

MBD & associates

Your Leadership

Empowered or Endangered?

An effectiveness index for Mayors and Council Members

**The Leadership Challenge for the 90's
Designing the Future and Leading Today**

Your Leadership: Empowered or Endangered?

Leadership

Yes/No

1. Does the City Council have a stated and published Vision for the Year 2010?
2. Are Annual Goals set and published by the Council?
3. Are Roles and Expectations clarified and mutually understood by all City policy makers?

Personal Action Notes

Process

1. Are the necessary resources provided to Boards, Commissions and Management to carry out their roles?
2. Do the Boards, Commissions and management set goals and are they consistent with the City Vision?
3. Does the Council meet with the Boards and Commissions to set expectations and convey the City Vision?
4. Is there a clear feedback mechanism(s) between the Council and the Boards, Commissions and Management?
5. Are there effective processes to utilize citizen groups' expertise and support prior to Council decisions?

Personal Action Notes

Actions

1. Are decisions consistent with and designed to advance the City Vision?
2. Is there a known decision process?
3. Are implementation resources made available when decisions are made?
4. Are decisions reviewed for necessary adjustment during implementation?
5. Does the City celebrate successes?

Personal Action Notes

Community Perception

Yes/No

1. Does the media treat City information and Council actions seriously?
2. Do residents participate in City celebrations?
3. Are there City/Council organizational partnership activities?

Personal Action Notes

Leader Succession

1. Is there a known, published process for selection to serve on City Boards and Commissions?
2. Do Council members actively recruit citizens for membership on the City's Boards and Commissions?
3. Are opportunities created for Council members to share their Vision with current and potential members of the City's Boards and Commissions?
4. Do active citizen leaders run for office, supporting the City Vision and the community's belief in its future?

Personal Action Notes

Score

Count the number of Yes answers in each section

Leadership	_____
Process	_____
Action	_____
Perception	_____
Leader Succession	_____
Total	_____

15+ Your leadership is designing your City's future.
10+ Keep working, you are headed in the right direction.
9 or less Your leadership may be on the endangered list.

This book has attempted to simplify the orientation period as you acquaint yourself with your new city. Hopefully, by following the guidelines in this book you will successfully manage your new job. In addition to these guidelines, there is plenty of assistance available from other city managers. All you must do is pick up the telephone and call another city manager, use the Internet to e-mail an inquiry to a fellow city manager, post an inquiry on a city government electronic bulletin board--e.g. Access Local Government (<http://www.algov.org>) or The Innovation Groups (WWW.IG.ORG), and/or attend regularly scheduled city manager meetings in your region. (Call the Texas City Management Association, 512-719-6300, or check TCMA's website (<http://www.tcma.org>), for the dates and times of these meetings.)

To give you an idea of the basic types of information available from other city managers, the following are "survival tips" provided by experienced city managers who have learned the hard way. These tips are not necessarily articulated or formulated to win the originator any recognition. In fact, these tips might be frowned upon by academia, but in a way there are more words of wisdom in most of these tips than in some three-hour graduate course in public administration.

City Council Relations

"It is easier to replace a city manager than to replace a majority of the city council." **Craig Lonon**, City Administrator, Conroe.

"Never count your councilmembers' votes before they are cast." **Kelvin Knauf**, City Manager, Lago Vista.

"Be available; where three or more (councilmembers) are gathered together, in my name, there I shall be also." **Joe Pence**, City Administrator, Henrietta.

"After giving the best advice possible, the city council, in a democracy, has the right to be wrong and do idiotic things." **Leland Nelson**, retired City Manager, University Park

"Keep your city council out in front and leading as much as you can, especially if they happen to be going in the right direction." **Tom Hart**, City Manager, Euless.

"You have to learn how to change... how to dance the two-step when the city council is dancing the two-step, how to dance the waltz when the council is waltzing, how to polka, etc. And sometimes, when the council is retreating, then you should be ready to attack!" **Lou Fox**, former Professor of Urban Studies, Trinity University, and former City Manager, San Antonio.

"Find out what is the city council's most pressing concern or what they emphasize in their evaluation of the city manager. If it is the fund balance, then protect the fund balance. If it is a top-notch police department, then support the police department. Now this doesn't mean that you sacrifice your principles for city council approval, but if you can't survive the first year or two with the council, then you will never have the opportunity to impact the city!" **James Thurmond**, City Manager, Missouri City.

"Use department heads to present reports to the city council whenever possible. Rehearse with the staff prior to the meeting so that surprises will be avoided. Eliminate technical jargon and excess verbiage. Most of all, provide a list of options and ask the Council to support the one recommended by the staff. Two or more heads are better in presentations to the Council than just yours." **Daniel Crawford**, Finance Director, Tyler.

"The staff proposes and the city council disposes." **Jack Harzke**, retired City Manager.

Perception

"Appearance can be as important or more important than performance. I carry and religiously use a 'Day Timer' Planner/Diary System wherever I go. The truth is I would be lost without my book, but the general public, the city council included, see me as organized, whether I use the book or not, because I carry it everywhere." **Tom Adams**, City Manager, San Angelo.

"In this business, perception is everything--reality is nothing. Always be cognizant of how your projects, equipment, reports, etc., look--that is how they will be judged." **Lanny Lambert**, City Manager, The Colony.

"What's in a title? Some years ago, Army Intelligence used to teach courses on "Lock-Picking" and "Electronic Bugging"--euphemisms for going where you were not wanted and eavesdropping. Parents of GIs complained, because they didn't want their sons learning how to get into someone else's property or to snoop on somebody else's conversations. So, Army Intelligence changed the titles of the courses to 'Defense Against Methods of Entry,' and "Defense Against Signal Equipment". The same courses were taught, but no more complaints were received. So, if one title doesn't work in your town, then try another." **Marvin Norwood**, retired City Manager, Woodway and Alvin.

"Be yourself, both during the interview and after you get the job. If you put on an act, you will be on stage a long time." **Joe Pence**, City Manager, Henrietta

Politics

"Remember that no matter how good the idea, or how progressive the proposal, community politics conquers all." **Kelvin Knauf**, City Manager, Lago Vista.

"Be sure you understand, you can live, and you can work with the value structure in the community. Councils will come and go, but the community values remain." **Jim C. Blagg**, former City Manager, Abilene.

"Our code of ethics prohibits our involvement in politics, our charters separate politics from administration, but to survive we better be students of politics." **Jim C. Blagg**, former City Manager, Abilene.

"The art of government is conducting business in such a manner as to satisfy the irritated without irritating the satisfied." **Bill Keffler**, City Manager, Richardson.

"Keep your friends close and your enemies closer." **Greg Vick**, City Manager, Cedar Hill.

"When asked how you voted in an election, say "My candidate always wins." **Ron Wicker**, City Manager, Seabrook.

Management

"We do miracles by appointment only." **Joseph F. Kiefer, Jr.**, former Deputy City Manager, Temple.

"The timing of an idea or project often outweighs the merits of the project or idea." **Craig Lonon**, City Administrator, Conroe.

"Be humble. I finally realized after many years that being a city manager is not a 'calling,' it is simply a job, and a damn difficult one at times." **Joe Pence**, City Administrator, Henrietta.

"There are three attributes needed for city management: (1) Maintain your physical conditioning; (2) Like people; (3) Maintain your congruency -- i.e., be in agreement with your city and organization, day in and day out." **Lou Fox**, former Professor of Urban Studies, Trinity University, and former City Manager, San Antonio.

"The two things that will get you in trouble quicker than anything else in this business are fooling with people's dogs and kids." **Greg Vick**, City Manager, Cedar Hill.

"It's not the pressure your job produces that hurts--it's how you take it." **Lanny S. Lambert**, City Manager, The Colony.

"Be patient. Develop a feel for your city's political attitudes. Don't try to change too fast. It doesn't take a lot of skill to identify needed change. It takes a great deal of skill, in many instances, to implement change." **Gary Gwyn**, former City Manager, Grand Prairie (now with the Brazos River Authority).

"Learn timing! It is critical. It can mean the difference in a project succeeding or failing; you being a hero or a villain; getting a raise or getting fired. Choose your timing carefully!" **Tom Hart**, City Manager, Euless.

"One of the hardest lessons I learned was not to take issues personally. In fact, I am still learning!" **Tom Hart**, City Manager, Euless.

"If you don't have a school crossing guard, don't get one. If you have one, don't try to get rid of it." **Joe Michie**, retired City Manager.

Ten Tips for a Newly Appointed Small Town City Manager

1. Don't mess with the volunteer fire department.
2. Don't even take a job in a small city that operates a zoo or bus system.
3. Don't create a department with a made-up name that Aunt Minnie doesn't understand what they do, e.g., Public Service or Environmental Control.
4. Don't change the cemetery maintenance or procedure. make the cemetery a showplace, if you do anything.
5. Don't raise water or electric rates in the summer.
6. Don't pass a sign/billboard ordinance.
7. Don't pass a dog ordinance unless forced to do so. Never pass a cat ordinance.
8. Don't refuse to see a citizen or refuse to return a phone call (same day if possible).
9. Don't change the garbage collection. People are proud of their garbage.
10. Don't be surprised to read about your bar bill at the Waldorf in the local newspaper after your trip to New York for a bond rating.

Joe A. Michie, retired City Manager.

"One of the hardest lessons I learned was not to take issues personally. In fact, I am still learning!" **Tom Hart**, City Manager, Euless.

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“When confronted with a problem, whether citizens or employees, follow these three rules:

- 1) Listen.
- 2) Listen again.
- 3) Listen some more!"

Ivan Langford III, General Manager, Galveston WCID #1, and former City Manager, La Marque.

"Like all CEO's, city managers run a high risk of allowing a well-used proven path become a deep rut from which escape is difficult or impossible." **Larry Cunningham**, City Manager, North Richland Hills.

“When deciding whether or not to do something, particularly as to whether or not it is right or wrong, simply apply the 'front page of the newspaper test'. If your decision or actions were published on the front page of the newspaper (as well it may be), could you defend it? If the answer is 'No', then you probably shouldn't be doing it." **Marvin Norwood**, former City Manager, Woodway and Alvin.

"Best time to work on the organization (i.e., reorganization) is after retirement or death." **Marvin Townsend**, former City Manager, Corpus Christi and Laredo.

"There is not a single issue which the city should get wrapped up in. There should be a box of issues." **Marvin Townsend**, former City Manager, Corpus Christi and Laredo.

Philosophical Thoughts

"Just because you are not paranoid does not mean they are not out to get you." **Ken Taylor**, former City Manager, Portland and Taylor (now in Henderson).

"If the government has the capability to kill everybody on earth five times over, how come they can't do anything about mosquitoes?" **Bill Keffler**, City Manager, Richardson

"Always follow-up on 'Requests for Service', otherwise the complainants will follow-up on you." **Cale Diaz**, former Assistant City Manager, Uvalde.

"Focus on results and not on the process." **Lou Fox**, professor of urban studies, Trinity University, and former City Manager, San Antonio.

"Don't ask the question unless you want to live with the answer!" **Chuck Owens**, retired City Manager, Lewisville.

"God must have liked city governments--he made so many of them! What does this say for the federal government?" **James Thurmond**, City Manager, Missouri City.

"Survival is not the bottom line. Maintaining your integrity is." **Warren Driver**, City Manager, Tomball.

" I do not necessarily agree that municipal government can be run like a business. I would agree, however, that a municipal government can be run in a business-like way." **Larry Cunningham**, City Manager, North Richland Hills