

Improving Aid Agency Management Practices: 5 Lessons (that I think work for me)

Dan Honig
UCL Research Away Day Impact Talk
June 8, 2023

**NAVIGATION
BY JUDGMENT**

Why and When Top Down Management of Foreign Aid Doesn't Work

DAN HONIG



1: Different Products for Different Audiences



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Navigating by Judgment: Organizational Structure, Autonomy, and Country Context in Delivering Foreign Aid

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When Reporting Undermines Performance: The Costs of Politically Constrained Organizational Autonomy in Foreign Aid Implementation

Published online by Cambridge University Press: 27 September 2018

Dan Honig

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Abstract

Bureaucracies with field operations that cannot be easily supervised and monitored by managers are caught between two sources of dysfunction that may harm performance. The first source of dysfunction is straightforward: field workers can use operating slack and asymmetric information to their own advantage, thwarting an organization's objectives. The second source of dysfunction is often overlooked: attempts to limit workers' autonomy may

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2: Validate Yourself

photo by Honig,
circa 2008

Flawed Choices: Top-Down Control vs. Letting Agents Drive

Navigation from the Top

Navigation by Judgment

Management Control

Agent Initiative

Oversight

Soft Information

Standardized Behavior

Flexibility

Extrinsic Motivation (maybe)

Intrinsic Motivation (maybe)

BUT: Distortions of Performance Measurement; Loss of Flexibility/Adaptability

BUT: Fallible Agent Judgment. Greater Potential for “Waste, Fraud, and Abuse”.

Aşağı tükürsen sakal,
yukarı tükürsen büyük



3: Be Yourself

5 Lessons (that I think work for me)

1) Different Products for Different Audiences

2) Validate Yourself

3) Be Yourself

4) Play Offense, not Defense, in Policy-land

5) Impact isn't an Afterthought: Design with Impact in Mind (if you care to have it)

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Thank You