



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Lessons from the Field:

Reflections, Advice, and Survival Tips from USAID Mission Directors



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“Lessons from the Field” (LFTF), represents the reflections, advice, and survival tips from current and former mission directors. The candid comments are presented without attribution and, as much as possible, without editing.

Ruth Derr of M/HR/TE, who originally compiled *LFTF*, saw it as a living document to be updated as additional suggestions came forth. In late 2011, Mission Directors were again surveyed for their suggestions and they are included in this revised version.

Thanks to the Mission Directors who contributed and shared their wisdom.

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Leading and Managing Inside

Getting to Know and Taking Care of Your People:

- 1) Set up individual meetings with everyone:** Set as a priority to schedule time to meet one on one with everyone on your staff when you first arrive.
- 2) Learn the name of everyone who works at the Mission.** Find out about their families, their hobbies, their strengths.
- 3) Invite people to your home:** FSNs are the heart and backbone of the USAID Mission while USDHs rotate in and out. Maybe it's an "old school" approach, and not something everyone should do, but we have invited all Mission staff, FSNs, PSCs, USDHs, to our home in small groups of 4 or so, to weekly family meals over the year, and people have responded very warmly. It also develops your "team" and you'll be able to reap huge rewards in the long term.
- 4) Connect with staff in personal ways:** Organize and participate in events where it doesn't matter that you are the boss like sports activities, school activities, etc. Celebrate weddings and births; and show support during difficult times like serious illnesses and death.
- 5) Take care of your people during times of tragedy, trauma, or crisis:** If you do, they'll take care of you. In the Foreign Service, we are a family and our jobs/family are really 24/7.
- 6) Ensure there is effective performance management in place:**
 - **Build the Mission Team:** Jointly defining work objectives and performance measures helps people recognize mutual interdependence. Staff should recognize that an important part of the Director's job is to enable everyone to accomplish their respective part of tasks that are team/intra-agency work efforts. These areas of responsibilities should be developed with the Mission at the beginning of the rating cycle and be reflected in individual work objectives. This not only strengthens the teams in the Mission, but it also makes doing good AEFs a lot easier. This should apply to anyone working on a joint effort, regardless of employment category. Each entity should define what others can expect of/depend on them to do and should also articulate what they expect from/depend on all other Mission units.
 - **Connect with staff in a professional way:** Mentor your staff to be successful. Look for opportunities to give positive feedback.

- **Don't tolerate poor performance: Give constructive feedback immediately.** If performance doesn't improve, work with employee to develop an improvement program. Keep AID/HR informed of consistently poor performer and develop a plan --Learn how to "work around" the consistently poor performers.
- **Set expectation that staff interact positively with colleagues from other agencies at post** – invite other agency folks on USAID field trips.

7) Create a culture of trust:

- **Treat FSNs with respect and dignity:** Generally FSNs distrust management. They think you have more information and authority than you actually do. You can build trust by being transparent – share as much information with as you possibly can. Meet with FSNs on a regular basis, perhaps monthly or quarterly.
- **Treat Contracting, Controller, and EXOs like development officers, not second-class "support" officers:** First, they respond better. Second, they have a great deal of technical expertise to impart, particularly if you are trying to build indigenous capacity. Most of our indigenous partners have the technical expertise but lack the financial and administrative capacity to remain viable. COs and Controllers, in particular, can be valuable resources in helping local partners become viable entities.
- **Trust your staff: Follow-up on important things when unsure.**
- **Be transparent, share information:** Hold All Hands Meetings at least once a quarter to brief the entire mission staff on what the front office has been up to, what is going on in Washington, what the strategic goals/priorities are for the upcoming months or year, etc. This serves to keep the mission personnel at all levels engaged and informed, not just senior staff. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!
- **Involve staff in decision-making:** Present management issues to the general staff, seek staff input in problem solving and act swiftly on recommendations. When you build trust between you and the staff by getting them involved, you will have fewer management headaches.
- **Do keep a real and true open door policy:** As Powell says, once the soldiers don't think they can talk to you, you have lost the ability to lead. Don't let office chiefs sandbag this by demanding that their subordinates clear items with them before discussing with you.

- **Create safe places to be frank:** Provide a calm center and a forum where people can express their ideas and perspectives with you in private.
 - **Ask questions and listen:** Ask people questions and listen to understand from the perspective of the speaker, especially if you think you already know the answers. Maximize the Socratic dialogue as a tool.
 - **DON'T play favorites:** Not with the FSNs and not with the Americans – this is very easy to do and is a bummer – those outside the circle resent it and will work against you.
- 8) Get ahead of the assignment cycle and actively and personally recruit your own team, but remain respectful of people you haven't worked with before** – some of the best USAID Mission talent comes from unexpected places.
- 9) Select USDHs who have excellent communication and interpersonal skills over technical skills:** Such an officer will help you create a good work environment. Technical expertise is wasted on someone who is difficult to work with and everyone avoids. In fact, a USDH with poor interpersonal skills will create more work for you.
- 10) Anticipate predictable problems:** For example, housing assignments and spousal hire will be contentious topics at most posts including at the interagency level. Don't be surprised, be prepared.

Building your Senior Management Team:

- 1) Hold weekly meetings Office Directors:** You need to know what's going on and communicate your vision to your staff.
- 2) Let Office Directors know what decision making power they have:** Coach office directors. Delegating downward does not mean abandoning all control/responsibility.
- 3) Augment talent when necessary:** Assess staff skills and provide backup. Try to separate private frank assessment and coaching from public comment and AEF ratings. Bring in SMEs to help frame and carry out major tasks. Make sure that your staff learns vicariously from experts. Talent can be found in unusual places. Always ask about backgrounds, interests and experience when meeting people living in country.

- 4) **Develop your staff:** Make sapience available to your staff through external coaching and/or other continuing relationships that impart skills and advice in a safe environment.
- 5) **Stay focused on your priorities:** Assess your priorities and try to stay at that level. Accept the fact that you may have to reach a less-than -optimum solution at times. Resist the temptation to personally manage sector offices but meet with them regularly.
- 6) **Demonstrate flexibility: Be willing to change.** Always seek to re-establish roles and priorities that best accommodate new leadership. Failure to appropriately adjust one's operational style is a major contributor to professional disappointment. This is true at all levels.
- 7) **Build staff confidence:** Let them see that you are looking after their individual and collective interests to the maximum extent possible.
- 8) **Get everyone on the same page - Repeat your major messages/themes:** So that all mission staff are on the same page. Everyone needs to understand major priorities.
- 9) **But.....tolerate separate opinions and encourage diversity of thought among your team.** When a decision is made, the team is expected to follow it – but until it's been made, test your assumptions and get wide input.
- 10) **Work hard at developing relations with your Deputy Director.** Many ways of dividing up the workload – find one that you are comfortable with, and once you decide don't backtrack and assume responsibility for things that you agreed were the Deputy's. Some models:
 - 1) "Mr. /Ms Inside and Mr. /Ms Outside"
 - 2) The Alter Ego
 - 3) Principal sector responsibility (e.g., if Deputy is a world class economist, consider giving him/her primary responsibility for Economic Growth portfolio. Ditto with health specialists, lawyers, etc.

USAID Company in the USG Corporation

- 1) **Know the BIG picture:** Be able to articulate how USAID's work fits into foreign policy priorities. Remember, you are seen as a spokesperson for the USG so link country and region-specific initiatives with broader USG policies and priorities. (If you're talking about food security, know how many people are hungry in the world and the size, location and other characteristics of the population you are targeting; make the link of hunger and poverty to terrorism/security.)
- 2) **Always have some success stories at the ready for both USAID globally and your Mission's programs.**
- 3) **Publicity is very important:** Part of the MD's job (and really, no one else can do it as easily in the USAID mission) is selling America – get good at it. This means you have to get out of the office and know your programs, who runs them and how to sell them. The newspaper, the television, and most importantly the radio are your friends. I know many directors who somehow think VIP visits of any kind (congress, white house, secretaries or celebrities) are a big waste of time. They are not. These visits give you the chance to tell America what we do – invaluable really.
- 4) **Coordinate carefully with Embassy Public Affairs offices.** Don't get out messages that are different from or contradictory to overall Embassy policies.
- 5) **There is sometimes a tendency in USAID to think that we can only influence change if we put together a project and spend money:** I've been surprised how much we can influence the debate in our countries about policy reform (both political and economic) through speeches, formal and informal contacts. Referring to current development thinking and using examples from other countries is always a help.
- 6) **Be open, friendly, and informative with the press:** Stick to your script. If you are in a country with a lively and free press, read the papers closely.

Managing Up and Leading Across

Working with the Ambassador:

1) Establish and maintain a working relationship with the Ambassador built on trust and confidence:

- **Set the right tone:** The health of your relationship with the ambassador has an impact on and sets the tone for USAID staff interactions with others in Country Team.
- **Trusting relationship:** If you're going to be effective, you have to have a relationship that allows you to call him/her up whenever you need to, to walk into his/her office, and to discuss issues one on one. You want to be able to say to the Ambassador in the Embassy staff meetings, "can we talk privately about a few issues?" and have the Ambassador respond "of course."
- **Be honest** with your ideas, implications, and reasons behind them. You are in a position to influence the Ambassador's decisions/positions.
- **Take the stands you need to take** and when you disagree, do it in a way that is not confrontational and not in public, to the extent possible.
- **Stay on message in terms of the Ambassador's themes/priorities.** Use the interests of the Ambassador to frame your input and honest opinions.

2) Keep the Ambassador informed and communicate effectively and on a regular basis:

- **Meet with your Ambassador at least once a week** to cultivate the relationship, keep the dialogue ongoing, build partnership, and to avoid micro managing.
- **Be concise.**
- **Don't use "development" jargon.**
- **Provide your best professional advice,** regardless of whether it is what he/she wants to hear or not.
- **Be proactive – avoid surprises.** Don't let the newspaper headlines be the first news s/he gets.

- **Develop an intuitive sense of what to discuss in private vs. public.**
- 3) Showcase the Ambassador by encouraging her/him to visit project sites and make sure the media is present.**
- 4) Do spend time interacting with the Embassy staff:** This will reap rich rewards all the way around. We are part of the USG team. My Ambassador is a BIG believer in leaving uniforms at the door – if you cannot get your arms around this, get some new arms.

Working with the Country Team:

- 1) Be intentional about playing well on the country team:** I was probably spoiled by my first MD assignment in regards to the best Embassy/USAID collaboration and cooperation in any of the ten countries I've served in. It was so natural and the-way-it's-supposed-to-be that it could have taken for granted. I thought it was a reflection of the Ambassador, but when he left post and was replaced, it was clear that it must have been something-in-the-water-at-post, because this superb relationship continued. Reflecting on prior assignments and assignments after that one, what is clearer is that you really have to pay attention to playing well on the Country Team. Doing so with respect gains respect for USAID.
- 2) USG interest comes first:** Within the interagency act first in the USG's overall interest and second in USAID's interest.
- 3) Speak with one voice:** Don't air dirty laundry. Make sure that the Mission speaks with one voice during interagency meetings. Internal USAID differences need to be resolved internally.
- 4) Cultivate the interagency relationships:** Always copy key people from other agencies on e-mails that might be of interest. Always invite them to meetings or field trips. Make them feel that we are always being inclusive, and they generally will reciprocate, making country team run more smoothly, and enhancing the implementation of our programs.
- 5) Step back, be strategic:** Achieve balance while moving forward. A Mission Director manages four (and sometimes more) distinct groups some of which are in potential conflict. These include the interagency, the host government, AID/W and the USAID mission.
- 6) Don't hesitate to lead in the country team.** Remember, you frequently know more than others around the table about a specific issue. And reach out to other agencies. You'll be surprised how receptive other agencies will be to your initiative.

- 7) **Talk to the “other” Agency:** If you can, get yourself included in the weekly intelligence briefings for the Ambassador. You need a special (SCI) clearance, but you won't regret it -- this is especially true if you're in a fragile state and your programs are viewed with suspicion by the host government. The other Agency folks tend to think they have better sources of information than everyone else at post. While this isn't necessarily true, they have contacts we don't have and frequently have interesting pieces to add to the puzzle.

Managing Host Country Relations:

- 1) **Cultivate relationships with Ministers and key government contacts and know them by name.**
- **Meet them in settings other than the office or national days.**
 - **Develop a working relationship so you can easily contact and communicate when the need arises.**
 - **You are in trouble:** If your staff doesn't know the name and office location of the deputy minister (by whatever title).
 - **Having key government contacts is the mission director's job** – you should not put this on other people.
- 2) **Meeting with your implementing partners**
- **Host a partners meeting at least once a quarter.** Give the implementers a chance to hear from the front office, network with each other across sectors and disciplines. This fosters better integration, camaraderie, and provides the Mission Director with an opportunity to communicate priorities from the mission leadership perspective.
 - **Get out and see your projects frequently, and see them as a thought-provoking and energizing experience, not just publicity for USAID.** Don't get chained to your desk. Get out every 6-8 weeks and encourage your staff to do the same, even down to the support staff on occasion. Every time I'm in the field, I learn something our partner and I hadn't expected, and in the process I also find that I often meet an incredibly bright and/or energetic soul or two who is a potential mover and shaker in his/her community. Often these people are the ones that could change the world if they just had a few shekels in their pockets. Look for these people and latch on to them, support them. The best ideas often or I dare say usually, come from below, and in the

field, you have the possibility of discovering them. And pull other people and staff along with you.

3) Have a clear understanding with Ambassador as to level of your contacts with host country. Some COMs want to limit meetings with very high level HC officials to only a few people, others want to see exposure at all levels. Find out and respect decisions. If you believe COM is overly restrictive, explain to him/her why.

4) Coordinating with donors

- **Donor Meetings:** Have a member of your staff at the table of every important donor meeting. Participate fully in policy discussions surrounding budget support even though USAID does not pool its funds.
- **Get Involved:** if you are not involved, the USG money probably isn't getting the biggest bang for the buck. Beyond the meetings, you have to get involved in the nitty-gritty issues, you have to help edit joint statements and you have to entertain.

Working with Washington:

- 1) Cultivate strong relationships with your colleagues in the Reagan Building,** especially the rank and file and your desk officer. They have your back. They are your eyes and ears in Washington and can give you heads-up on what's about to come crashing down on you. They are your advocates.
- 2) Establish communication lines with key staff** in regional and support Bureaus before going out to post – bi-weekly phone calls with senior regional bureau management are extremely helpful.
- 3) Learn the bureaucracy.** It may not be your friend but if you don't figure out how to work it, it'll definitely become your enemy. If you learn enough about the various implementation mechanisms and bureaucratic procedures, then you can usually find ways to get done what you need to.
- 4) Advise your DAA if there is a problem and use your DAA or AA as protector.**
- 5) Solve your management issues before they become a problem for your Bureau.**
- 6) Develop strong relations with appropriate State Department offices.** Know the State country desk officer and any technical people who might have input into post programs. Keep them informed.

Ethical Behavior

- 1) **Perceptions:** I found the most worrisome part as a MD (and watching MD over the years) is that some people may misinterpret innocent acts, or look for ways to attack your reputation if they don't get what they want. Document if there is an incident. Lean on your legal advisor for advice. Get professional insurance. I learned those lessons from a DCM who had been personally threatened and sued by a person who was ultimately fired. She wasn't his supervisor, but he blamed her for his suspension.
- 2) **Contracting:** Stay out of procurement discussions. Make sure you have a technical selection panel that does their job and makes the selection of contracts and grants transparently. When there are political "points" on a procurement (i.e., the Ambassador is pressuring you, or other political reasons), document them so that the record is clear as to why you made a decision. Don't give contracts to your buddies. Don't intervene in contracting unless both the contract officer and the lawyer agree.
- 3) **Document anything else that can bite you in the rear:** Meetings on discipline, politically difficult decisions that you don't agree with, etc. When in doubt, include the legal and procurement officers. If you are forced to make the wrong decision by the Embassy, document it so you don't take the heat for breaking rules or ethics violations.
- 4) **What to do when you might find yourself being told to make a decision that you believe breaks the rules** or is an ethical violation -- invoke Washington, the IG, procurement regs., or in extreme cases the dissent channel. Ethics are not negotiable in my view.
- 5) **Make sure you pay something often on your cell phone bill, your personal use of the vehicle, and anything else to show that you have no problem paying anything that you rightfully owe:** Establish a track record that you are happy to pay, and are doing your best to not take advantage of anything. Do not buy representational china, stemware, silver or any chandeliers for your home. Make sure you stay within your dollar limit on household furniture. Tell your staff frequently that you need to pay bills whenever you owe Uncle Sam money. They are not doing you any favors by "being nice....."
- 6) **When in doubt, don't:** It's important to not just go by the book but also by appearances. Some of those things seem obvious, but I am sure we all know directors who were rumored to do them, or were even kicked out for doing them. Appearance is important. You set the tone for the Mission.

- **Don't use your driver to take your kids to ballet classes.** If allowed by your post, set up a "personal use" account for personal use of official vehicles (pick ups at airport, etc.).
- **Don't pressure anyone in the Mission to hire your spouse or significant other:** And don't use your influence to get people hired.
- **Don't pressure or appear to pressure employees to do personal services for you.**
- **Don't have an affair with an employee, and please don't be found en flagrante in the office with one, and so on.**
- **Don't cheat on your travel and per-diem ... or your spouse.**
- **Obviously, we each can figure out where to draw the line:** Some of the don'ts are things that can get you suspended or worse. Others may affect your image, but not get you punished. Each culture interprets what is acceptable differently, so in each mission you will need to deal with American and foreign sensitivities. Your FSNs may think it only natural to run your personal errands, for example.

Personal Effectiveness

- 1) **Being a bit nervous about a major bump-up in your career is perfectly normal:** I felt it with each new assignment and especially my first directorship! If I didn't feel a little anxiety - that would be a problem - not recognizing the challenge, responsibility etc.
- 2) **Lead by example and be a role model:** You will be watched to see if your actions match your words.
- 3) **Constantly be in the learning mode:** Always solicit and be receptive to new information and reward innovation.
- 4) **Keep regular hours:** Yeah, we know you work late and have to go to a lot of cocktail parties – too bad. The ship needs a captain and you are it.
- 5) **Be on time for everything:** Keeping people waiting is impolite and unprofessional.
- 6) **Love every minute of it:** Greatest job in the world.
- 7) **Take time to have some fun:** Do not lose your sense of humor. Some directors take themselves so seriously they never have a good laugh with their staff – big mistake.
- 8) **Don't kill yourself trying to be super human:** Take care of yourself – exercise, eat well, rest, and enjoy life.
- 9) **Don't think you are god:** Not even with a small g. Don't ride around town with your driver, your new suit and your almighty attitude in full display. Not only will this turn off your staff, it will make you look like a jerk.
- 10) **Arrogance gets you nowhere but in trouble:** You get a lot more out of people, especially your staff, by preserving your humility.
- 11) **Don't scream, don't throw things, always smile:** Trust your instincts. Help the FSN staff manage change. Over communicate – always. Listen twice as hard as you talk. For a song to be really good, you need good words, good music, and good dance. So, don't only say the right words, use the right tone and the right body language.
- 12) **You are always sending out a message:** People will try to read into everything you do and say, and your body language and non-verbal expressions. If you are a person who wears what you are thinking and feeling on the outside, be more self-aware of the messages you may be sending. So if you are bored or tired remember that people will see your eyes (and attention) drift off; they will see you grimace when

someone at a staff meeting says something that you disagree with or is inappropriate.

- 13) Being a good person may ultimately be more important than having the brightest ideas:** It will probably have the single biggest impact on morale if staff sees this in you. Also, being humble about your ideas will tend to make you reach out to others for their ideas, in the end generating better decisions.
- 14) Take your job seriously, but not yourself.**
- 15) Go to all, or ALMOST all of those receptions:** It is extremely useful in making contacts, and getting things done. But you really do have to recognize and know the names of your ministers. Use receptions to do business and find out what's going.
- 16) Be conscious of the Mission Director mantel:** As Director, you are no longer just you.
- 17) Making friends:** Bad idea in the Mission - creates cliques. Play with everyone or no one. Develop personal relationships outside of Mission.

Establishing Your Leadership Approach

- 1) **It's useful to have and communicate a few basic principles that guide you when leading the mission:** In this time of change, chaos and uncertainty, it's good to have principles to rely upon. Lots of management gurus have written books filled with principles, many excellent, but for me, it's hard to remember and articulate more than a few. At the mission I lead, I've stressed Integrity, Intellectual leadership and Impact – the three Is – as my guiding principles. Trite perhaps, but important to me and easy to remember and articulate. Pick what works for you.

- 2) **Managing a mission is different from managing a technical or support office and demands a different skill set:** Just because someone is good at producing results at one level doesn't mean that they will also be good at a higher level. In essence, you go from having a great deal of control over your staff as an office director to a role in which you are called on to facilitate other's work internally and externally. That professional transition needs to be done consciously.

- 3) **Remember that you're being watched for hints, direction etc.:** What's important for you is important to others. Your views and attitudes will lead your employees' reactions and views so you have to be careful about being positive, supportive, and keeping negative opinions to yourself unless it's appropriate to voice them.

- 4) **Manage your corridor reputation** - it is your political/goodwill capital: Keep an ear to the ground to maintain a sense of the corridor reputation of your program and Mission. Draw people out if there are issues, and take corrective action.

- 5) **Motivation:**
 - **Encouraging, motivating, and rewarding people is critical:** Try to compliment someone's work at one time during your day - it's true that it's almost impossible to give too many compliments in the workplace.

 - **Treat everyone as if their job was the most important to the mission:** This includes drivers, maintenance people, cleaners, guards, etc.

 - **Encourage Mentoring:** Mentor the young, and set examples with your own behavior.

 - **Rewards are VERY important:** Not just the written ones (although do these also) but the oral atta-boys/girls – you have to do both and you have to really feel it and make people feel valued. Make sure your staff is also rewarding their staffs.

 - **Celebrate successes – big and small.**

6) Manage By Walking Around (MBWA): Walk around the mission. Don't always make everyone come to your office, go to theirs (particularly the FSN staff) – it is good for morale (shows you care about what they are working on) and it is good for the Mission Director to keep a direct line open with all staff.

- **Recognize that you may have an open door policy,** but not everyone will feel comfortable walking through it. So walk around.
- **Learn the names of your staff.**
- **Say hello (and smile) each day,** ask about their families, and earn their trust. With trust comes information, and with information, you're able to manage.
- **Have your meetings in other peoples' offices.** It is too easy to get locked up on your computer answering emails and not seeing faces in their environment.

7) Communication:

- **Be transparent: Provide transparency.**
- **Be open enough to recognize good ideas regardless of where they originate:** Sometimes, the most interesting or innovative ideas don't always come from within USAID or even from your best staff, so you need to be open to ideas from the outside and make sure to listen to people on your staff who others dismiss.
- **Seek input:** As a best practice, I sought input from my senior staff (and others, if appropriate) before making a decision. They seemed to appreciate being asked and I got an education. I realize this is not a brilliant new insight: at the MD conference, one of the most important traits of leadership was said to be the ability to say, "I don't know."
- **If people have concerns, it's up to you to create the "safe environment" to express those concerns:** Even if you can't do anything to resolve those concerns, validating their concerns and lending a sympathetic ear is sometimes all that's needed to get people to move on/forward.
- **There are two sides to every story:** Hear both sides out before you judge. Be prepared to play Solomon.
- **Be hard on the issues:** Set high standards, be soft on the people.

- **Give regular feedback:** Provide critical feedback and praise even when you are not enthusiastic. Praise and criticism are tactics and should be consciously applied.
- **Run meetings well:** Keep them focused and short. Insist on an agenda and documents circulated in advance. Be clear on the purpose. Prepare for each meeting and decide what outcome you want.
- **Sharpen your public speaking skills:** Appearing to speak impromptu is an asset as is artfully avoiding questions.

8) Teamwork:

- **Build a strong team:** Make people feel connected while also making each person feel individually valued.
- **Model how to use teams:** Developing your Mission's AEF Work Objectives and Performance measures together as a team at the beginning of the rating period, when it's supposed to be done, is a good way to build the Mission team. By enabling each officer to have input into others' WOs/PMs, and accepting recommendations for their own, each will recognize the contribution of others to their own success. The MD must place a high priority on performance management and lead the Mission in its implementation, including preparing AEFs for which the MD is responsible. It's one of your most important functions. Extensive use of 360 feedback helps.

9) Delegation:

- **Manage at the appropriate level:** Stay on point in terms of operating at the appropriate level and delegating key responsibilities to avoid micromanaging and getting sucked into dealing with minutia. Don't allow staff to delegate up but stay on top of what they are doing. This is an art.
- **Don't let your ego get in the way:** Be the facilitator for your staff to get the job done. Delegate but hold them accountable. Letting staff take the lead gives them ownership and you will in the end reap the rewards.
- **Remember that it isn't your job to do everyone else's job.** MDs need to give their staff guidance and encouragement, but not take things away from them by always injecting themselves into the middle of things as the "decider." On the other hand, it is your job to be sure that staff stay focused on their own jobs rather than getting all worked up about things that really aren't their responsibility. We have a lot of super-specialist positions in USAID such as EXO, FMO, RCO, and RLA. That's a great thing and one generally does well if

they consult well with their specialists, respect their professional integrity and allow them to do their work. The alternative can get messy in a hurry. MD's (and Ambassadors) who become dictators always fail and unfortunately, they make a lot of people very unhappy on their way down.

- **Delegation is critical to keeping your sanity:** But you have to do it in such a way that people are accountable. Every person has his/her limits and capacity - you have to judge those and give responsibility accordingly - it's not the same level for all. This might be a strong challenge for you - you are a doer and like to be involved in a lot of things - you might not be able to do this as much as a director.
- **Manage your time through effective delegation.**
- **Empower people:** The ideal leader empowers others, creates a sense of shared mission, listens well, and earns the trust and respect of all staff so that they are willing to come to them when things go wrong and help is needed. Give staff freedom but limit the potential damage. Judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from exercising poor judgment.

10) Self-Management:

- **Never be afraid of saying “I was wrong”:** This will happen – it is not the end of the world. This is part of my belief that a bad decision is better than no decision – you have to keep moving and if you keep moving, you are going to make a mistake.
- **Use staff meetings to publicly apologize when things go wrong in a decision or attempt at resolving an issue:** Staff will respect you for taking the blame and not putting it on others.
- **Provide a calm center:** No matter how crazy the external environment becomes remain calm.
- **Learn to “sleep on it:”** Rather than react too quickly to a potentially conflictive situation, learning to “sleep on it” for a night has helped me approach difficult management situations with much greater calm. While it's common sense, it's sometimes difficult to do.
- **Be selective when you choose to fight:** Pick your battles on all fronts. Always take the high road.
- **Managing up is a big part of your job:** To the Embassy and USAID/Washington

- **Be intentional about your image:** Don't underestimate image when dealing with the interagency and the public. Showing up and looking the part are important.

11) Decision Making:

- **Stay current on the latest development thinking and research:** As the principal USG representative on economic development issues, you can show intellectual leadership at post, in your USAID Mission and among the donor community by being conversant with the latest literature on development. Although it's not in the category of development research, one of the more thought provoking things I've read recently that I refer to frequently in donor discussions and formal and informal contacts with partners, including speeches, is Thomas Friedman's "The World is Flat."
- **Recognize that decision-making is a skill:** Quick decisions that you later have to reverse will undermine your credibility as a leader. On the other hand, allowing issues to fester also shows a lack of leadership. Give yourself time to obtain answers to your questions and solicit and hear different points of view. Make sound decisions based on the information at hand. If you receive new information later that suggests you should reverse your decision, don't be afraid to do so. Explain the rationale for your reversal and reasonable people will understand
- **When the research indicates that you should change tactics or direction (either general development research or project-specific evaluations), move forward and change course:** There will always be folks on staff who are wedded to their pet projects. The job of senior management is to look beyond parochial interests and make the hard decisions to change course when necessary.

12) Work Products:

- **Simplify procedures.**
- **Control the quality of every document that leaves your mission whether it is destined for Washington or host government audiences:** Maintain high standards of quality and let staff know that you won't tolerate sloppy work.
- **Take prudent risks: Read what you sign.** Document special circumstances. Remember that the IG has its own rules. Take risks but consciously assess them. Use your warrants and authorities judiciously.

- **Insist on projects delivering promised results:** Pay attention to implementation use portfolio reviews and your field trips to stay on top.
- **Don't let funds obligations drive you:** But be sure to get the money signed up as early as you can.
- **Manage your own policy dialogue:** One idea that some have used successfully is to keep 3 x 5 cards in your pocket with up to 6 policy messages. Pull them out and use them as occasions come up.
- **Be alert to vulnerabilities.**
- **Financials/Internal controls:** Spend time with your EXO and Controller. Keep finger in Internal Controls Assessment, especially at beginning or your tour. Close out audit recommendations. Stay squeaky clear on your vouchers.
- **Find funds to hire a good development outreach coordinator:** Plug him/her into Embassy PAO office (and co-locate DOC in PAO if you can)