



Driving Government Performance

PIONEERING PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC EXECUTIVES

Former prosecutor Khaled Hamdy Attia is now in a very different role – he is heading the recently established Egyptian Competition Authority and wants to learn public policy management skills.

Piero Bonadeo, representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Liaison Office to the European Union (EU), wants to keep his bureau tightly focused on countering drugs, crime, terrorism and human trafficking, and getting organizations to cooperate on such efforts.

Gdansk Deputy Mayor Marcin Szpak says Poland is undergoing rapid transformation and its public sector is still defining itself. Developing strategies is easy, according to Szpak. What he wants to learn is how to bring them alive.

And Carles Riviera Molins is director of **Diputació Barcelona**, which is setting up a system to monitor the performance of Barcelona's 311 municipalities. He wants to know how to capture the involvement of all employees.

All four uncovered strategies to achieving their objectives in Driving Government Performance, a four-day program held in association with the **Harvard Kennedy School** at IESE's Madrid campus in June.

It was the first time the four-day program had been offered for open enrolment in Europe and attracted a diverse group of top-tier public sector leaders keen to learn how to maximize effectiveness. Robert Behn, public policy lecturer at the **Kennedy School of Government** led the program.

Behn, a world-renowned guru on public sector management, told the class that they had an advantage over private sector executives. "Your organizations produce results that matter greatly to citizens."

He recounts that as part of Steve Jobs' successful bid to recruit **PepsiCo** President John Sculley to work for **Apple**. Jobs reportedly asked Sculley, "Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water or do you want a chance to change the world?"

"The nice part is you've already made that choice," Behn said. "That's an advantage and you should make use of it."

The secret of effective implementation

Behn said that when it comes to getting results, there is no silver bullet. The starting point is asking what needs to be accomplished, where an organization's main performance deficit lies and focusing efforts accordingly.

He used public sector case studies to illustrate key concepts. Among these is the importance of clearly and frequently articulating an organization's mission. Another is monitoring its progress often. "Publish the data so that every team knows that you know - and everyone else knows - how well every team is doing," he advised.

Work teams should be rewarded with "esteem opportunities" which provide recognition and motivation to ratchet up performance with little or no cost to the organization. And – very importantly – competition must be structured so that everyone can win; otherwise teams will not share the secrets of their success.

Beware of honest cheats

The risk with performance measures is that staff is motivated to deliver but will cut corners to do so. Behn calls this honest cheating and gave examples of fudg-

ing numbers or teachers focusing on students' exam pass rates rather than their fundamental understanding of concepts.

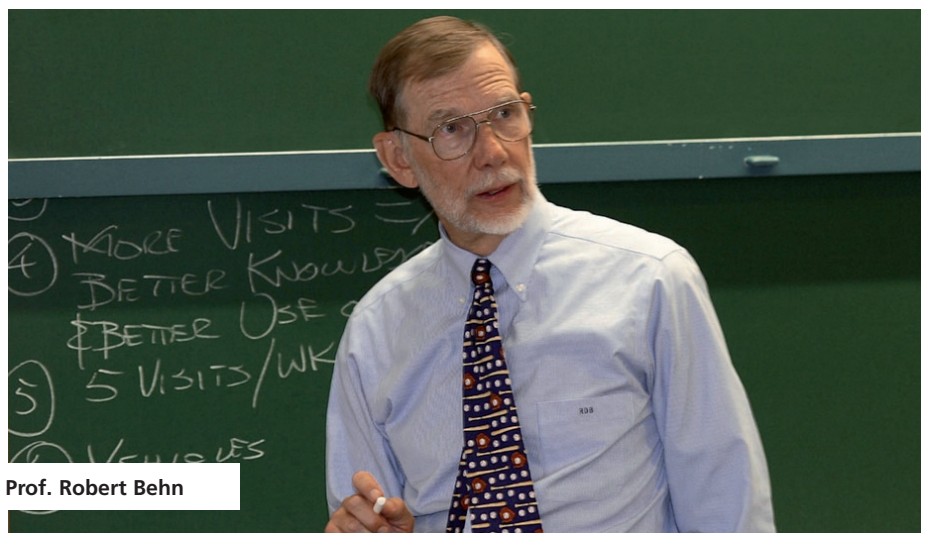
"Verify that people are achieving their targets in a way that furthers the mission, not in a way that fails to help or that actually undermines this effort," he warned.

Defining success

As he returned to Cairo, Attia said he planned to define targets to get some bite into Egypt's competition watchdog. "We have a mission and goals but they are not clear enough. I have realized that all staff and stakeholders need to know clearly what to focus on," he said. Gdansk's deputy mayor Szpak also plans to provide staff with clear definitions of what is expected of them.

Meanwhile, UNODC's Liaison Officer to the EU, Piero Bonadeo, said he had learned how "to remind people of what we are working for, to refresh their minds and keep their commitment strong." And Riviera Molins said he had learned concrete ways to get the staff's buy-in and how ensure goals are accomplished.

Behn had one more tip for them once they had succeeded in making their organizations more effective – give their political leaders the glory. "Don't be dumb. They will respect you for letting them have the credit."



Prof. Robert Behn