompromising personal integrity and institutional integrity.

⁷² German, interview.

⁷³ *The U.S. Army Leadership Field Manual FM 22-100* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1999), 3-5.

- Accountability by accepting responsibility for our actions and decisions and the consequences of our actions and decisions; and
- Leadership, both personal and professional.⁷⁴

FBI Special Agent leaders might “Be” as a result of individual attributes identified through the eight core competencies. Special Agent leaders also need certain skills and abilities or “Know” how to deal with people, handle concepts, and be good technicians and problem solvers. Finally, Special Agent leaders need to be decisive and act or “Do.” But what will guide their actions? It is one thing to have a set of values and yet another to adhere to a code of conduct or set of principles. Principles act as a guiding force. When principles are adopted in an organizational sense, they can have the effect of shaping the values of the organization. They can also provide a great deal of predictability toward how leaders will function as part of the organizational culture. Listen to the words of Director Mueller when he described the leadership lessons he learned as a young Marine. To anyone who has worn a uniform in the armed services, his words ring true as the principles described by the Director have familiarity and likely continue to influence their own leadership styles. The FBI would benefit from the establishment of formalized leadership principles for its Special Agent leaders. Established codes of conduct help drive how Special Agent leaders are expected to act. What might those overarching leadership principles look like?

The U.S. Army has established a set of Principles of Leadership to help guide leaders under extreme and demanding conditions. The U.S. Army Principles of Leadership are as follows:

- Seek responsibility and take it for your actions.
- Know yourself and seek self improvement
- Make sound and timely decisions
- Be technically and tactically proficient
- Train your soldiers as a team
- Set the example
- Know your soldiers and look out for their well-being

⁷⁴ “FBI Core Values,” <http://www.fbi.gov/quickfacts.htm> [Accessed February 8, 2007].

- Employ your unit in accordance with its capabilities
- Develop a sense of responsibility in your subordinates
- Keep your soldiers informed
- Ensure the task is understood, supervised, and accomplished⁷⁵

These principles could almost be taken verbatim and adopted for use by the FBI. But for the sake of this and future discussions concerning leadership principles for FBI Special Agent leaders, the following principles, which are borrowed or adopted from the principles detailed above that are used by the Army, are proposed:

- Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions.
- Know yourself and seek self-improvement.
- Be honest and never compromise your integrity.
- Know your people and look out for their welfare.
- Set the example by being technically proficient and never ask a subordinate to do something you are unable or unwilling to do yourself.
- Keep your subordinates, peers and superiors informed, speak with frankness and candor.
- Develop a sense of vision and focus on the bigger picture.
- Learn to lead by being led.
- Pay attention to the details by making sure every task is understood, supervised and accomplished.
- Set conditions for success by knowing your limitations and the limitations of your team; employ them in accordance with their abilities.
- Praise in public and constructively criticize in private.
- Be decisive.

Why does the FBI need a set of guiding leadership principles? It needs them because the current leadership system of individual career management emphasizes the individual and not the organization. Leadership principles refocus the energy of the individual in a way that is beneficial for the entire organization. If the FBI hopes to become an organization led by a professional leadership corps, it needs to start by

⁷⁵ Brace E. Barber, *No Excuse Leadership: Lessons from the U.S. Army's Elite Rangers* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004), 7.

emphasizing core values and establishing guiding principals. Core competencies focus on the individual, core values define the organization and core principles support and help guide the individual to the greater benefit of the organization.

Developing leaders isn't easy. It is a complex art made up of many different complex tasks. As FBI Executive Assistant Director Don Packham, head of the newly created Human Resources Branch observes,

A dilemma is how you teach leadership development. It is a combination of formal and informal training as well as professional development programs. There are four types of leadership development options, assessment, coaching, learning, and experience based. The outcomes of organization success are how it is measured. In the case of the FBI have we been successful in our law enforcement and intelligence mission overall? In so doing are we adhering to our core values? Are we leading in a way that takes full advantage of current state of practice and future thinking in technology and application of our human resources?

The intervention is a complex web of a development strategy, a set of programs fitting within our culture, teachable moments, and connection to the context of our work. The Bureau could raise the notion of leadership to a more visible conversation of what works, why we think it works, and how repeatable the events seem. The solution to teaching leadership is not just one thing but a complex web of activities. Useful models involve peer to peer challenge in the pursuit of excellence in outcomes.⁷⁶

Is it possible the task of developing leaders is made even more difficult by the unpredictability built into the current system of individual career management? Could the FBI improve its ability to grow leaders with a different model built as a leadership pipeline?

EAD Packham believes the FBI has a pipeline full of effective leaders, but concedes there are weaknesses,

The FBI has effective leadership and has a pipeline of quality future leaders. There is never a perfect fit for jobs and always there are tradeoffs. Our leaders possess, in the main, excellent tradecraft skills but fall short in the areas of business acumen, effective process management, project management, and strategic visioning.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Packham, interview.

⁷⁷ Packham, interview.

Given the areas or skills Packham believes the organization's leader's falls short in are executive level skills, how can the organization develop those skills in emerging executive leaders? The FBI cannot be guided in transformational ways without strategic vision and strategic leadership skills in its executive ranks.

Former Army Chief of Staff Gordon R. Sullivan and his co-author Michael V. Harper describe Strategic Leadership in their book, "Hope is not a Method." Sullivan and Harper describe strategic leadership as the process of creating a future for an organization. They write,

It is a human process, involving first and foremost the leader and the people who make up the organization; working as a team...it is possible to transform any organization so that creative, adaptive behavior becomes imbedded in its culture, so that it can be successful in a future that cannot be predicted. This process of creating the future is anchored in a strategic architecture for change based on values and vision, unified by strategy, directed by purposeful action, and continually evolving through a process of organizational learning.⁷⁸

The framework appearing below, or Leadership Pipeline Model for FBI Special Agent Leaders, serves as a proposed strategic architecture for the FBI business/leadership lines of identification, selection, development, evaluation and placement of Special Agent leaders. This architecture encourages continuous learning, is anchored in the values of the organization and unlike the current system, elevates the needs of the organization above the desires of the individual.

It serves as a suggestion for strategic change and hopefully a lightning rod for discussion about what FBI Special Agent leaders should look like and how they should be developed or grown.

⁷⁸ Gordon R. Sullivan and Michael V. Harper, *Hope is not a Method* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 230-231.

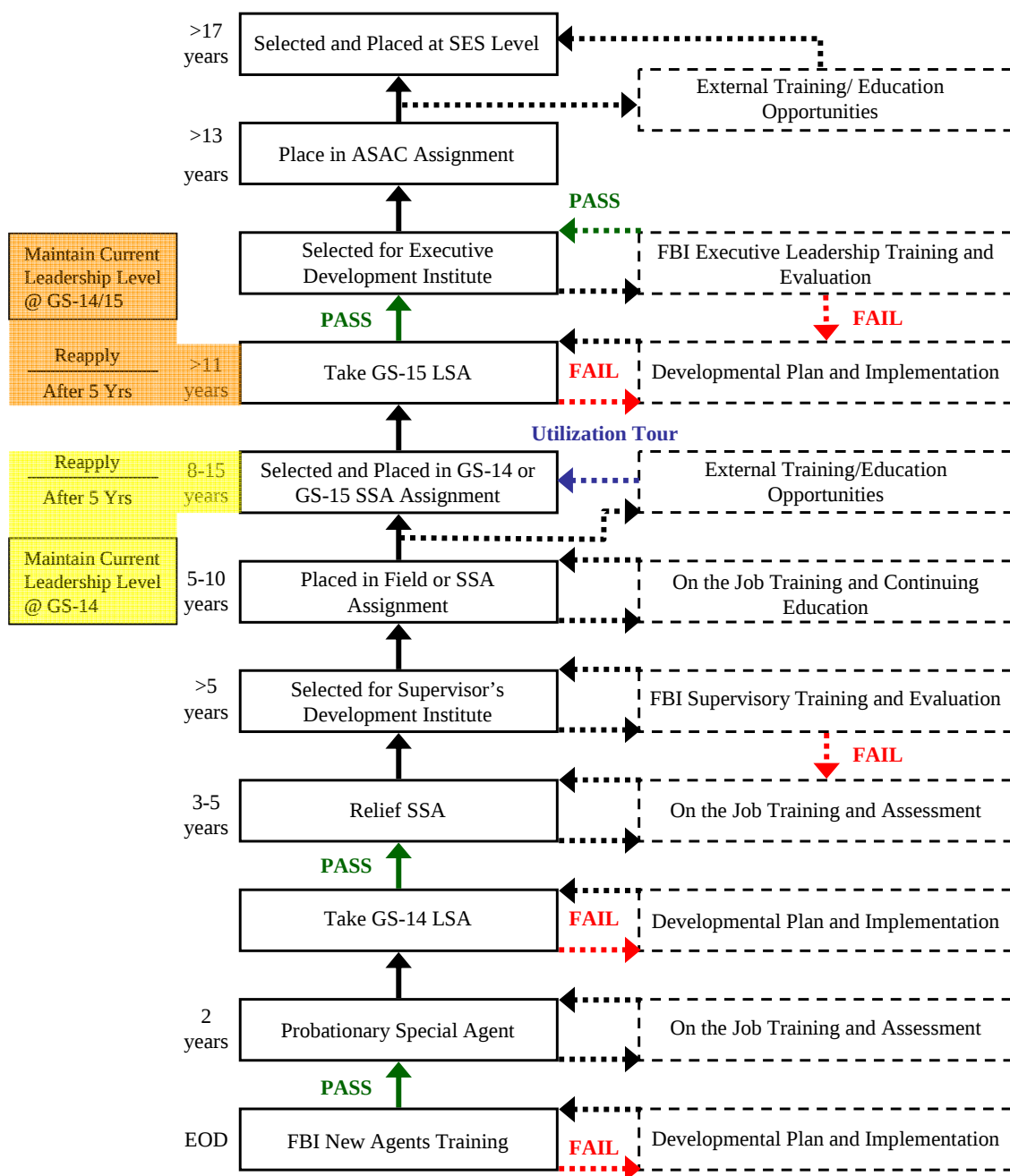


Figure 4. FBI Special Agent Leadership Pipeline

The idea of a leadership framework is nothing new to the FBI. Various models and frameworks have been in use or are under development. Most have education and training as a component and envision a formalized process. The proposed framework or “Leadership Pipeline” depicted in Figure 4 is a variation of a number of good ideas that

have already been proposed or adopted. The thing that sets this model apart is that it is an attempt at integrating all the leadership lines or functions necessary to develop a culture of leadership excellence. It provides a mechanism to bring up the mean of our leaders and focuses heavily on the beginning of the pipeline with structured educational and developmental opportunities tied to meaningful work experiences.

Entry into the leadership pipeline would begin at the FBI Academy during New Agent's training where individual leadership skills, core values, core competencies, and core leadership principles will be emphasized. The focus will be on leading yourself. This will be tied to the two year Probationary Special Agent program where the new agent is provided with valuable job experiences as he or she develops technical skills and competencies as an investigator.

After completing the Probationary special Agent program, agents will spend an additional year learning their craft before being eligible to apply as a relief supervisory special agent. Acceptance into the relief supervisory special agent program will trigger a series of distance learning and on the job training opportunities. Agents will also be required to take the GS-14 Leadership Development Assessment between year three and six. Agents failing the GS-14 LSA will be given a developmental plan and will be required to re-test within two years. Agents passing the GS-14 who have completed at least one year as a relief supervisor and have spent one year at the GS-13 grade level will be eligible to apply to attend the Supervisor's Development Institute Leadership Academy (SDILA). Selection will be competitive and slots will be based upon the current leadership needs of the FBI. Selection and successful completion of the SDILA will come with an incentive package such as a step increase and graduate level course credits.

The Supervisor's Development Institute Leadership Academy will enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of mid-level FBI supervisors and seek to provide a consistent baseline of knowledge across the organization. It will provide a professional credential and serve as a right of passage into the leadership ranks just as New Agent's training serves as a right of passage into the FBI. The focus will be on leading others, the consequence will be the creation of leadership as a profession.

The leadership academy would be based along the lines of the FBI National Academy in that it would provide an opportunity for supervisors to earn graduate level credit. This encourages a culture of learning and could easily be wedded to a distance learning program that would result in a master's degree for all participants. The academy would consist of a proposed twelve week program inspired in part by the FBI National Academy and in part by the British National Police Strategic Command Course. Students would be required to complete various course modules and would be tested or required to complete papers for grades and graduate level credits. Modules for the Supervisor's Development Leadership Academy might include:

- Module 1: Leadership
- Module 2: Partnerships-Joint operations, task forces, public-private partnerships and the media.
- Module 3: Managing Counterterrorism Investigations
- Module 4: Managing Counterintelligence Investigations
- Module 5: Managing Criminal Investigations and the Use of sophisticated investigative techniques
- Module 6: Technology for the FBI manager and managing Cyber Crime investigations.

The Supervisor's Development Institute Leadership Institute would also include the first 360 degree review of the individual leader as a developmental tool. Selection as a Supervisor will be competitive and based upon the needs of the organization. There may be classes where there are not enough supervisory positions to fill and students will return to their field offices until a supervisory position opens.

Upon completion of the SDILA, graduates will be placed in supervisory jobs based upon the needs of the FBI and matched with the skills and if possible preferences of the individual. An alternative method to consider for assignment of newly minted supervisors might be to tie the class rank of the student to the selection of his or her assignment. Each student could be ranked and would select their assignment based upon their class rank. There would be one academy class per quarter adding predictability to transfers and building in a mechanism for the organization to conduct forecasting of

future needs and an overlap of incoming and outgoing leaders in order to enhance continuity of operations. This dynamic will be repeated at all FBI special Agent leadership levels.

All supervisory jobs at the GS-14 and GS-15 levels would have term limits of three years that are extendable to five years. Three years is long enough to learn a job and make a difference. It is also long enough for the supervisor to be effectively evaluated and held accountable for his or her performance. Supervisors with technical skills such as bomb techs, laboratory scientists, instructors, etc. or individuals desiring to stay in-place due to personal situations, such as the care of elderly parents, health related issues, balancing of the career of a spouse, or other personal needs will be allowed to re-compete for their jobs at the five year mark. This provides flexibility for those individuals to continue to benefit the organization by remaining in their current positions. It also provides senior leaders with the ability to make changes if such changes are in the best interest of the organization.

Upon completing assignments at FBIHQ and in the field at the GS-14 level, leaders will be able to compete for jobs at the GS-15 level, but only after successfully completing the GS-15 LSA. Once the candidate passes the LSA, he or she will be programmed for the Executive Development Institute (EDI). EDI will be expanded from its current form and will focus on organizational level skills such as strategic planning and program/project management. It will also include instruction on crisis management and strategic communication. EDI will be conducted for all FBI Special agent and non-agent leaders in a joint environment. The course will include a group project and policy recommendation presentation relating to a strategic issue of importance to the FBI. Participation in EDI will also require or trigger a 360 degree review as an individual developmental tool. The focus will be on leading organizations as opposed to leading people.

Other professional development opportunities such as the University Education Program, Sabbatical Program and attendance at the FBI National Academy, National Executive Institute, LEEDS, and other courses will be recommended and placement in these continuing education opportunities will be competitive.

The difference between this model and the steps being enacted in the FBI today is the focus will not be on the high potential or high performers, but rather on bringing up the mean by investing heavily in the improvement of leadership and technical skills for the entry level manager/supervisor and following up at the higher level with improving organizational skills. Currently the FBI is spending around 17 million dollars on external programs serving a small percentage of high performing or high potential leaders, mostly at the GS-15 level and above. Conversely it is spending approximately 1.7 million dollars on internal leadership development programs.⁷⁹ The total budget for the FBI is currently around 5.7 billion dollars. The FBI is apparently not spending very much of its total budget on the development of its leaders and the dollars it is investing are focused on the wrong end of the leadership continuum. It makes more sense for the organization to increase its spending on all of its leadership development programs with the majority of the money going toward programs designed for the junior leaders as the organization will benefit from these educational and developmental experiences for a longer period of time. Additionally, an investment focused in this manner will likely have the impact of bringing up the mean. A better quality of leader will help limit the reliance of the organization on the “Hero Leader” to save the organization as an over-arching culture of leadership across all ranks and levels of leadership emerges.

Under the proposed system, selections will be based on a full evaluation of each candidate and placement will be driven by the needs of the Bureau. In order to effectively forecast and staff leadership needs by placing the right individuals with the right skills at the right place and time; a new unit will be created in the Human Resources Branch. This unit, known as the Career Counseling and Placement Unit will make use of technology to track the development of leaders, help shape choices for and mentor individual leaders and ensure leadership development is done in a focused manner designed to fill the overall leadership needs of the FBI.

Another organizational change for consideration is the creation of a Knowledge and Futures Unit to manage professional development of Special Agent leaders and to conduct research into re-occurring and emerging issues of concern to the organization.

⁷⁹ Charles “Skip” Robb, interview by author via telephone, Quantico, Virginia, February 12, 2007.

This would allow the FBI to be more proactive, to harness lessons learned in a meaningful way that can be accessed by the entire organization and to systematically seek solutions to organizational problems. One of the responsibilities of the Knowledge and Futures Unit might be to identify issues to be worked on as group and individual projects by attendees at EDI. Imagine an FBI where rising executives are not only able to identify strategic issues, but have a mechanism to conduct meaningful research into finding solutions that can be captured and perhaps utilized by the FBI. If the Bureau funded four EDI courses per fiscal year and each class worked on solving two to three strategic issues, the payback potential for the organization is exponentially great, especially when compared to the mechanisms that exist today.

Moreover, the proposed leadership pipeline can be fully implemented with incremental or transactional changes that taken together will create a truly transformational solution to the FBI's inadequate leadership development capabilities.

D. INPUTS, OUTPUTS, AND OUTCOMES: A DISCUSSION OF DEVELOPING THE LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

Figure 5 below, describes the inputs, outputs and outcomes for the proposed system or "FBI Leadership Pipeline."⁸⁰

Moving from the current system of individual career management to a system of organizational professional development will require an increased investment by the FBI in terms of funding and human resources. This investment could be significant; however, as depicted in Figure 5, the outcomes or the return on the FBI's investment could far outweigh any costs. Developing a leadership pipeline for FBI Special Agent leaders would greatly improve the FBI by improving the technical competencies of its leaders through a combination of integrated training, education, and on the job experience. It would also provide a mechanism to better match skills and abilities with specific jobs to

⁸⁰ Harry P. Hatry, *Performance Management: Getting Results* (Washington D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 1999), 33.

improve the capacity of the organization to meet new and emerging threats. Finally, such a system by its nature emphasizes common core competencies as the FBI seeks to find, develop and place the right person with the right skills in the right place at the right time.

Developing an FBI Special Agent Leadership Pipeline

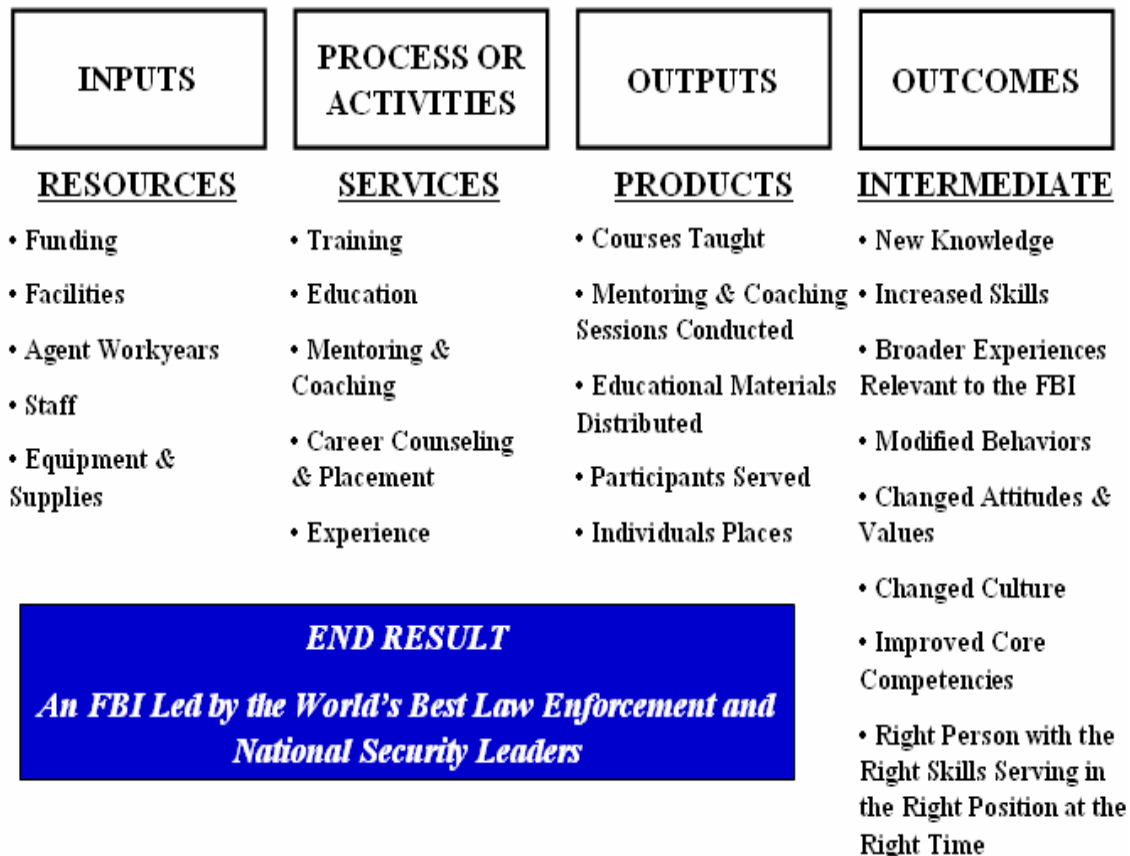


Figure 5. Developing an FBI Leadership Pipeline (From Harry P. Hatry, *Performance Management: Getting Results*, 1999)

A greater degree of institutional commitment will undoubtedly improve the leadership abilities of the FBI's mid-level and executive supervisors, managers, and leaders and in doing so will encourage new behaviors, emphasize organizational values, and help to positively change the FBI's culture. A transformation of the FBI's leadership systems would help break the cycle of successive transactions conducted to offset the

weaknesses inherent to an individually driven career management system. A transformational approach, looking at the issue as an entire system would provide more predictability, transparency, accountability, and a larger degree of responsibility by both the individuals seeking advancement and the organization they serve. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the increased professional development opportunities mandated under the proposed system and the ability of the organization to more effectively place its leaders will undoubtedly bring up the mean level of the Special Agent leader, moving the organization closer to a culture of leadership excellence. Ultimately, the development of a “Leadership Pipeline” for FBI Special Agents moves the Bureau closer to the strategic vision of being led by the world’s best law enforcement and national security leaders.

E. BENCHMARKING THE STRATEGIC ACTION REQUIRED TO DEVELOP AN FBI SPECIAL AGENT LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

For the leadership lines to have meaning, they must be intertwined and interrelated, forming the framework for a comprehensive leadership system. Designing an overarching leadership system for Special Agent leaders’ represents a lofty strategic goal. Development of exemplary law enforcement and intelligence community leaders in the midst of the FBI’s ongoing transformation will require a comprehensive plan and a commitment from the highest levels of the Bureau.

Once the FBI moves toward a system of organizational leadership development or the “To Be” vision of a leadership pipeline, it will be important to continue to manage the strategic shift and to measure the effectiveness of the individual strategic actions taken to institute the change. To do this, the FBI will need to establish specific benchmarks to measure progress being made in the identified leadership lines used to *identify, select, develop, evaluate, and place* Special Agent leaders. The benchmarks or indicators constituting the new system should be periodically reviewed to determine if the strategy |

should be maintained, reformed, or eliminated.⁸¹ Figure 6 serves as an example of a strategic framework for the proposed leadership pipeline. It identifies specific strategic goals and objectives along the business lines defining the new leadership system.

⁸¹ Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, 292.

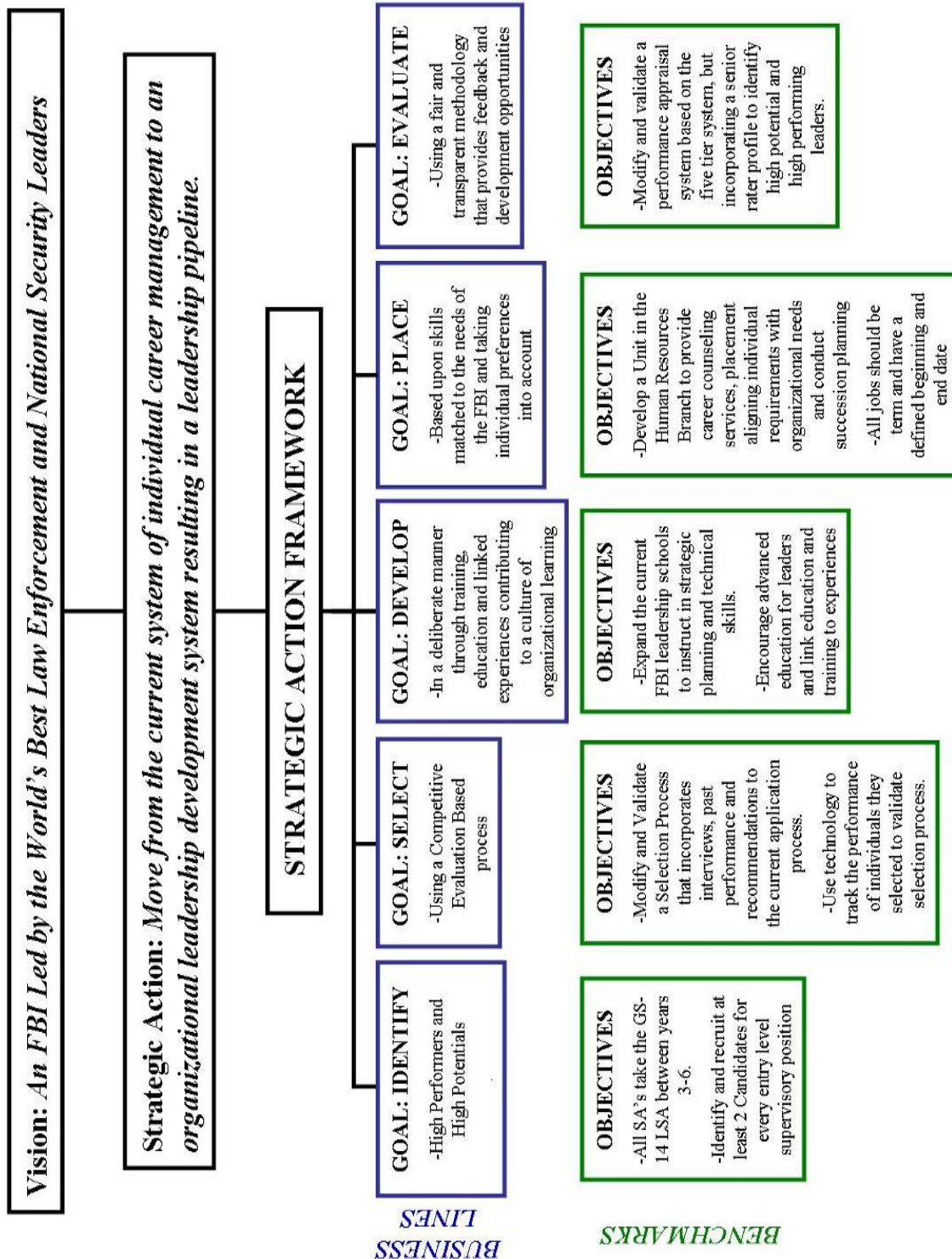


Figure 6. Benchmarking the Strategic Action Required to Develop an FBI Special Agent Leadership Pipeline (From Bryson, Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organizations, 2004)

Figure 6 depicts specific goals relating to the five business or leadership lines. These goals are designed to improve each business/leadership line by conceptualizing desired outcomes. For example, the goal for the Identify business line is to identify high performers and high potential leaders. To do this the objectives or measurable outcomes include instituting a policy where all Special Agents take the Leadership Skills Assessment Test between their third and fifth year in the FBI. This is akin to registering for the draft as it would provide the organization with a ready pool of qualified applicants. It allows leaders to conduct developmental training for those not passing the test while identifying the individuals who have demonstrated leadership potential through a validated mechanism. As all agents would be required to take the test, the organization would also have the best possible population to measure the test by and continue to make changes as indicated by the anticipated leadership needs of the organization. This in turn provides the starting point for objective number two under the Identify goal. Objective number two is to have at least two viable candidates for every entry level supervisory job. This could be accomplished through a system of formalized mentoring or by a formalized invitation to apply in a process instituted by the Human Resources Division as visualized in the objectives under the Place goal. While the preferred method of filling the FBI leadership pipeline would be to develop a culture of leadership whereby individuals desire to participate in the FBI's management and leadership program, during times the FBI is having difficulty filling entry level supervisory positions, the option of drafting the highest potentials could be explored as those individuals would already be identified across the FBI.

Goal number two or *Select* deals with the establishment of mechanisms to move from an application based selection process to one that is evaluation based. The objectives for *Select* include developing a validated process that adds recommendations from outside the FBI, important in the post-9/11 Bureau given the new partnerships the FBI has forged, an interview process and more emphasis on performance appraisals as an indicator of future performance as measurable objectives toward the improvement of the selection process used for FBI leaders.

The third goal or *Develop* seeks to improve the qualifications of the FBI Special Agent leadership corps by emphasizing training and education programs and linking them to on-the-job experiences. This effectively creates an organizational learning culture where life-long learning is encouraged and is a pre-requisite for future advancement. The objectives or benchmarks toward achieving the goal include increasing the professional leadership development education FBI Special Agent leaders receive. Most leadership scholars believe leaders gain the most from spending about ten percent of their time in education or training programs. In a twenty year career, this equates to approximately two years worth of education and training for FBI leaders. Currently, the FBI leadership development programs fall far short of reaching the ten percent benchmark. Most Army Officers spend two and a half to three years in various mandated leadership development education and training programs. Including new agents training, FBI Special agent leaders currently spend around six months or approximately one quarter of the recommended time engaged in professional development education and training programs. Significantly increasing the amount of time dedicated to training and educating FBI Special Agent leaders is necessary if the organization is going to professionalize its leadership corps. Such programs will enhance the base line of knowledge for all FBI leaders and will serve to bring up the level of ability for the lowest common denominator. It would also help meet requirements for certification of FBI leaders as intelligence officers. Moving away from focusing on the high performers and making a larger investment in the mid and lower level performers in the organization will drive the FBI to a higher level of overall leadership proficiency.

While the FBI is world renowned for the executive management programs it designs and puts on for police executives, it does not mirror these programs for its own executives. Currently, FBI Special Agent leaders are required to attend a one week Supervisor's Development Institute at the GS-14 level, a two week Executive Development Institute at the GS-15 level and a three day Navigating Strategic Change Seminar at the Kellogg School. Other educational opportunities exist for FBI Special Agent leaders but are not required for advancement and are not currently heavily weighted during the application assessment process. The FBI needs to significantly

expand its training and education for its executives and should consider developing a comprehensive leadership academy based upon the FBI National Academy or the British Command College models. It should also provide opportunities for leaders to build on education and training with linked on-the-job experiences. Special Agent leaders who are selected for sabbatical or other education programs should have a utilization tour attached to the completion of their program.

The next goal will *Place* FBI Special Agent leaders in assignments that will help meet the needs of the FBI while further developing the skills of individual leaders. This will be managed by a newly created Career Counseling and Placement Unit in the Human Resources Branch charged with conducting career counseling, tracking the progress of high potential and high performing leaders and matching the skills of the workforce with the needs of the organization. This unit will conduct succession planning, ensuring there is a steady stream of qualified applicants for each level of leadership.

Finally, the leadership pipeline will require each leader be *Evaluated* at every level in a fair and transparent manner that provides feedback and developmental opportunities. To do this the current tiered performance appraisal system will need to be modified so senior raters are required to provide a profile of high potential and high performing subordinate leaders. The evaluation process should also be linked to specific competencies for the level the leader is operating at as well as for the next level of leadership. Each of the goals and objectives highlighted in the above chart can be quantified by the human resources division as a benchmark to evaluate the efficacy of the proposed strategic change. Periodic review of the new policy will allow the FBI to modify or change its leadership development practices depending upon the value added to the organization by the new system. Benchmarking provides a method to calculate or measure the impact the proposed strategic change is having on the organization.

It should be noted that Figure 6 does not constitute the breadth of benchmarking used to evaluate the leadership pipeline, but rather serves as a starting point. In fact, all of the proposed ideas in the preceding pages should be evaluated in the context of starting a meaningful discussion.

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V. RECOMMENDATION FOR STRATEGIC CHANGE

The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty.

-Winston Churchill

A. LOOKING BEYOND TRANSACTIONS

The reality of the post 9/11 Federal Bureau of Investigation is one of ongoing transactional and transformational change. Changes are occurring incrementally and through sweeping, enterprise-wide shifts in the way the FBI conducts business. These changes are being driven internally by FBI executives who understand the urgency required to navigate the FBI's strategic shift from a domestically focused, case and fact driven, predominantly law enforcement culture to a much more agile, threat and intelligence driven, globally focused and fully integrated culture of law enforcement and national security excellence. The FBI of today must be able to effectively and simultaneously address such diverse threats as hostile intelligence services, diffuse global terrorist organizations, and transnational criminal enterprises. Imagine the complexity of a leadership position that requires an individual to understand, effectively prioritize, and address in a timely manner hostile intelligence services working on behalf of the governments of China, North Korea, Russia, and others who seek to steal our technologies, infiltrate our government, and undermine the strategic advantages enjoyed by the United States. Now imagine adding the threat posed by global terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda, Hamas, and Hizballah or domestic terrorist groups who seek to use violence to force social and political change. Finally, add transnational criminal enterprises and networks such as La Cosa Nostra, Russian, and Asian criminal enterprises and South American drug cartels to the list of the most egregious threats faced by American society and you have a set of interesting problems and challenges for the FBI supervisor, manager, and executive. Are we simply expecting too much from the FBI and its leadership? Given the current manner and means the organization utilizes to staff its leadership ranks, is the FBI setting conditions for its own success? The FBI needs to re-evaluate its leadership practices and develop a systematic approach toward

professionalizing and developing excellence in its leadership corps. This is the only way the FBI can hope to address the varied and diverse challenges presented in today's operating environment.

In testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on the Departments of Commerce, Justice and State, the Judiciary and related Agencies, FBI Director Robert Mueller captured the essence of what FBI leaders now face as well as the underlying ethos that has allowed the FBI to continue to adequately pursue emerging national threats when he stated:

The culture of the FBI is now and always has been a culture of hard work, integrity, and dedication to protecting the United States, no matter what challenges we face. The FBI was created 96 years ago to fight the spread of traditional crime across county and state lines. Today's FBI faces a world in which crimes as diverse as terrorism, corporate fraud, identity theft, human trafficking, illegal weapons trade, and money laundering traverse easily back and forth across international boundaries. Today, we are dealing with organized crime groups that launder money for drug groups, which sell weapons to terrorists, who commit white collar crimes to fund their operations. In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks, it became clear the FBI must be more flexible, agile, and mobile in the face of these new threats.⁸²

It is undeniable that the FBI has made great effort toward attempting to transform itself in the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy. It is equally clear the work is not yet finished. The FBI has become more focused on its changing mission and has re-prioritized its investigative functions and realigned its workforce to effectively address its stated priorities. It has shifted its managerial and operational environment from one of decentralized planning and operations in the field to centralized planning and operations at FBIHQ with decentralized execution occurring in the field. The Bureau has shown a willingness to look hard at its practices and to make changes in line with the desires of various external stakeholders, specifically the Congress of the United States and the eleven separate committees of Congress that have oversight responsibilities for the FBI. To that end, the FBI has undertaken dozens of projects to re-engineer its practices and

⁸² Robert Mueller (Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation), "Testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and related Agencies March 23, 2004," <http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress04/mueller032304.htm> [Accessed January 10, 2007].

processes at the behest of various committees, panels, and recommendations from such diverse organizations as the Government Accountability Office, the Office of Management and Budget, the National Academy of Public Administration, various contractors such as the RAND Corporation, Science Applications International Corporation, LMI, Arthur Anderson, and others.

Senator John Rockefeller, the newly appointed Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee expressed concern about the role of FBI management during recently held hearings relating to FBI reform when he stated:

...A related issue has to do with the experience, the expertise of FBI management. Much has been made about the turnover at the highest levels of the FBI, but what about the lower and mid levels of management, particularly at the headquarters level, those who are supposed to be guiding and supporting FBI field offices? ...Does this level of the FBI's management ranks have the appropriate expertise, especially in international counterterrorism to perform their duties? Are the mid to senior ranks of the FBI being given the right incentives to come to FBI headquarters, and to stick around long enough to help guide the FBI's national security and intelligence activities?⁸³

Senator Rockefeller's concerns are not unfounded, nor do they represent previously undiscovered issues. The National Academy of Public Administration concluded in a September 2005 report that while the FBI recognized a significant obstacle to its transformation efforts was an unwieldy human capital program and that the Bureau had taken steps to address the problem, including the revision of the FBI's strategic human capital plan, more needed to be done. Moreover, NAPA provided a ten step roadmap as a solution to the FBI's ongoing leadership woes. The steps in NAPA's roadmap included⁸⁴:

- Appoint a human capital implementation team.
- Create a chief human capital office and officer.
- Develop a strategic workforce and planning process.

⁸³ John D. Rockefeller (Chairman), "Testimony to Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Hearing on January 23, 2007 concerning Reform of the FBI and Department of Homeland Security," <http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress07/> [Accessed January 29, 2007].

⁸⁴ Thornburgh, et al., *Transforming the FBI: Roadmap to an Effective Human Capital Program*, xiii-xix.

- Establish a leadership development and planning program.
- Develop a communications and employee involvement strategy.
- Increase the priority for information technology support to human capital programs.
- Address hiring issues.
- Initiate a comprehensive pay study.
- Develop a structured career development and training program.
- Provide consistent work-life processes and programs.

The FBI has taken many of the suggestions made by NAPA to heart and successfully made incremental changes. In doing so the FBI has set the stage to move from making incremental or transactional changes to improve the way it conducts business toward transforming the methods and means the FBI uses to identify, select, professionally develop, place, and evaluate its Special Agent leadership corps as part of an overarching leadership strategy.

One example of the changes implemented within the FBI flowing from the NAPA report and setting the stage for truly transformational change is the creation of the Human Resources Branch headed by an Executive Assistant Director (EAD). This change created an organizational structure that combines human capital management responsibilities and authorities previously shared among nine different offices and by placing it under an EAD (one of five in the FBI), underscored the commitment the FBI has to its employees by elevating in importance the human resources functions of the FBI. The reorganization provides the FBI with the capacity to identify strategic issues, determine potential courses of actions or outcomes to successfully address the issues, and effectively and efficiently execute human capital initiatives and plans. This structural change in the FBI potentially removes a major obstacle to previous efforts to institute change in the FBI's human capital program.

The ten steps suggested by NAPA represent incremental and transactional solutions to the FBI's leadership problems. Taken together these ten steps may lead to transformational change and if many of them are effectively applied, they will most certainly set better conditions for transformation. However, with regard to the specific

tasks of identifying, selecting, developing, placing and evaluating Special Agent leaders, they serve more as loose directions, than the roadmap report implies. The ten steps provide a general idea of the direction of travel the FBI should take and an idea of what its final destination should be. It does not provide turn-by-turn instructions on how to get to the destination and once the FBI arrives at the destination it is possible the Bureau will find an empty lot. Once there, the FBI will need to construct a lasting leadership structure. Where is the materials list or instructions for designing and building an enduring leadership system within the FBI? Perhaps the FBI needs a more of a blueprint and less of a roadmap.

The steps outlined in the NAPA report are broad ranging and apply to the full spectrum of FBI supervisors, managers, and executives, both in the Special Agent ranks and in the non-agent leadership population. The steps are generic to the organization and do not specifically address problems inherent to the FBI's Special Agent leadership cadre. That is not to suggest that the FBI needs to maintain a strict separation between the functions of a Special Agent leader and other leaders in the FBI, it merely means Special Agents have a very unique job function within the FBI. Certainly the FBI needs to get away from previous practices of differentiating between "Agents" and "Support." The FBI needs to emphasize the "One Team, One Fight" concept in its future approaches to conducting its mission and recognize the value each function brings to the overall and integrated team. The primary difference between leaders in the FBI's Special Agent ranks and leaders within the larger organization that supports an argument for change specific to Special Agent leaders is that while FBI leaders in other career functions such as computer and technologies specialists, scientists, human resources experts, legal experts, linguists, office managers, and the like, can either be grown from within the FBI or recruited and hired from outside the organization. Special Agent leaders on the other hand must be wholly grown or must emerge from within the Special Agent ranks of the FBI.

To that end, the FBI should move from its current system of individual career management for its Special Agent leaders to a system of organizational professional development. What needs to occur for conditions to be set for the FBI to undergo such an organizational change?

Moving the FBI from an “As Is” model of individual career management to a “To Be” model of organizational professional development or a “Leadership Pipeline” will require a new way of thinking about the leadership progression of FBI Special Agents. The current way of thinking ties leadership at all levels to eight rather generic core competencies identified as: (1) Leadership, (2) Interpersonal Abilities, (3) Liaison, (4) Organizing and Planning, (5) Problem Solving/Judgment, (6) Adaptability/Flexibility, (7) Initiative, and (8) Communications. Special Agent leaders are required to pass a Leadership Skills Assessment (LSA) test at both the GS-14 and GS-15 levels. They must also obtain professional development education by attending a one-week long Supervisor’s Development Institute (SDI) course at the GS-14 level, a two-week long Executive Development Institute (EDI) course at the GS-15 level, and a three-day Kellogg school seminar on navigating strategic change. This one-size-fits-all approach to competencies does not account for the different knowledge, skills, and abilities required for success at the various levels of GS-14, GS-15, and SES for FBI Special Agent leadership, nor does it set conditions for the FBI to effectively develop leaders for the next level of responsibility. Leaders are not evaluated for their potential to function at the next higher level, but are instead evaluated on their performance based on metrics for the current level. The organization has not identified and benchmarked behaviors and skills at each level so that high performers who are exhibiting behaviors and skills in line with those required for success at the next higher level are easily identified.

An alternative method for evaluating leadership development options has been suggested by leadership consultant H. Skipton Leonard. Leonard advocates two lines of inquiry:

Does the organization have effective leadership now and does it have a full “pipeline” of leaders for the future? If not, where are the current and future gaps in leadership capabilities? What skills are required to fill these gaps?

How do people best learn complex skills like leadership? What is the evidence a particular development technique or intervention will have the desired impact? What are the best ways to evaluate the success of leadership development programs?

Leonard's approach assumes leadership is vital to the success of the organization and different gaps and learning needs require different solutions.⁸⁵ A debate within the FBI concerning the strategic value of leadership development programs would be valuable as the FBI requires high functioning leaders at the supervisory (GS-14), managerial (GS-15), and executive (SES) levels.

One model or size does not fit all as argued by leadership consultants and authors Ram Charon, Stephen Drotter, and James Noel. Charon, Drotter, and Noel make the case in their book, "The Leadership Pipeline" that careers move through different phases or stages and each passage in the pipeline brings different challenges and therefore requires different skills to successfully navigate a career moving from managing oneself to leading an organization. The authors argue the development of a "Leadership Pipeline" helps focus developmental opportunities, allows organizations to gauge the readiness of an employee to move up in the organization through demonstration they have mastered the skills required for success at the current level while exhibiting some of the traits, skills, and behaviors required for success at the next higher level. This pipeline development helps focus developmental opportunities so that leaders at all levels are developed to their maximum potentials, and facilitates succession planning. Selection becomes more objective rather than being based upon past performances, individual connections, or personal preferences. Finally, Charon, Drotter, and Noel argue the most significant contribution of the "Leadership Pipeline" is that it allows the organization to develop leaders internally.⁸⁶

Given the uniqueness of the FBI Special Agent career path, it follows that all Special Agent leaders need to grown from within the organization. So how does the FBI

⁸⁵ H. Skipton Leonard, "When Leadership Development Fails Managers: Addressing the Right Gaps When Developing Leadership," in *Filling the Leadership Pipeline*, ed. Robert B. Kaiser (Greensboro, N.C.: Center for Creative Leadership, 2005), 71.

⁸⁶ Ram Charon, Stephen Drotter, and James Noel, *The Leadership Pipeline: How to Build the Leadership Powered Company* (San Francisco, CA: Josey Bass Inc., 2001) 30-31.

institute a strategic plan that moves the Bureau's leadership development program from one that is managed by the individual to one where the organization takes a greater role in moving the emerging leader through a leadership pipeline that will successfully identify, competitively select, professionally develop, accurately evaluate, and effectively place its leaders?

Some would argue that the steps the FBI has taken to adopt recommendations made by NAPA, GAO, and others is proof the FBI is moving away from individual career management and investing in the future of its leaders. They would point to the creation of the Human Resources Branch, the use of Leadership Skills Assessment testing and short term programs such as the eighteen month temporary duty program for term supervisors or the five year up or out alternative for sitting supervisors, alternate career path program, re-institution of a tiered performance appraisal system and developmental opportunities such as mandatory attendance at the Kellogg School's "Managing Strategic Change" course as benchmarks toward successful leadership development efforts in the FBI.

Another issue of concern with the FBI's Special Agent leadership ranks is the percentage of growth. During the past ten years, the FBI Special Agent leadership has grown from approximately one quarter of the total Special Agent population to just under one-third. It has increased by 62% overall, with a 71% increase in mid-level managers at the GS-14 and GS-15 levels. There has been a marked increase in the number of GS-15's with less than ten years of experience and the FBI's hollow work year issues caused by the authorization of leadership positions without a concurrent increase in funding has started to pressure the FBI's budget. To that end, the FBI should look at each of its leadership positions and try to right size the organization to meet its operational demands. Thirty percent of the FBI agent population in leadership positions is excessive for an organization the size of the FBI.

While the FBI has attempted to initiate change and move in the right direction, its efforts are akin to treating the symptoms rather than curing the disease. They simply do not go far enough and represent transactional solutions that replace one thing or way of

doing business with another. In fact, many of these short term fixes, while done with the good intention of furthering the overall capabilities of the FBI, may have had some unintended negative consequences.

One example is the “Up or Out” program requiring field supervisors to move up to a higher level of responsibility assignment at FBI headquarters or return to investigative duties after five years. This policy did not take into account the different developmental rates of individual supervisors or the fact that some supervisors impacted may be performing at their highest potential grade level. The NAPA report observes that while this policy was designed to have a positive effect by broadening experience and individual capabilities, and filling vacancies at headquarters; its role in leadership development or succession planning was not clearly explained. Moreover, implementation of the program was met with unrest and created issues that had an adverse effect on families, compensation and retirement benefits.⁸⁷

This policy and the implementation of the eighteen-month term supervisor program that ostensibly brought field supervisors and Special Agents to headquarters as a developmental experience on an eighteen-month “term” or temporary duty assignment helped fill manning requirements at entry level supervisory positions at FBIHQ, but on further examination, their implementation may have had the unintended consequence of eroding the culture of trust that must exist between executives and subordinates in any high performing organization. And as Kendrick has observed, the policy may have developed a caste system among supervisors.

In the case of the “Up or Out” policy, many of the supervisors impacted were among the most experienced field supervisors in the FBI. They had competed for their positions with the understanding that as “stationary” supervisors, they could stay in the assignment and serve at their current grade until retirement. Some had no desire to move beyond the position they were in and were continuing to contribute to the success of the FBI in meaningful ways. The “Up or Out” policy was enforced retroactively and there was no grandfather provision allowing supervisors who obtained their positions before the Bureau practice was changed to remain in their jobs. While the policy did create

⁸⁷ Thornburgh, *Transforming the FBI: Roadmap to an Effective Human Capital Plan*, 13.

movement and set conditions for supervisors to move up rather than return to investigative duties, several experienced leaders stepped down and in doing so faced adverse impacts in terms of salary and retirement benefits. Since the policy was implemented, through 1/29/2007, 280 FBI supervisors have been impacted. A review of the results of the policy has determined 145 of the 280 supervisors decided to advance or take lateral assignments at FBIHQ. Over 48 percent or 135 supervisors decided to retire or to step down rather than accept an assignment at FBI headquarters.⁸⁸ Of greater concern than the loss of this number of experienced leaders, and the ethical and legal issues relative to forcing superior performing supervisors to leave their jobs, is the potential adverse impact this policy may have on future generations of agents contemplating voluntary service in the Special Agent leadership ranks. Many would-be volunteers may eschew leadership positions if they believe policies and practices could be changed in manners that would hurt them financially or create hardships for their families. Any culture of leadership excellence must be accompanied by a culture of trust between managers at all levels as well as between leaders and those who are led.

Adding to the erosion of trust between FBI executives and mid-level managers and supervisors was the recent decision to suspend temporary duty benefits for those supervisors and Special Agents who opted to take term assignments to FBIHQ. While on the surface, this may have been a prudent cost saving step, it effectively changed the rules. Many of the temporary duty term supervisors or “scabs” as they are affectionately known, had no intention to stay in the leadership pipeline, but saw the opportunity to not only make a significant amount of money while in a temporary duty status (estimated to be around \$72,000.00), but to also permanently obtain a higher pay grade and step upon their return to the field due to pay retention legislation. While the temporary duty program appeared to have a financial benefit to the Bureau, in that \$72,000.00 is cheaper than the estimated \$80,000.00-85,000.00 for a permanent transfer, this did not take into account the long-term costs to the FBI in salaries and benefits paid to the term supervisors at a much higher rate during the remainder of their careers and into their retirements. Such initiatives also encourage people to volunteer for the wrong reasons.

⁸⁸ Bennett, interview.

While financial incentives may serve as an enticement to serve at the next higher level, they should come with an expectation the individual will stay in the leadership pipeline.

And while the organization may have been justified in suspending the temporary duty benefits or changing the rules concerning those benefits; to those impacted it had the same appearance as the “up or out” policy, where the rules were changed and what you had as an expectation when you volunteered to step up and take a leadership job is subject to change at the whim of executive management. The combination of these events will likely serve as further disincentives for Special Agents considering voluntary advancement to the supervisory level. Ironically, any short-term gains made in keeping the voluntary leadership system full may be offset by the deleterious impact these decisions have had on potential future volunteers. Why would anyone want to enter a system where the only constant is change? How can subordinate leaders trust an executive hierarchy that acts unpredictably and in a manner inconsistent with providing actual incentives for advancement?

Prophetically, leadership consultant Jeanette Swist once opined, “Organizations have difficulties in implementing lasting improvements because they focus on the technical side and short term issues. There is a tendency to disregard the human side and the larger system perspective.”⁸⁹ Perhaps the FBI would be better served if it adopted a longer view of its Special Agent leadership issues and made incremental or transactional changes that set conditions for a whole systems approach representing something truly transformational.

What is preventing the FBI from moving beyond transactional fixes to its leadership issues? What organizational hurdles exist that must be negotiated before the conditions for transformation can exist? In their international bestseller *Blue Ocean Strategy*, authors W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne identify the four organizational hurdles of strategy execution as cognitive, resources, motivational, and political.⁹⁰ Overcoming these hurdles requires they be identified in the context of the strategic

⁸⁹ Jeanette Swist, “Consulting Windowpanes: Addressing the Challenges of Executing Change,” http://shrm.org/hrresources/whitepapers_published/cms_000227.asp [Accessed February 21, 2006].

⁹⁰ Kim and Mauborgne, *Blue Ocean Strategy*, 52.

change proposal to move the FBI from its current or “As Is” system of individual career management to a future or “To Be” system of organizational professional development. Figure 7 depicted below graphically details the four organizational hurdles of strategy execution as forces working both for and against the proposed strategic change:

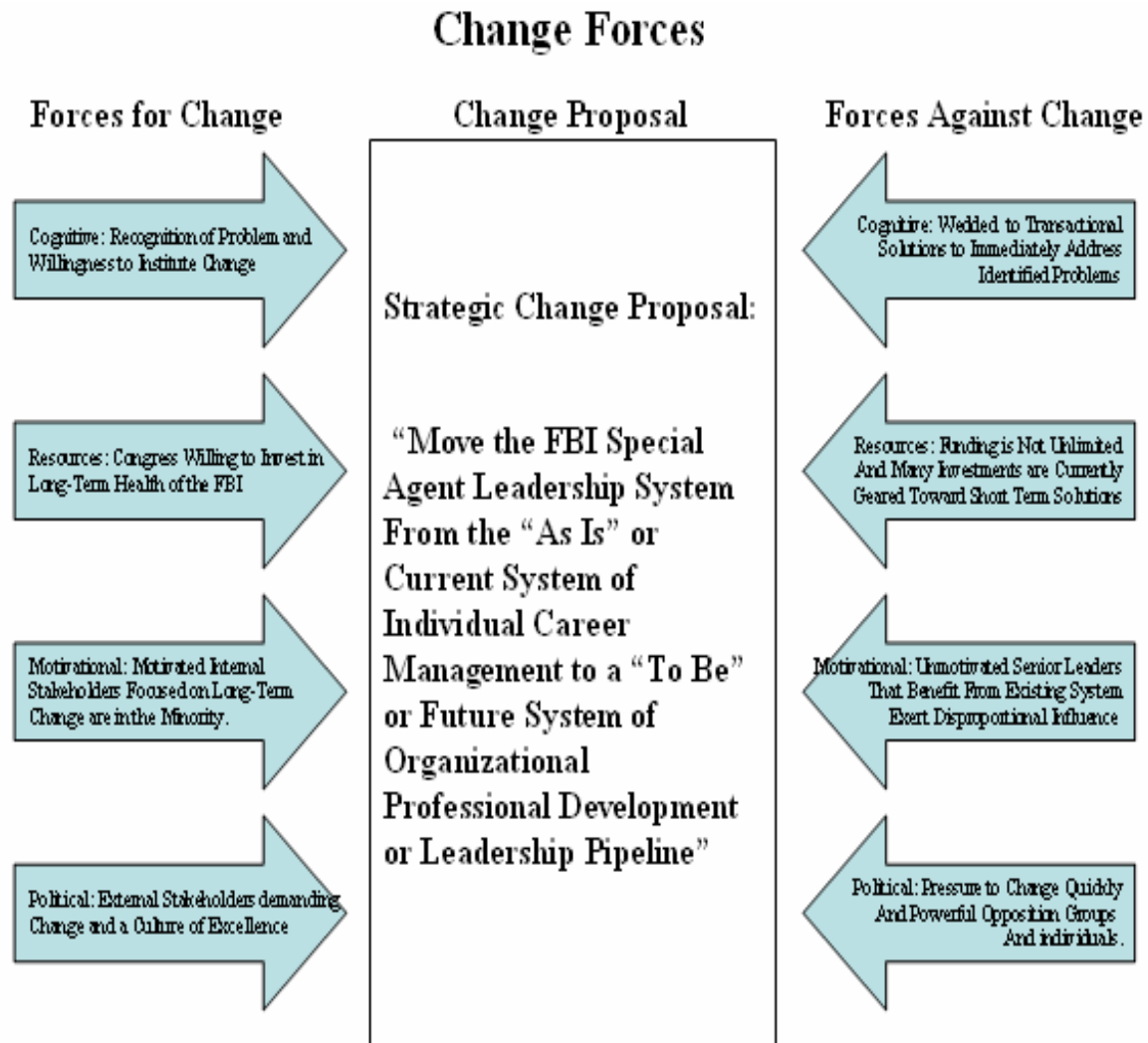


Figure 7. Change Forces

Clearly, the problem is being recognized by the FBI as evidenced by the implementation of such incremental changes such as the creation of a Human Resources Branch; combining human resource functions previously spread over nine separate organizations. Other transactions have included the validation and implementation of

Leadership Skills Assessment (LSA) testing at the GS-14 and GS-15 grade levels to identify future leaders and as a prerequisite for entry into the management ranks, a new focus on change management as evidenced by mandatory attendance by GS-14 and GS-15 personnel at the Kellogg School, “Navigating Strategic Change” course and the use of various new programs and policies such as the five year “up or out” policy or eighteen month term supervisory temporary duty (TDY) program at FBIHQ to create movement in the mid-level management ranks and entice agents to come to FBIHQ.

Mike Ferrence offers a comprehensive explanation concerning the difficulties of creating an overarching leadership system when he offers,

There are several impediments to making changes in the way the FBI identifies, selects, professionally develops, evaluates, and places its leaders. The first deals with the entire human process of dealing with change. With each existing situation there are a number of individuals who will benefit with the status quo, another group of individuals who would benefit from specific changes as they see it, and two other groups who are connected to those who are in power or will move into positions of power. These two power forces work to maintain the system the way it is or to change it to their liking. What may be lacking is an honest, informed broker, who holds the institution above all else. This individual or group is hard to find. Further, if the individual or group is identified, are they still open to other ideas that are inconsistent with their own experiences or points of view.

The second impediment is that when we look for change we look external to the organization. We look for people who have been successful, or appear to be successful, in other organizations, to show us the way. These individuals bring in new systems that have worked for them at a different place and at a different time. The executive who court and hire these individuals tend to suggest the FBI is broken, fix us as you did at IBM, IRS, BP, etc. They give them no time to understand how their past experience may be similar or different from the FBI. They give the impression that everything we are doing is wrong rather than we are doing some things right and some things wrong.

Case in Point, several years ago the FBI brought in an executive from IBM, Bob Dyes to fix our technology systems based on his excellent track record of dealing with what was perceived to be similar situations in the private sector. Two years later he was gone and the FBI was no further

along in having better technology systems than when he arrived. We had something different, but different and better are not necessarily synonymous.

In the HR area we brought in a number of individuals from the Department of Defense who attempted to 'install' the military model of personnel development. Three to four years later they were asked to leave, or strongly encouraged to do so, after an inspection finding that they were manipulating the hiring data to make themselves look good relative to the goals and objectives they said they could achieve. They brought with them a model of mergers and acquisition that said break everything down in to parts, throw out parts that don't produce, get rid of individuals who are not loyal to you personally, and promote those that are loyal to positions of power and authority even if they do not have the expertise to lead the work unit.

In the Training Division, we hired an individual from the IRS who engineered a leadership development system based on core competencies. In his effort to 'transform' the FBI to his successful prior system, he failed to understand the short falls of competency systems, believed everything that was being done was totally wrong, was not open to any advice about the organizational culture, and could not communicate with our law enforcement working partners. He was a very bright man, with many good ideas and success that may have made a positive difference if he had created a partnership with the existing Leadership Development staff to take what was working well and to add his insight and experiences to create a new development system that would have been transformative by utilizing some transactional interventions. This leads me to conclude, in this case, that it is important to balance out transformative systems with transactional decisions. All transactions are not bad and all transformative initiatives are not all good.

I believe one of the most serious impediments to change in the identification, selection, development and placement of individuals who would lead this organization is the unknown of what a professional, well grounded, objective system would produce. Would it produce an individual with a profile inconsistent with the current leaders? Would it identify flaws in our hiring practices to include our diversified programs, the hiring of particular professional groups (i.e. lawyers, accountants, scientists, etc.)? Would it run counter to court decisions and law suit settlements?

Lastly, I would consider what gets rewarded internally and where are the pressures externally. Leadership development is not a high priority, whereas solving cases, preventing terrorism, and collecting intelligence is. How often does Congress, specially those committees and sub-committees

who provide oversight and funding, want to know how we hire, develop, evaluate and reward leadership as compared to questions on intelligence failures, employees gone bad, technology issues, and how are we protecting whistle blowers (who are at times some of our worst employees that we can not fire).⁹¹

Still, one of the factors against transformational change is that the FBI's leaders and managers appear wedded to transactional solutions. They are problem solvers by nature and tend to think in terms of the immediate challenge, sometimes without looking at the long term effects or unintended consequences. Examination of the eighteen month temporary duty program to allows a fuller understanding of this dynamic.

The program was initiated to provide developmental opportunities to FBI Special Agents through an eighteen month temporary duty tour at FBIHQ, while eliminating a major barrier to service at FBIHQ, that being the impacts of moving a family to the high cost Washington D.C. metropolitan area. The candidates selected were to be paid full per diem during their tenure at Headquarters and given a term GS-14 rank for the duration of their assignment. The program also helped fill critical staffing needs at FBIHQ and on its surface seemed like a good idea. It also appeared to be cost efficient as the total cost for the temporary duty tour was estimated at approximately \$72,000.00 compared to an average cost of \$85,000.00 to transfer an employee to FBIHQ.

The program had several unintended consequences including a deleterious impact the program had on field division operations. Many of the volunteers who were selected for the program were among the most senior and most productive agents in the field. Losing the experience of these agents without any backfill of resources created gaps in the ability of field divisions to execute their operations at the same level of competence. Additionally, the solution offered an eighteen month stop-gap measure that turned out to be more expensive for the organization than originally intended.

The current budget environment has seen a Congress willing to invest in the long-term health of the FBI. While this suggests additional resources, particularly funding, may be available for the FBI to invest in long term solutions or long range goals, real or perceived fiscal irresponsibility may quickly negate any gains. Furthermore, the reality is

⁹¹ Ferrence, interview.

that funding is not unlimited and the current federal deficit does not bode well for the future. Additionally, Congress wants to see tangible results, so FBI organizational investments that are geared toward the short-term are more likely to receive funding. This leads to budget conditions more favorable to transactional solutions rather than transformational change.

There are certainly some dedicated, forward-thinking leaders and managers in the FBI who have championed and continue to advocate the concept of developing a leadership pipeline. This is not a new idea and when it has surfaced in the past, it has invariably run up against senior staff who are satisfied with the status quo and who are not only overwhelmed by competing short-term goals and priorities, but who have themselves benefited from rising within the current system of individual career management. Many of these leaders see criticism of the status quo as an attack on their leadership and are therefore less than enthusiastic about driving the change.

Finally, the politics surrounding change is complicated with external stakeholders such as Congress, GAO, NAPA and the American Public all advocating the FBI implement sweeping organizational change. This is balanced against powerful special interest groups and individuals who are resistant to change or who have their own visions of what and how change should be implemented. Interestingly, these powerful self-interested or special interest groups can potentially become powerful facilitators or instruments of change.

An example of such a group that has become an agent for change for the FBI is a group of African American agents known as “Black Agents Don’t Get Equality” or BADGE. The BADGE group successfully sued the FBI in order to force the Bureau to revamp its promotional system for all Special Agent mid-level management positions. The lawsuit and a binding legal settlement subsequently required the Bureau to utilize specific assessment tools to identify and select mid-level leaders and managers at the GS-14 and GS-15 grade levels. The assessment tools selected included a Leadership Skills Assessment initially comprised of a written occupational personality inventory and

business reasoning test followed by a verbal role playing exercise in which candidates act in a supervisory capacity at the appropriate level and are scored against the eight identified core leadership competencies.

While the BADGE litigation hoped to provide a mechanism to assist individuals interested in serving at mid-level leadership and managerial positions in the FBI, the lawsuit settlement legally bound the Bureau to implement the use of this process without conducting much research into the use of assessment tools. Fortunately, the presiding Federal Court views the assessment tools as acceptable and in a 1995 article for *Public Personnel Management journal*, authors G.F. Coulton and Hubert S. Field determine federal courts have traditionally viewed assessment centers as a preferred technique toward remedying discrimination in human resource decisions, particularly those concerning race and gender issues.⁹²

The use of these tools may suggest the FBI is on the right track, however, the implementation of the LSA has been far from perfect. First, the use of the occupational personality and business reasoning or written portion of the test was suspended, leading many of the rank and file Special Agents who took the test to question the validity of the testing process. Shortly after the decision was made to abandon the written portion of the test, approximately 200 individuals who had taken and passed the test, were told their results no longer met the passing threshold and that they now had failing scores. While the reasons behind suspending the written assessment and re-aligning the test scores may have been valid and made perfect organizational sense, the glitches in the implementation of the LSA have had an undeniable negative impact on the trust emerging leaders place in their senior executives. The perceived “changing of the rules” after the assessments were conducted raises serious ethical and possible legal issues.

Moreover, the FBI rushed to implement a transactional fix to a legitimate problem that was identified well in advance by the BADGE litigants and ordered by the Court to be repaired by a specific date. The FBI did so admittedly without conducting the appropriate research or without placing the changed processes into the context of a larger

⁹² G.F. Coulton and Hubert S. Field, “Using Assessment Centers in Selecting Entry Level Police Officers: Extravagance or Justified Expense?” *Public Personnel Management*, Vol. 24 (1995): 223-254.

leadership development framework. They simply fixed the identified problem and in doing so created additional unintended consequences, the results of which remain to be seen.

Bestselling author Malcolm Gladwell suggests in his book, “The Tipping Point,” the possibility that sudden change occurs at the center of that point or moment where an issue reaches critical mass and “tips” toward sweeping, meaningful, or transformational change. Gladwell describes that point where radical change becomes more than a possibility and moves toward becoming a certainty. He looks at epidemics as a model of how changes start and examines those points where a movement, good idea, solution to a problem or next great thing gets started. Gladwell concludes starting epidemics requires first concentrating resources in a few key areas.⁹³

What if the BADGE lawsuit had been looked at differently? Suppose the issues identified by the BADGE litigants had been reframed as a strategic issue for the entire FBI rather than viewed in the context of a tightly focused, targeted problem in need of an immediate solution?

With the clarity of hindsight, it is easy to see the BADGE lawsuit had the potential to become a “tipping point” for FBI leadership as it brought together external stakeholders such as the Department of Justice and the Courts and powerful internal stakeholders in the form of the BADGE litigants to identify systemic problems in the manner and means utilized by the FBI to identify and select its Special Agent mid-level leaders and managers. It also dealt with diversity issues and for the FBI to be an effective representative of the American public, it must mirror the diversity of the public it serves. There was an unseen opportunity to leverage these powerful change agents as “tipping points” toward truly transformational change.

⁹³ Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2002), 12-14.

B. A POLICY RECOMMENDATION FOR LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMATION

Comprehensive, long-term solutions are never easy. They typically require a great deal of effort and resources to implement. Furthermore, FBI Special Agents are by their very nature adept at short-term problem solving. They are hired because of demonstrated autonomy and because they are self-directed. Their roles after being hired require them to very quickly and logically find solutions to broad ranging problems. They are good at finding holes in cases, building arguments based upon statutory requirements, and working in ever-changing, fast-paced environments where their decisions may have tremendous consequences up to and including the difference between life and death. They intuitively understand how to identify and address specific problems while expending a minimum of effort, time, and expense.

FBI Agents are much less adept or comfortable facing abstract problems requiring dramatic exponential change. They don't always recognize the implications of their short-term solutions. They typically default to behaviors such as short-term problem solving skills that have led to individual and organizational success. They often have trouble seeing the benefits of long-term change.

Given that dynamic, what must occur to set conditions for those few individuals and entities or "tipping points" within and external to the FBI holding the power to drive change and tip transformation to create an epidemic of transformational change in the Bureau's leadership methods? If the FBI is not performing as well as it should, is in need of change; and you accept that the key to long-term or strategic change lies in the Bureau's leadership corps, how do you move the Bureau toward the strategic vision of an FBI "led by the finest law enforcement and national security leaders in the world?"

Steven Kerman in writing about change in government organizations observes that the notion people resist change is oversimplified. Kelman argues there are typically two constituencies in large government organizations, one for change and one for the status quo.⁹⁴ The dynamic suggested by Kelman most certainly exists within the FBI.

⁹⁴ Steven Kelman, *Unleashing Change: A Study of Organizational Renewal in Government* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2005), 6.

There are supporters of the Bureau's "As Is" practice of individual career management and there are individuals who see the need for the FBI to move toward a different model of leadership development and placement. Enough controversy currently exists and enough incremental changes are being enacted that conditions may favor initiation of a change process driven by interested external and key internal stakeholders. The key to finding the "tipping point" suggested by Gladwell will be to think more broadly and to raise the level of debate so those specific shortcuts to innovative ideas concerning change can be rediscovered and exploited, turning the debate into an epidemic and resulting in a true transformation of the FBI's leadership practices.

Burns description of the differences between transactional and transformational leadership helps define the "As Is" verses the "To Be" states of the FBI with regard to its leadership.⁹⁵ Transactional leadership is the kind of leadership the FBI has engaged in to cure its many ills. It has made many changes or adjustments to the manner and mechanisms it uses to appease the politicians and hopefully in doing so, improve the way it functions. The FBI has identified and fixed many organizational and institutional shortcomings, but what if the FBI did something truly transformational and altered the way it identifies, selects, develops, evaluates and places its future leaders. What if the FBI looked at leadership as the essential system from which every other aspect or plan flows? Transforming the FBI leadership lines of identification, selection, professional development, evaluation and placement into an interconnected, overarching system would secure for all time the future of one of America's great institutions.

Much like the United States army in the years following Vietnam, the FBI is at a crossroad. Post-Vietnam, the army recognized it needed to transform. A great deal of introspection occurred and in a renaissance of leadership, the army remade itself as "The Army of Excellence." It did so by embarking on a path that focused on developing leadership and professional leadership development was institutionalized at all levels. Today it is the best led army in the world. Post-9/11 the FBI would do well to emulate the army's experience and fix its leadership problems first. Here are a few suggested

⁹⁵ Burns, *Transforming Leadership*, 24.

recommendations toward transforming the FBI's leadership through the initiation of a "leadership pipeline" approach to the identification, selection, professional development, evaluation and placement of FBI Special Agent leaders:

- The FBI should consider the development of overarching leadership principles that augment the core values of the organization and serve as those intangibles that every leader knows and that guide every leader's actions. Similar principles are used by the military with great effect. Developing guiding leadership principles will help create and sustain a leadership culture of excellence in the FBI. A suggested set of FBI leadership principles (to generate discussion) follows:
 - Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions.
 - Know yourself and seek self-improvement.
 - Be honest with and never compromise your integrity.
 - Know your people and look out for their welfare.
 - Set the example by being technically proficient and never ask a subordinate to do something you are unable or unwilling to do yourself.
 - Keep your subordinates, peers and superiors informed, speak with frankness and candor.
 - Develop a sense of vision and focus on the bigger picture.
 - Learn to lead by being led.
 - Pay attention to the details by making sure every task is understood, supervised and accomplished
 - Set conditions for success by knowing your limitations and the limitations of your team; employ them in accordance with their abilities.
 - Praise in public and constructively criticize in private.
 - Be decisive.
- All Special Agents should be required to take the Leadership Skills Assessment (LSA) test upon the completion of their probationary special agent period and completing a minimum of one year as a Special Agent. All SA's will be required to take the LSA by their sixth year in the FBI. This will provide a baseline of leadership in the FBI and will help identify personnel with high leadership potential. During periods where the FBI's pool of voluntary leadership candidates does not meet organizational requirements, identified high performing and high potential leaders could be subject to involuntary promotion.

- Further development of a valid mechanism to identify at the 3-5 year mark Special Agents with the aptitude to become the FBI's future leaders that goes beyond the limitations of the current LSA should be explored. This mechanism should include psychological testing, and a comprehensive skills test such as the LSA currently in use. All SA's should be required to take the tests and be provided with feedback as a developmental tool. SA's who pass the test and desire additional leadership training should submit an application to serve as a relief supervisor and be interviewed and career boarded as part of their selection as a relief or supervisor trainee. Selection should come with monetary incentives such as a step increase.
- Professional education should be emphasized by the organization at all levels and should be programmed to cover a minimum of ten percent or around two years worth of professional education in a twenty year career. Selection as a Relief Supervisor should trigger the first formal professional development training opportunity and require completion of combination distance learning, in-residence, and on-the-job training consisting of basic supervisory skills. Mentoring by supervisory personnel and senior leaders should commence at this point. Qualifications should be documented in a critical skills book in the same manner the FBI documents the acquisition of critical skills for probationary agents.
- Upon successful completion of the relief supervisor's course and at least one year as a relief, and upon reaching and spending one year in the grade of GS-13 (on the premise you have to make "agent" before you can make supervisor), the candidate would be eligible to compete for a slot at the Supervisory Development Institute or leadership academy.
- Upon selection for the FBI Supervisory Development Institute Leadership Academy (SDLIA) and prior to reporting to his/her first supervisory assignment, the candidate should attend and successfully complete an FBI command college similar to the FBI National Academy or the British Command College, but geared towards the unique skills required by FBI leaders. This school should help meet the requirements for the academic portion of the newly created intelligence officer certification and should provide at least 15 hours of graduate level credit. The FBI should enter into an agreement with an accredited university to develop a program to allow SSA's to continue to work on-line to obtain additional credits toward a master's degree in an appropriate discipline such as national security studies, strategic intelligence or criminal justice management. Advanced education at the graduate degree level should be a pre-requisite for further advancement to the GS-15 level. SDILA graduates will be assigned to their first supervisory job based upon the needs of the FBI and if possible in accordance with their own desires. Consideration should be given to a merit system whereby class rank determines the degree of choice an individual has over their first supervisory assignment.

- Subsequent application for supervisory jobs should require a resume and application detailing the candidate's qualifications and verified by individuals familiar with the candidate's qualifications. An interview panel should be part of the selection process and the last three performance appraisals for the candidate should be taken into consideration. Given the increased interaction by FBI personnel with outside or other agencies, letters of recommendation from individuals outside of the FBI should be considered by career boards in the future. Psychological profiles and test scores for the leadership aptitude test should also be evaluated. Past work related assignments in the SA's career track of Counter-terrorism, Counterintelligence, Intelligence, Cyber crime, and Criminal subprograms should be considered as well as pre-FBI experiences, professional certifications, and educational background. Selection should be evaluation based and placement in jobs should be prioritized with the needs of the Bureau coming first. This should not be without the desires of the individual being expressed. As detailed below, the FBI should develop a career counseling and placement center to help monitor the development of FBI Special Agent leaders and ensure the leadership needs of the organization are being effectively met.
- All GS-14 and GS-15 assignments should have minimum term limits of 3 years and maximum term limits of 5 years. (With possible exceptions for critical operations, personal hardship, or hardship tours in undesirable places.) This will allow for better succession planning and continuity of operations and leadership within the FBI. High performing and high potential leaders exhibiting traits desirable at the next level of leadership will be encouraged to move up earlier.
- At the conclusion of the five year term, individuals desiring to re-compete for their existing assignment will be allowed to do so. This will provide separate leadership pools in the leadership pipeline for individuals who have technical skills such as advanced teaching credentials, bomb technicians, laboratory scientists, etc. to remain in their positions so the organization can continue to benefit from their technical expertise. It will also allow supervisors with existing family needs to stay in their positions to attend to their individual requirements without being financially harmed by being forced to step down. Re-competing for a job at the five year mark will allow bosses to make a change if they are not happy with the performance of the incumbent.
- 360 degree reviews should be conducted of all FBI Special Agent leaders at each successive grade level (GS-14, GS-15 and SES) as a developmental tool and as a reality check for the individual and the organization. This would help eliminate the careerist or at least separate him from the professional in the Special Agent leadership ranks.

- SES selections should be performance and skills based, should come with a minimum commitment and increased financial incentives that are performance based. The entire work history of SES candidates should be considered and psychological testing administered to effectively place SES executives in the jobs they are best suited for. There should be a minimum of 30 days overlap for all SES positions as part of an overall continuity in leadership plan.
- All GS-15 applicants will be required to have a master's degree or equivalent as an educational requirement. Upon selection to a GS-15 position, candidates will be required to attend an advanced command college or Executive Development Institute designed to prepare the designee for greater responsibilities. Strategic Planning skills will be emphasized during the Executive Development Institute. As is the current practice, EDI classes will be conducted with the entire range of FBI leaders, both agent and non-agent. Problem solving, program and project management, strategic planning, change leadership, and crisis management skills will be emphasized. Individual and group projects focused on solving organizational problems will be required. ASAC candidates will be required to be inspection certified. Special Agent positions at the GS-15 level will be awarded based upon the needs of the FBI and if possible in accordance with the desires of the candidates.
- Organizational changes to manage the new "Leadership Pipeline" should include the creation of a Career Counseling and Staffing Unit within the Human Resources Branch. This unit will forecast FBI leadership requirements, provide career counseling for leaders at all levels, maintain skills and abilities data bases in order to effectively place leaders with the right skills in the right jobs as manage skills required by the organization in rising classes of leaders, and place leaders in a manner that is best for the organization, helps develop individuals to their greatest potential and ensures there are no leadership gaps.
- Another organizational change for consideration is the creation of a Knowledge and Futures Unit to manage professional development of Special Agent leaders and to conduct research into re-occurring and emerging issues of concern to the organization. This would allow the FBI to be more proactive, to harness lessons learned in a meaningful way that can be accessed by the entire organization and to systematically seek solutions to organizational problems. One of the responsibilities of the Knowledge and Futures Branch might be to identify issues to be worked on as group and individual projects by attendees at EDI. Imagine an FBI where rising executives are not only able to identify strategic issues, but have a mechanism to conduct meaningful research into finding solutions that can be captured and perhaps utilized by the FBI. If the Bureau funded four EDI courses per fiscal year and each class worked solving two to

three strategic issues, the payback potential for the organization is exponentially great compared to the mechanisms that exist today.

- Finally, the FBI should look at its Special Agent leadership requirements and determine if all the positions currently funded are required for the efficient and effective running of the organization. A Special Agent leadership cadre consisting of over 30 percent of the total number of Special Agent resources seems excessively large.

Borrowing once again from Chan and Mauborgne, Figure 8 below described as an Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create Grid⁹⁶, provides an analytical framework to synopsise the recommendations described above in the context of actions necessary to implement the changes desired. The grid forces leaders to scrutinize the factors for and against change and as it is fairly easy to understand, it serves as an excellent tool to generate additional discussion, the primary goal of this thesis.

Grid Depicting Actions to Create an FBI Special Leadership Pipeline

<u>Eliminate</u> -Individual Career Management -Voluntary LSA -Application based selection in favor of evaluation based selection	<u>Raise</u> -Professional Standards -Identification of high potentials -Professional education to a minimum of 10 percent of a career
<u>Reduce</u> -Number of mid-level Special Agent managers -Short term transactions or incremental changes in favor of long term solutions	<u>Create</u> -A Leadership Pipeline -A Leadership Academy -Leadership Principles -A Career Counseling/Placement Unit -A Knowledge and Futures Unit

Figure 8. Grid Depicting Actions to Create an FBI Special Agent Leadership Pipeline (From Chan and Mauborgne, *Blue Ocean Strategy*, 2004).

⁹⁶ Chan and Mauborgne, *Blue Ocean Strategy*, 35-36.

While the above recommendations are not all inclusive, they represent a potential investment in FBI leaders that is unmatched in the history of the organization. They are proposed in the spirit of provoking thought, generating discussion and moving the FBI in a direction toward positive transformational change relating to its leadership corps. They are pieces of the “Just One Thing” or overarching policy recommendation that the FBI scrap its current system of individual career management in favor of a leadership pipeline to create a professional FBI Special Agent leadership corps. Taken together they represent the type of integrated, whole systems approach needed to improve the FBI’s Special Agent leadership capacity.

As Michael Useem, Director of the Wharton School’s Center for Leadership and Change Management once wrote,

...I take leadership to signify the act of making a difference. Leadership entails changing a failed strategy or revamping a failing organization. It requires an active choice among plausible alternatives, and it depends on bringing others along, on mobilizing them to get the job done. Leadership is at its best when the vision is strategic, the voice persuasive, the results tangible.⁹⁷

If FBI leaders are going to make a difference, and in order for the Bureau to truly transform, the FBI must start making serious investments in the people it hopes to develop to lead it into the 21st century. To do this, the FBI needs to move away from the current system of individual career management and develop a system of organizational professional development or a “leadership pipeline.”

⁹⁷ Michael Useem, *The Leadership Moment* (New York: Random House, 1998), 4.

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