



# **NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM**

## **SYMPOSIUM 2011**

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### **THE MANY ROLES OF THE GOVERNOR'S CHIEF OF STAFF**

*Courtesy of National Governors' Association*  
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GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OPERATIONS

**The Many Roles of the  
Governor's Chief of Staff**

Office of Management Consulting & Training  
2010 Management Note

Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association (NGA) is the collective voice of the nation's governors and one of Washington, D.C.'s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 50 states, three territories and two commonwealths. NGA provides governors and their staff members with services that range from representing states on Capitol Hill and before the Administration on key federal issues to developing and implementing innovative solutions to public policy challenges through the NGA Center for Best Practices.

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# Acknowledgements

Governors often are elected for their vision of what needs to happen in their states. They typically look to a select few staff members to play pivotal roles in helping make the vision a reality. Among these staff members, the most central and pivotal role is played by the chief of staff (sometimes called the senior executive assistant).

Much has been written about governors. Little has been written about chiefs of staff. This management note focuses on chiefs of staff and the many roles they play.

This management note was written by Robert Behn, Lecturer at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. It is based not on his theories of what the roles should be but on the experience of governors and their chiefs of staff. The roles described in this management note are rooted in past and current practice.

The intended audience for this note extends beyond chiefs of staff, who may benefit through greater understanding of the roles they can and do play. It also can help governors structure the role of the chief of staff and others. This note also may help others who share some of these roles with the chief of staff.

This management note was commissioned by Peter Wiley, former director, Office of Management Consulting & Training (OMCT), and reviewed and edited by Martha Hatcher.

The National Governors Association Office of Management Consulting and Training (OMCT) provides direct management services and training to governors, chiefs of staff, and key members and units of governors' offices. OMCT helps governors lead and manage state government and organize and operate the governor's office. For more information about OMCT services and additional publications, please contact OMCT at (202) 624-5300.



# Executive Summary

Although the titles may differ, almost all governors designate a senior staff member to serve as their chief of staff. While the roles and responsibilities assigned to the chief of staff will vary from state to state and from time to time, this is usually one of the most important appointments a governor will make.

This management note is a reprint of an NGA classic that was originally prepared in 1990. Over the years it has been updated slightly, but its fundamental message remains unchanged. It is based on the experiences of chiefs in numerous states and reflects their input as well as input from a number of governors. Chiefs of staff need to balance many key roles and responsibilities.

**Chief Operating Officer:** Much of the day-to-day responsibility for ensuring state agencies are functioning falls to the chief of staff. The chief of staff must monitor and manage what is going on in the cabinet and the departments, convert the cabinet into a team, and orchestrate the strategy designed to focus attention on the governor's agenda. Another major task of the chief is to routinize the various activities that help build loyalty among state employees and ensure decisions are made at the correct level.

**Office Manager:** The chief of staff directly manages the governor's office. In this role, the chief oversees the daily operations of the gubernatorial staff and manages their interrelations; builds and motivates the team by keeping everyone informed and giving staff credit for their efforts; conducts staff meetings; and decides what decisions will be taken to the governor, in what format, and when. The chief also serves as guidance counselor by being attentive to personnel problems, internal staff politics, and the need to keep staff out of trouble.

**Chief Strategist:** The chief of staff helps the governor develop and maintain a short and focused policy agenda. As chief strategist, the chief must stay alert to ways to reinforce the governor's devotion to his or her agenda; launch issue campaigns when agenda items require action or approval by others; and ensure the governing strategy, policy agenda and any issue campaigns are built on the governor's beliefs and strengths. The chief is involved in the planning and execution of large events by making sure someone is focusing on every detail.

**Policy Advisor:** The governor inevitably will rely on the chief for advice on a wide range of policy issues. The chief's role is to ensure the governor receives the information, analyses, and views necessary to make a decision. As policy advisor the chief also must serve as an



honest broker by understanding the preferences of the governor and making sure he or she always receives a full set of perspectives. The chief of staff may develop the key themes and directions of the governor's annual (or biennial) budget or legislative message and leave the details to budget office and policy staff; in other cases, the chief's role may consist of eliminating any inconsistencies. The chief must keep abreast of major ongoing issues to be aware of when new policy decisions must be made; he or she also must set a process for monitoring likely defensive issues and develop a proactive policy to handle potential problems.

**Gubernatorial Vicar:** The chief of staff often serves as surrogate to represent the governor's views and the governor's office. The chief can serve in this role by overseeing relations with the press, lobbying the legislature informally and ensuring every legislator gets his or her share of attention and response from the governor, and building bridges and cultivating support for the governor within the political party.

**Guardian of the Palace:** The job of the chief of staff as doorkeeper often is to convince people that the person who can address their problem or request most effectively is someone other than the governor. While the chief must guard the governor's time, he or she must serve as an honest broker to ensure the governor is exposed to a diversity of views and perspectives about what is happening in the state. Serving as guardian also means saying "no" to requests; talking the governor out of bad ideas; enforcing rules for scheduling; minimizing verbal requests to the governor; firing staff; and learning about and reporting bad news to the governor in time for him or her to act effectively.

**Headhunter:** The responsibility for overseeing, if not actually carrying out, the recruitment process for political hires will fall to the chief of staff. The chief may be involved in deciding exactly what the job is; generating a large pool of candidates; selecting and interviewing finalists; and providing recommendations for the final selection.

**Crisis Coordinator:** The chief of staff has a formal role in the governor's office plan for emergencies, which includes developing the standard processes for managing crises, putting together an ad hoc team to address the specifics of any given emergency, and rationing the governor's visibility in a crisis.

**Personal Confidant:** The chief of staff spends many hours with the governor and this close relationship creates a unique bond. As the governor's personal confidant, the chief shares in and commiserates with the governor on the absurdities and highs and lows of their job. The chief helps the governor let off steam and helps manage the relationship with the governor's family through careful attention to scheduling concerns and advocating for the governor's spouse.

This management note describes each of these roles in detail and discusses how they have been implemented in one or more states. By enumerating the various roles of the chiefs, this management note should help governors consider the functions critical to the success of a governor's office and decide which of those functions will be assigned to a chief of staff and

which may be performed by other members of the governor's senior staff. It also should help chiefs better understand the roles they may be called upon to play. Rarely will any single person be best suited to performing all nine roles; some inevitability will be shared with others. However, just as inevitably, the chief of staff is drawn into each of these roles; in the end, the final responsibility rests with the chief of staff.

Because the information and advice in this management note remains timely, we have decided to reissue it without major revisions. At the same time we recognize that changing technology and other factors may impact on the role of the chief of staff. For this reason we asked a number of current chiefs to review this management note. Some of their comments on additional challenges include:

**The Challenges of Electronic Communication.** One chief noted that it is extraordinarily difficult to be successful in many of the roles when the governor replies to his or her own emails or distributes his or her cell phone number. It is important for any commitments or requests made in these direct communications to be captured so the necessary follow-up can take place. The chief may play a critical role in ensuring basic office systems are updated to respond to this growing challenge. The chief also may play a leading role in deciding how the governor will utilize emerging technology, including blogs and websites.

**Coordinating with the Governor's Spouse.** In many states the governor's spouse plays an active role in managing the executive residence and is involved in one or more program or policy initiatives of their own. In addition, the governor's spouse must be included in critical scheduling decisions and other issues that may affect the first family. The chief often may be called upon to ensure the needs of the spouse and the first family are recognized and the necessary coordination and communication takes place.

**A Focus on Results.** In assessing some of the roles of the chiefs we address the governor's agenda and priorities. While this focus is still appropriate, it is useful to recognize that many governors and their chiefs are increasing their focus on results: what specific things a governor wants to accomplish. This new focus often is reflected in the performance management systems being developed for the department and agency chiefs who report to the governor.

**Looking Ahead.** It also is important for the chief to be a forecaster. The chief should always have his or her eye on the horizon to anticipate events and issues. There always will be unexpected immediate issues, but a forward looking orientation often can anticipate and avoid last minute crisis situations.

For further information about this topic or about other management services, please contact the NGA Office of Management Consulting and Training at (202) 624-5300.



# Introduction

Every governor has a chief of staff. Sometimes, the governor assigns numerous responsibilities and delegates significant authority to one individual, creating a “strong” chief of staff. At other times, the governor divides these responsibilities among a number of staff members. Not every chief of staff holds the title, “chief of staff,” but every governor has someone who fulfills this role by carrying out the major functions common to every governor’s office.

In discussions among governors and their chiefs of staff, a number of critical functions have been identified. The following roles will be described in this management note as “the many roles of the governor’s chief of staff”:

- Chief Operating Officer;
- Office Manager;
- Chief Strategist;
- Policy Advisor;
- Gubernatorial Vicar;
- Guardian of the Palace;
- Headhunter;
- Crisis Coordinator; and
- Personal Confidant.

## **The Governor’s Options in Assigning Roles**

This list of the various roles played by a governor’s chief of staff is not meant to imply that every chief of staff performs all these roles. Each of these responsibilities must be carried out, but they need not be done by the person with the formal title of “chief of staff.” The governor has the power to divide these roles among the chief of staff, other members of his or her immediate staff, state government employees, and individuals not employed by the state. How the responsibilities of any gubernatorial staff are determined will depend primarily upon the desires of the governor. Some governors prefer to concentrate these functions in one individual; others like to distribute them among many.

At the same time, even if someone else has the primary responsibility, most chiefs of staff are somewhat involved in every one of these roles. Another member of the governor’s staff may be responsible for legislative relations, but the chief of staff will remain a key lobbyist for the governor. “It does not make any difference if it is your assignment or not,” said one chief of staff, “you [the chief of staff] are responsible for everything.”

Often governors begin their administration assuming (as some recent Presidents have done) they should not have a strong chief of staff. One governor began his administration thinking his office would be organized like “the spokes of a wheel with five or six people reporting to the governor.” Soon, this same governor concluded that “it was better to have a chief of staff and a strong chief of staff.” A second governor concurred, “There is more than one way to run the [governor’s] office, but there isn’t for me.” This governor also organizes his office around a strong chief of staff.

How the roles are assigned also is influenced by factors such as the talents and desires of the chief and other members of the staff and the strengths of the various individuals upon whom the governor can call. The role of chief strategist may be held by another member of the governor’s staff; the governor’s headhunter may work for the department of administration; and the governor’s personal confidant may not be employed by the state. It is rare that the chief of staff will have the primary responsibility for all nine roles.

Nevertheless, a governor does need someone to perform each of these roles, and most governors assign a majority of these roles to their chief of staff. Rarely will any single person be best suited to performing all nine roles; some inevitability will be shared with others. However, just as inevitably, the chief of staff is drawn into each of these roles; in the end, the final responsibility rests with the chief of staff.

## **The Importance to the Governor and Chief of Staff of Clarifying Roles**

So who will do that? The governor, the chief of staff, other gubernatorial staff, and key executives within state government need to know the answer to that question. The governor may wish to make these decisions before selecting a chief of staff. Alternatively, the governor may wish to discuss specific assignments with the chief of staff before making any decision.

Regardless of how responsibilities are assigned and how they may change, they need to be made clear to everyone concerned. Once the governor has decided who will perform what roles—and what kind of chief of staff he or she wants—the governor must communicate this clearly to avoid unnecessary ambiguity and destructive turf battles.

## **The Sources of Roles Described in This Note**

In attempting to characterize the roles of any top executive in state government, it may be valuable to consult some of the traditional material written about managerial roles. In his classic book on *The Nature of Managerial Work*, Henry Mintzberg outlines 10 working roles of the manager:

- Three interpersonal roles—figurehead, liaison, and leader;
- Three informational roles—monitor, disseminator, and spokesman; and
- Four decisional roles—entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly a gubernatorial chief of staff performs all 10 roles. Yet these roles do not fully capture the nature of a chief of staff's job. The chief is not the leader of an organization but the first assistant to the leader. Although some of the roles of the chief of staff—such as being the chief operating officer of state government—are general and managerial in nature, the primary job of the chief of staff is to serve a general manager (the governor) rather than be one. In addition, the roles of policy advisor and personal confidant are important for a gubernatorial chief of staff though not for the general manager Mintzberg describes. Consequently, this management note is organized around nine different (and often unique) roles performed by gubernatorial chiefs of staff.

As described in this management note, the roles of the chief of staff reflect the ideas of many of the nation's governors and their chiefs of staff. In mid-November of every even year, the National Governors Association conducts a "Seminar for New Governors." Senior governors offer guidance to their new colleagues focusing on everything from how to lead the public, to coping with their legislatures, and managing their offices. Throughout these discussions, governors analyze the role of their chiefs of staff. Senior chiefs of staff also get together with their new colleagues

to examine their various responsibilities. Many of the ideas—and many of the quotations—in this management note come directly from these seminars.

Consequently, the content of this management note is not some theoretical construct of what a chief of staff ought to do. It is an effort to characterize, present, and analyze what governors and their chiefs of staff describe as "the many roles of the chief of staff."

### **The Categories of Roles Described in This Note**

An examination of the various roles of the gubernatorial chief of staff can be organized in a number of ways. The structure developed for this management note was selected because it appeared most useful for understanding these roles. However, once the roles were established, it was not always obvious to which role a number of specific tasks should be assigned. Is keeping everyone in state government focused on the governor's priorities a task of the state's chief operating officer or of the governor's chief strategist? These choices were based on the same criterion: which structure appeared to provide the most help in understanding the tasks and roles of the governor's chief of staff.



# Chief Operating Officer

If the governor is the chief executive officer of state government, then the chief of staff is its chief operating officer. Much of the governor's time and energy is focused on people and organizations outside of state government. Consequently, much of the day-to-day responsibility for ensuring that the state's agencies are functioning falls to the chief of staff. Further, the chief of staff has the responsibility for ensuring the governor's vision and programs are being realized by state agencies. The chief of staff, explained one governor, exercises more day-to-day authority than the governor.

"All of the cabinet officers report directly to me, not to the governor," said one chief of staff. "If I find cabinet officers in a meeting in the governor's office that I didn't know about, we have a very pointed discussion about it." "I defer to him," said this governor, "that's his side of it." In another state, a cabinet secretary can get on the governor's schedule without clearing it with the chief of staff. At the same time, all these cabinet secretaries know that they can get a decision more quickly from the chief of staff than they can from the governor. Of his chief of staff, another governor said, "He makes most of the decisions. He knows to bring the big ones to me. And he knows what I think about the small ones."

## Managing the Cabinet and the Departments

The work of state government is carried out by the various cabinet offices, departments, and agencies. Consequently, if the governor is to have an impact on the day-to-day functioning of state government and implementation of public programs and the governor's agenda, someone must continually monitor and manage what is going on in the cabinet and the departments. In the private sector, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the firm typically delegates these chores to the chief operating officer (COO).

Should the chief of staff actually give orders to cabinet officials? Governors disagree on this question.

"Your chief of staff must run your office," said one governor. "He or she must not run your agencies. You must be very careful that your chief of staff does not give orders to your agency heads." This governor stressed that although the chief of staff can deliver messages for the governor, this individual should not give orders. "I've been told that some agency heads resent chiefs of staff bitterly," continued this governor. Thus, if there is something difficult to be said, "it should come from the boss, not from the chief of staff. ... It can't ever be, 'I'm giving you this order for the boss.'" Ra-



ther it is „I’m delivering to you this message.“ ”

Another governor disagreed. “They [department heads] understand that my chief of staff has the full authority of the governor.” A third governor, while agreeing with the second, added a note of caution: “But if you get someone [to be chief of staff] who is too heavy-handed, it can backfire.”

Some governors employ cabinet councils or management clusters to coordinate the activities of departments with overlapping responsibilities. In addition, ad hoc cabinet councils can work jointly with the governor’s staff to develop new policy initiatives. Although the chief of staff may not manage any of these cabinet councils, he or she often is responsible for organizing them and overseeing their work.

## **Managing Relations with Gubernatorial Appointees**

Is the cabinet a collection of diverse individuals representing special interests within the administration, or a team devoted to carrying out the governor’s agenda? “An administration becomes a family,” observed one governor, “either a happy family or an unhappy family.” The task of converting the cabinet into a team is a major responsibility of the COO. Many of the techniques for doing this are standard and include everything from routine cabinet meetings to special cabinet retreats. One governor holds an annual cabinet retreat during which the day has a structured agenda, and the nights are free for informal social activities.

In addition, the COO can employ special activities to build team cohesion. For example, one governor places particular emphasis on spouse: “I think you should keep the family members of your cabinet secretaries as happy as possible.” Every fall, this governor takes his entire cabinet and their families to a state university football game. “If the spouse buys into the mission,” argues this governor, “it’s easier to get performance.”

A common problem confronting the chief of staff as COO is friction and infighting between the cabinet and the governor’s staff. One departmental commissioner told a new chief of staff the most important thing the new chief could do is reduce from nine to about five the number of gubernatorial staff who called the commissioner with requests. “One of the challenges,” observed the governor “is how to create a team between staff and cabinet.” The chief of staff plays a major role in creating this team and mediating disagreements between the gubernatorial staff and cabinet.

## **Focusing Attention on the Governor’s Agenda**

The governor cannot dictate the operations of state government. Even without the constraints imposed by civil-service protections, corporate executives do not dictate the operations of their firms. CEOs—whether corporate or gubernatorial—must lead their organizations. They need to establish a mission and explain how they will achieve it; they need an agenda. At previous “Seminars for New Governors,” faculty governors repeatedly have told

their new colleagues: “Concentrate on a few priorities. Limit your agenda.”

In recent years, some governors have chosen to make education their top priority. Others have focused on economic development. Some have concentrated on balancing their state’s budget. Regardless of how the governor’s agenda is defined, once established it must receive constant attention. Said one governor, “Your whole team has to know your priorities.” The governor needs to get those inside and outside of state government to understand his or her agenda and act on it.

The most obvious mechanism for focusing attention on the governor’s agenda is the ubiquitous speech. But deeds speak louder than words. How the governor spends time, what events the governor attends, who the governor sees, what agencies the governor visits, and who the governor praises affect the perceptions of the public and state workers as to what the governor really cares about.

The job of the chief of staff is to orchestrate the activities designed to focus attention on the governor’s agenda. While the governor’s communications director may have direct, day-to-day responsibility for crafting speeches and arranging events, the chief of staff as COO must be constantly and deeply involved. Because the purpose of these activities is to influence the behavior of state employees (among others) and because the chief of staff is in constant touch with agency heads and their work, he or she is in an ideal position to assess the effectiveness of these efforts and help design modifications to the administration’s plan. Indeed, as chief strategist, the

chief of staff will play a major role in the development of the overall strategy (see Chapter 4).

## **Building the Loyalty of State Employees**

The stereotypical attitude of the civil servant is well known: “I’ve seen governors—and their ideas—come and go. This one will go away too.” Yet it is precisely these civil servants upon whom the governor must rely to carry out his or her programs. Regardless of how energetic and effective the governor and the chief of staff are at articulating the themes and specifics of the governor’s agenda, these efforts will prove futile if the civil servants refuse to cooperate.

Observed one governor, “Everyone in the state [government] can embarrass the governor.” Consequently, continued this governor, it makes sense to “treat everyone in state government as a staff member.” The implication is clear: if the governor treats the people who work in an agency with the same consideration and personal attention given gubernatorial staff, they will be much more responsive to the governor’s efforts to get them to act on the governor’s agenda.

As chief operating officer, the chief of staff is responsible for building the loyalty of state employees. The mechanisms for doing this are simple, obvious, and are practiced throughout the public and private sectors. Yet even in the lull between crises, they easily can be forgotten. Consequently, a major task of the chief of staff is to routinize the various activities that help create loyalty among state employees and build

these activities into the governor's regular schedule.

A short list of the most obvious mechanisms for building the loyalty of state employees includes:

- annual awards for superior performance;
- employee recognition events;
- gubernatorial tours of state facilities and offices; and
- recognition in speeches of the quality of state employees.

Indeed, nothing can undermine all efforts to build employee loyalty more quickly than public criticism of civil servants. Such criticism will be quickly and widely reported by the press.

After the governor and chief of staff agree upon the array of activities the governor will employ to create employee loyalty, actual responsibility for these tasks can be delegated to others. The state personnel office is the obvious choice for handling awards and recognition events. However, the scheduler must be aware of the need to build tours into the monthly schedule, and the speechwriters may need to be reminded to add several boilerplate sentences praising state employees into every address. The chief of staff needs to monitor these tasks to be sure they become part of the gubernatorial routine.

### **Pushing Decisions Down Into the Agencies**

There is a tendency in government to elevate decisions to the top. The public, the

press, and the legislature typically want to hold the governor accountable for every decision in state government. Moreover, when they want a certain decision to be made in a particular way, they often take it straight to the governor. In addition, information technology further reinforces this tendency. Presidents now can make battlefield decisions, and governors can examine and modify the smallest account of an agency's budget.

For numerous reasons, most decisions should be made at much lower levels by those who possess the subtle on-the-scene information and those who must implement and live with these decisions.

Moreover, once those in the governor's office begin making micro-decisions or begin reconsidering decisions made at lower levels, the natural reaction will be for agency heads to buck all their decisions upstairs. Said one governor, "I try to push everything that is possible out of the governor's office."

As the COO of state government, the chief of staff is responsible for ensuring decisions are made at the correct level. Some of these decisions are major ones that should be made by the governor to avoid the possibility of an uninformed individual making a major decision without understanding its full implications. Consequently, the chief of staff needs to be aware of the emerging issues to ensure the governor has the opportunity to make the decision before it is too late. The chief always needs to be alert to the danger that the governor will be denied the opportunity to make an important policy decision.

An equally important—and more subtle danger—is for the governor to be trapped into making too many decisions. If the chief of staff as chief strategist (see Chapter 4) is able to help the governor develop and articulate a policy agenda, and if the chief of staff as COO is able to keep the agencies focused on that agenda, the chief and the governor should begin to develop confidence in the thinking and decision making of agency heads. Of course, the governor constantly must reinforce the specifics of his or her agenda, and the chief of staff continually must monitor agency decisions to ensure they are in consonance with that agenda. Nevertheless, if the agenda is articulated well, the chief of staff will want to keep his or her desk, as well as the gover-

nor's desk, clear for the really big decisions by delegating as many minor issues as possible to the agencies.

Some governors believe their chief of staff should not be the chief operating officer of state government. They want the chief of staff to focus on those tasks relating most directly to the governor and assign the COO role to someone else. In some states, this is another member of the governor's staff, often a deputy chief of staff or a chief of operations. In other states, it is someone outside of the governor's office, such as a secretary of administration. Said one governor: "If you try to run everything from the governor's office, you will court disaster."



# Office Manager

In addition to the responsibility for indirectly managing the departments and agencies of state government, the chief of staff directly manages the governor's office. This includes everything from ensuring the requisite proclamations are issued on time to massaging the egos of individuals who believe their personal efforts were solely responsible for the governor's election.

## Overseeing the Gubernatorial Staff

A typical governor's office contains a number of sub-units with varied responsibilities, such as press relations, scheduling, legislative liaison, legal advice, and correspondence. Whether these units are large (e.g., in some states the volume of mail may require a large correspondence staff) or small (e.g., a single legal counsel), someone must oversee their daily operations and manage their interrelations. This task typically falls to the chief of staff.

One chief argued that it is important to have a manual of standard operating procedures: "If you haven't got one, get one done." How do you appoint someone to a board or commission? If there is a major snowstorm, what do you do about closing the capitol? This is helpful for new and existing staff "It's so many of the basic things that you almost forget about. Like when

someone calls up and says „We want to fly the flag at half-mast," and you forget— „What are the rules on that?" Get those things down, so that any anybody (regardless of whether they are the person in charge of that) has got the answer." This office manual should be "right down to the real detail."

As one chief of staff explained, there are five things every member of the governor's staff has to know: their job objectives, the extent of their authority, the results they are expected to produce, the person to whom they report, and the areas for which they will be held accountable. The keys to being successful at managing the governor's staff, continues this chief, are to hire good people, to delegate authority, to hold them accountable, and to not have \$100-per-hour people do \$10-per-hour jobs. "If it's easy," says this chief, "it can be done by one of the 10,000 state employees."

## Building the Team: Motivating the Staff

The task of overseeing gubernatorial staff is much easier if these individuals function as a team. Consequently, the chief of staff needs to devote considerable attention to creating that team and motivating its members. Just as the governor cannot di-

rect all of the operations of state government, the chief of staff cannot direct all of the operations of the governor's staff. Indeed, the objective of any manager is to create an organization that requires minimal direct supervision. The steps it takes to build such a team are no big secret; yet if the manager is not careful, these steps may be overlooked. One experienced gubernatorial staffer emphasized the old military adage: "Take care of the troops and the troops will take care of you."

One step is simply keeping everyone informed. One reason for this is obvious: if the governor's staff is to function smoothly, everyone needs to know what is happening. Having hired competent staff, the governor and chief of staff are able to trust them to make the right decisions and take the correct actions. However, analytical skills and political acumen are of no benefit if the staff does not have the information for intelligent decisions and actions.

Keeping everyone informed is also important from a staff retention perspective. Most people did not join the governor's staff for the pay. They joined because they were interested in policy and politics. Many of these people have strong egos; they want to be part of the major decisions affecting the state. They want to be on the inside, and information means they are on the inside. To motivate the people who naturally gravitate to a governor's office, the chief of staff needs to provide them with what they want. Keeping the staff informed—even about small events unrelated to their immediate responsibilities—is a simple, inexpensive way of ensuring these people receive important "benefits" for their hard work.

Large staff meetings and informal conferences are one way of keeping people informed. In one governor's office, the chief of staff prepares a "Daily Activity Report" for the governor. This document focuses primarily on events of the previous day and is circulated to the entire staff.

These reports also serve to give credit—another important way to motivate the staff. Although much of what gets accomplished by the governor is a direct result of the work of one or more staff members, the press office will and should emphasize the governor's words and deeds. Moreover, the media will focus not on what the staff did but on what the governor did. Even to the most seasoned staffer and those with a "professed passion for anonymity," this lack of attention may wound the ego. Consequently, the chief of staff constantly needs to be creating ways to give out credit.

Of course, there are many simple ways to bestow credit. One chief of staff suggested taking an individual into the governor's office and saying: "Governor, I just want you to know that Sally did a great job on this project." A letter of thanks from the governor to the individual can help, particularly if it is mailed to the home. Some governors hold parties for their key staff and spouses at which they make a point to praise each individual directly to the spouse. One governor advocated "work[ing] with your people to build a sense of family and commitment." What another governor says about cabinet members applies well to gubernatorial staff: "If the spouse buys into the mission, it's easier to get performance."

Another approach to motivating staff members is to ensure everyone gets to see the boss—and frequently. One governor arrives at the capitol at 8:00 a.m. and walks through his office shaking hands with everyone. Not only does this improve morale, explained the chief of staff, but it also gets another half hour of work out of people; they show up promptly at 8:00 a.m. (rather than around 8:30 a.m.) to be sure that they get to talk with the governor. In addition, all staff—including the most junior—can be given an opportunity to travel with the governor. “Every once in a while,” says one chief of staff, “I like to throw support staff on the airplane.”

One further approach is to allow those who work on a project to make a presentation to the governor. Clearly, a staff member will work much harder on a project if the chief of staff already has established the norm that the person who does the work—no matter how junior—gets to explain it to the governor (The staffer’s boss and the chief of staff also can be in the room to provide additional feedback). Asking the person who does the work to brief the governor is the easiest way to ensure everyone gets credit for their work.

Motivating the staff must be an ongoing process. It is an activity that must be on the daily agenda of every chief of staff.

### **Organizing and Orchestrating Staff Meetings**

Much of the business of the governor’s office—and particularly the task of keeping everyone informed—is conducted at staff meetings. Some chiefs of staff conduct such meetings on a weekly or daily basis. Others

hold them only as needed. Some hold meetings for everyone—or at least top-level staff—to attend. Others conduct meetings only for specific purposes and invite only the relevant staffers. Usually, the chief of staff will chair these meetings, though for sessions that focus on specific issues, the person with the lead responsibility may take charge.

The purpose of these meetings remains the same: to inform people of recent developments, raise issues for future consideration, issue assignments, report progress, think through problems, and make decisions. The job of the chief is to make sure all these things are accomplished within a reasonable time frame. It is the chief of staff who sets the agenda and makes sure it is followed.

The chief also sets the style for these meetings. How formal will they be? How inclusive? How participatory? The manner in which the governor’s staff conducts its meetings affects how the governor’s staff does the rest of its work. Consequently, when the chief of staff is making implicit decisions about how to conduct the inevitable staff meetings, he or she also is making unconscious and important decisions about how to conduct the work of the governor’s office.

### **Organizing the Presentation of Information to the Governor**

Governors make decisions. As office manager, the chief of staff needs to be sure the governor is in the position to make the best possible decisions. Consequently, the chief needs to provide the governor with the in-



formation necessary to make such decisions.

The information need not be prepared personally by the chief of staff, although he or she orchestrates the process. The chief decides what decisions will be taken to the governor, and when. The chief decides how to present information to the governor—on paper or through a briefing—and who will make these presentations. The chief must ensure the governor receives information from all the relevant perspectives, while also making sure the volume of material is appropriate.

The way in which this should be done depends on the style of the governor. Some governors choose to receive information through a memorandum so they can think about it. Others prefer to receive information through briefings, so they can ask questions. Some governors opt to have differing views debated in front of them. Others prefer their staff first attempt to reach a consensus. The job of the chief of staff is to make sure the governor receives the information he or she needs in a format that best facilitates decision making (See Chapter 5, “Serving as an Honest Broker”).

### **Serving as Guidance Counselor**

The governor’s staff is composed of people with differing personalities, interests, and

needs. Consequently, and inevitably, the chief of staff will be required to cope with their personal problems.

The most obvious and potentially destructive problem is the clash of egos. This may manifest itself in a battle over policy, or in petty squabbling over prerequisites or turf. In either situation, the chief of staff must keep internal staff politics under control. “Once you let staff infighting start,” explained one chief of staff, “you will never be able to stop it.”

Even if the chief can eliminate infighting, personnel trouble is still possible. Staff members—particularly at the junior level—may not know how to respond to reporters’ questions; they may be flattered by the attention and fail to redirect the inquiry to the press office. Others may lack the requisite partisan sensibilities. Others simply may be tactless in dealing with citizen inquiries. The chief of staff must be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each staff member. Further, the chief must be prepared to help them overcome their professional weaknesses.

As the governor’s office manager, the chief of staff also serves as a guidance counselor. The chief must constantly be on the alert for personnel problems and the need to keep staff members out of trouble.

# Chief Strategist

What is the governor's agenda? How can the governor, the cabinet, and the departments best pursue that agenda? How can the governor get reelected? Developing a two-year, four-year, or eight-year strategy for the governor often is the responsibility of the chief of staff. A governor's first chief of staff may have been offered the job because of his or her ability to develop the successful election strategy.<sup>2</sup> In selecting subsequent chiefs of staff, the governor often looks for individuals who are capable of developing a new strategy; this may reflect the need for a governing strategy, the necessity of responding to new social or economic conditions, or the desire to be reelected.

## **Developing the Policy Agenda—The Theme**

Perhaps the most consistent piece of advice experienced governors give their new colleagues is "Limit your agenda." The governor needs a policy agenda, but that agenda must be short and focused. Usually, the items on that agenda are linked. Sometimes the governor's agenda is a single, simple theme. "The issues," noted one governor, "don't stay the same. That is why you need an overall theme." "If you have the right type of theme," he continued, "you work the new issues into that theme."

In recent years, many Governors have focused their work on the theme of education or economic development.

In attempting to get the public to pay attention to his or her agenda, a governor with a theme has an advantage. The media will pick up on that theme and reinforce it. "The press will tend to think of your administration in themes," observed one governor. "You are either an education governor, or a foreign trade governor, or whatever."

As chief strategist for the governor, the chief of staff is responsible for developing the policy agenda, though he or she does not act in isolation. The communications director, policy staff, and cabinet members also have a role in shaping the general concepts and specific details of the agenda, but someone must take charge of bringing the pieces together coherently. That someone often is the chief of staff. "If you can think beyond the short two-year time horizon of the legislature," said one chief of staff, "you can control the agenda."

## **Keeping Everyone Focused on the Governor's Priorities**

Once the agenda is established and enunciated, the people who work in state government can easily forget it. After all,

they have their ongoing assignments and daily crises. To most people who work in state government—even those who work on the governor’s immediate staff—the governor’s agenda may be no more relevant than an old campaign speech. The agenda is necessarily visionary—and thus somewhat ephemeral. If it seems unconnected to the day’s events, it can be forgotten easily.

Consequently, the chief of staff must devote considerable attention to keeping everyone who works in state government focused on the governor’s priorities. The governor can be the most effective tool by reminding people repeatedly in word and deed. Because some individuals never get the message, the chief of staff must constantly be alert to ways to reinforce the governor’s devotion to his agenda.

Several years ago, a state received a rebate from the windfall profits tax that had to be spent on energy conservation. This posed a dilemma for the Governor, whose sole agenda item was education. His solution was creative: he spent the money on insulating the schools, freeing the funds school districts otherwise would have spent on insulation or fuel for educational purposes.

## **Running the Issue Campaign**

Sometimes the governor’s agenda requires more than action by the executive branch. Key elements on the agenda may require action or approval by others, usually the legislature. In such circumstances, the governor may need to launch an issue campaign to persuade people to support his or her agenda. Usually, the goal is legislative enactment of a specific package of laws. If the legislature is resistant, an issue

campaign may persuade citizens to tell their legislators they support the governor’s agenda. In recent years, governors have conducted issue campaigns to enact education reforms, build new infrastructure (particularly roads), and raise taxes to cover deficits.

The key elements of an issue campaign are similar to those of a political campaign. In both cases, the objective is to persuade a working majority of the people to support something—whether an individual or an idea. Yet this simple principle may be forgotten. One nationally known political consultant told a group of governors that sometimes it seems as if once they get elected to office they forget all they knew about campaigning. Indeed, running an issue campaign should be second nature for a governor and chief of staff who recently won a political campaign.

Like a political campaign, an issue campaign requires a basic message. “You should never go into a press conference,” emphasized one governor, “without a theme.” This basic message must be repeated, repeated, and then repeated some more. “You cannot assume,” said another governor, “that one speech or one set of speeches can do it for you.” If the public is inattentive to political campaigns—to which the media devotes at least the traditional horse race coverage—the campaign manager will find it even more difficult to get an issue campaign to penetrate the public’s consciousness. That is why repetition is necessary. Said the communications director for one governor, “You have to repeat the message until you are bored with it and then repeat it some more.” An advertising executive and friend of one governor told

him: “About the time your friends tell you they are tired of hearing it [your message], the rest of the world may be beginning to hear it.”<sup>3</sup>

## **Emphasizing the Governor’s Beliefs and Strengths**

The governor is involved—personally and directly—in every governing strategy, policy agenda, or issue campaign. Because the governor is the most obvious and visible symbol of his or her policies, the strategy must emphasize his or her values. If it does not bring out the best of the governor, the strategy will fail.

As chief strategist, the chief of staff must design a strategy that builds on the governor’s beliefs and strengths. Does the governor want to take his or her message into every Lions Club in the state? Is the governor good on television? Does the governor enjoy cutting ribbons? Does the governor like responding to questions on radio talk shows? The objective is not merely to make the governor look good for the reelection campaign; it is to make something substantive happen. Unless the strategy brings out the best in the governor, makes the best use of the governor’s talents, and reflects the governor’s beliefs and values, it is inadequate.

Consequently, there is no generic governing strategy, no canned issue campaign, and no prepackaged policy agenda. As in a political campaign, the chief strategist must

start with the governor—building upon the governor’s vision for the state and talents as a campaigner—to create an effective strategy.

## **Producing the Hollywood Extravanzas**

Sometimes a governing strategy or issue campaign requires a major event. This may be nothing more than a campaign rally for the issue campaign. It may require simultaneous video-linked conferences across the state. It may involve the creation of numerous large task forces—each of which is charged with soliciting views and mobilizing opinion statewide. Or it may be a large lawn party at the capitol to thank some group of active citizens—be they teachers, state employees, or issue-campaign workers.

Regardless of the nature of the extravaganza, the chief of staff will necessarily be involved in the planning and execution of such a large event. The event is large precisely because it is important, and because it is important it requires the chief’s attention. The chief of staff need not personally worry about all the details, but he or she will want to know who is worrying about every detail.

This principle is true for much of the chief’s job. The chief of staff cannot worry about every detail, but he or she must make sure someone else is addressing each and every one.



# Policy Advisor

The legislature has just passed a controversial wetlands bill. The department of mental health wants to move more people into group homes. Because the chief of staff is both the governor's COO and chief strategist, the governor inevitably will rely on him or her for advice on a wide range of policy issues. Sometimes, the chief of staff provides this advice personally and directly. On other occasions, the chief is responsible for ensuring the governor receives—from others—the advice necessary to make the best decision.

## **Organizing the Decision-Making Process**

When the governor must make a major, conscious policy decision, the chief of staff usually is responsible for organizing the process. In consultation with the governor's other policy advisors, the chief will decide what analyses to commission, what alternatives to pursue, and what perspectives to consider. When the governor makes a policy decision, it will be based on the information, analyses, and views compiled by the chief of staff.

Usually, the chief of staff establishes parameters for how the governor will make a decision. The chief decides who will present what perspectives to the governor,

when to first bring an issue to the governor's attention, and when to push for a final decision. "It makes a difference," said one chief of staff, "when you present an issue to him." Explained another chief: "I slow some things down, and I speed some things up." If the governor is not kept abreast of the issue or if critical analyses are not available, the governor may be unprepared to make a timely decision. If pushed to make a decision before all the necessary information can be presented, the governor may make a precipitous choice. If the wrong people are assigned to present specific views, the governor may undervalue certain perspectives.

## **Serving as an "Honest Broker"**

Obviously, the chief of staff has his or her own policy views. Nevertheless, the chief does not have the luxury of presenting only those views to the governor. At various times, every member of the gubernatorial staff will prepare policy analyses, reflect particular perspectives, and advocate specific actions. The chief of staff is in a unique position, however. He or she probably sees the governor more frequently than other members of the staff and may control (or at least limit) access to the governor. Consequently, before any major decision is made, the chief has the respon-

sibility to make sure the governor always receives a comprehensive set of perspectives.

How these views are presented depends upon the governor's preferences. They may be presented in a long analytical memorandum, aired in debate conducted before the governor, or set forth in a series of meetings with experts. "Figure out how you learn," one governor admonished his colleagues, "and then teach your staff how you learn." Clearly, the chief of staff needs to figure out how his or her governor learns. The best way the chief of staff can serve as an honest broker depends upon the nature of the decision to be made and the preferences of the governor.

### **Overseeing the Development of the Legislative Message and the Budget**

The chief of staff is not directly responsible for the governor's annual (or biennial) budget or legislative message, but as the chief policy adviser (and chief strategist) he or she inevitably will be involved in creating these documents. The governor uses these two beginning-of-the-year documents to articulate his or her priorities and set a tone for the year. The chief of staff also has a responsibility to ensure these documents are consistent with each other and with the governor's other policies and priorities.

The chief may develop the key themes and directions of these two documents, leaving the details to budget office and policy staff. Or the chief's responsibility may only be to eliminate any inconsistencies. Regardless of the level of involvement, someone must be responsible for overseeing the development

of the legislative message and the budget; that person usually is the chief of staff.

### **Managing Ongoing Issues**

Some issues never go away. Taxes, highways, welfare reform, and environmental concerns have long life cycles.<sup>4</sup> These issues require constant attention; they are necessarily important to the governor and thus to the chief of staff. Fortunately, the responsibility of monitoring ongoing issues usually can be assigned to someone else. It may be the head of the governor's policy shop or the governor's legal counsel or legislative liaison. It is this person's job to keep the chief and the governor informed about all new developments. Obviously, the chief needs to be informed when new policy decisions must be made. However, even in the interim, the chief must keep abreast of the major ongoing issues; some developments that may seem inconsequential to another member of the governor's staff may have particular significance to a person with the chief's breadth of responsibilities.

### **Coping with Defensive Issues**

One gubernatorial chief of staff divides all the issues confronting the governor into two categories: offensive and defensive. Offensive issues reflect the governor's agenda; they have become public issues because the governor has highlighted them. (Alternatively, if offensive issues already were on the public agenda, the governor can capitalize on the attention they are receiving while seeking to shape them to reflect his or her own strategy.) In contrast, defensive

issues are those with which the governor is forced to cope.

Defensive issues naturally detract from the time and attention that the governor and staff can devote to offensive issues. Moreover, while offensive issues can result in major pluses for the governor, defensive issues represent mostly potential negatives. Consequently, the governor's staff may have a tendency to ignore the defensive issues until it is too late.

The chief of staff needs to be alert for emerging defensive issues—issues that are not yet on the front page but may appear next week, next month, or next year. Clearly this requires judgment. There is no science for predicting what will be next year's major crisis and what will be next year's big fizzle. Rather than try to make a positive prediction, the chief of staff needs a process for monitoring potential defensive issues—that is, tapping the knowledge of gubernatorial staff, cabinet secretaries, department heads, and outsiders. The chief needs to know about upcoming court decisions, federal legislation, social trends, or public attitudes. Could a new court ruling

or federal mandate throw the budget into deficit? Will the downward trend in student achievement scores continue? Will the public continue to place an emphasis on improving the environment? Such developments might put the governor on the defensive.

The chief of staff must do more than check for the possibility of defensive issues. The chief also must be prepared to address them. This may involve nothing more than thinking through what the governor should say depending upon how the court rules. Alternatively, it may involve consulting an expert to gain a better understanding of educational trends and, if necessary, develop a policy before the issue becomes a crisis.

Handling defensive issues may not appear to be the most pressing of the chief's duties. Yet, if some defensive issue suddenly emerges, inevitably the chief of staff will be responsible for organizing the response. Thus, devoting a little time to worrying about potential problems may prove a wise investment.





# Gubernatorial Vicar

The governor cannot take every phone call from legislators, reporters, and party leaders. The governor cannot attend every meeting, address every audience, or conduct every interview. In those situations, the governor needs a surrogate—someone who can present the governor's views and represent the governor's office. Often, the chief of staff is called upon to be this gubernatorial vicar.

## Speaking for the Governor

The governor cannot return every reporter's phone call, nor will he or she want to. On such occasions, the chief of staff may speak for the governor. "One function I find myself spending more and more time on," said one chief of staff, is "I'm more and more taking on that role of spokesman . . . On major issues broadly affecting the state, I'm the spokesman." Sometimes, the chief of staff may be the spokesperson for the governor on political issues. One chief of staff has the responsibility for responding to attacks by the opposition party to prevent the governor from being drawn into the squabble. Moreover, sometimes reporters will call the chief of staff directly. "I find that if I make myself available to the press," said one chief, "all of a sudden they are coming to me for everything." Echoed a

colleague, "That pressure is certainly there to be a spokesperson."

Another chief noted two conditions that could (and should) force the chief of staff to become a gubernatorial spokesperson: (1) when the governor does not deal with the press, and (2) when the press secretary is not close enough to the governor to be able to really speak for the governor. This chief observed that deciding whether he likes dealing with the press is "a luxury I cannot afford."

In addition to being a gubernatorial spokesperson to reporters, the chief of staff also may take on this role with other groups. "When our governor turns something down," said one chief, "I usually get the invitation, either from the group or from our scheduling committee."

However, other chiefs of staff prefer to remain anonymous. "I feel it's important," said one chief of staff, "that I not be a personality or public figure on my own." Another argued that "a too visible chief of staff becomes very much of a liability for a governor." A third noted, "A low profile is what has worked really well for me over the years."

In addition to the general liabilities of becoming a public figure, other chiefs of staff noted particular disadvantages of being

quoted by the media. “Unless you have a good, working, substantive knowledge [of the issue],” said one chief who has “minimal contact” with reporters, “you [can] get into more trouble” talking to the press than not.

Another noted the extra significance attached to any statement made by the chief of staff. “You can always claim that the press secretary „misspoke,” said one chief, but “when you’re the chief of staff, your word is just like the governor’s. And when you said it, it’s laid in gold.”

Many chiefs of staff deflect all press calls to the governor’s press office. Predictably, when the press secretary returns a call that a reporter made to the chief of staff, the reporter will be unhappy. To assuage the media, this chief repeats the terms of a simple agreement he has with his press secretary: “He’s not going to be chief of staff. I’m not going to be press secretary.” continues this chief, “Because, if you take reporters’ calls, before you know it, you’re going to be the press secretary.”

Chiefs of staff function as surrogate spokespersons for their governors to varying degrees. However, all agree, in the words of one chief, that “overseeing relations with the press is an important role.”

## **Lobbying the Legislature**

Just as every governor has one or more policy advisors, so every governor has one or more legislative liaisons. Inevitably, the chief of staff also is pulled into this role. Every state senator and every state representative wants to talk with the governor and usually they do. Of course, the gover-

nor is the best lobbyist for his or her program. But the second-best lobbyist may be the person closest to the governor—the chief of staff. Every time the chief of staff comes in contact with a legislator, it is an opportunity to lobby—informally and subtly—for the governor’s program. And in the final days of the legislative session, while the governor is talking to one legislator, the chief can be talking to another.

One simple lobbying activity that inevitably involves the chief of staff is returning the governor’s phone calls. Some governors and their chiefs have a policy of returning all phone calls by the end of the day. This does not mean the governor or chief of staff personally returns all the phone calls received. An assistant may return either of their calls saying the governor is out of the office for the day, inquiring about the purpose of the call, and offering any assistance. The objective is simply to assure the caller that his or her call was not forgotten.

This process of returning calls may accomplish something else. The assistant may indeed be able to resolve the reason for a call. Observed one governor: “Eighty percent of the calls [to the governor] can be handled by somebody else.” This is particularly true when the chief of staff returns the governor’s calls. The call may come from a legislator, and the request or question may be something neither the governor nor the chief of staff can answer immediately. By quickly returning the legislator’s call, the chief also can ensure a speedy response.

In addition, by returning the legislator’s call to the governor, the chief of staff demonstrates respect for the legislator’s sta-

tus. Lobbying legislators means lobbying egos. Governors have a number of ways of paying attention to legislators, from inviting them to parties at the executive mansion to taking them along on gubernatorial visits to their districts. Legislators of both parties should be invited to travel with the gubernatorial party, say some governors, and they should be introduced at the beginning of any gubernatorial speech. "Give them a means to look good in their home districts," recommended one governor. Often it falls to the chief of staff to be sure every legislator gets his or her share of attention.

Still, it is the governor, not the chief of staff, who can take the legislator along in the state plane. After all, chiefs of staff are neither governors, legislators, nor sheriffs; they have not been elected to any office. They do not hold the same position as the governor, particularly in the eyes of legislators. Consequently, the chief needs to be personally conscious of legislative prerogatives. The task often may require a self-effacing wit; it most certainly requires diplomacy.

### **Building Bridges to the Governor's Political Party**

Even in this age of the swing voter—when political machines and party loyalty mean so little—governors must pay attention to their party. Indeed, the governor is the figurehead of his or her state's party. If only for defensive purposes, the governor must pay attention to the concerns and needs of party leadership. Because these concerns are important to the governor, they also are important to the chief of staff.

The relationship between the chief of staff and the party may vary considerably. The chief of staff may have been active not only in the governor's campaign, but also in the campaign efforts of many previous candidates. Alternatively, the chief may never have engaged in partisan politics. The governor may have personally selected the party's state chairman or may be at odds with the formal party structure. The governor may have an old political pro on his or her staff with the job (if not the title) of party liaison, or the governor may tell the party's leaders to deal directly with the chief of staff. Regardless, the chief of staff will need to pay some attention to cultivating support for the governor within the party.

The leaders of the governor's party will expect a gubernatorial appearance at all major functions. Because the governor will be a major attraction, his or her scheduling of office usually will have little difficulty in arranging an event that corresponds to the governor's schedule and provides the necessary visibility. The chief's job is to worry less about the details of the schedule (though, while wearing the chief strategist's hat, he or she might do so). The chief's main concern is to assure that the governor is a visible part of every major party event.

For candidates of the governor's party, he or she can be a major asset. The governor will be besieged by requests for joint campaign appearances. In this era of loose party loyalties, the governor may have few coat-tails, but he or she can attract attention and press coverage, generate enthusiasm, and motivate the party faithful. During a mid-term election, responding to such requests

for joint appearances may be predominantly a scheduling matter.

However, when it comes time for the governor to run for reelection (or for another office), such decisions become more complex. The governor's campaign staff will have their own priorities and, depending upon the governor's policy objectives and

the partisan balance in the legislature, these may have little or nothing to do with the objectives of the party's other candidates. The task of aligning the governor's reelection campaign with the party's other campaigns may become quite complex. Inevitably, the chief of staff will be drawn into such a debate.

# Guardian of the Palace

Who gets to see the governor? Who does not? Making these decisions gives a person real power. Of course, nobody likes to be told that his status is not significant enough or that her issue is not important enough to warrant even a short meeting with the governor. Every governor has a set of rules about who does (and does not) get a meeting. For example, during the legislative session, any legislator gets to see the governor almost immediately. But when someone is denied a meeting, one logical response is to escalate the request, which means it will end up on the desk of the chief of staff.<sup>5</sup>

## Opening (and Closing) the Door

Often the job of the chief of staff as doorkeeper is to convince people that the person who can really handle the problem is someone other than the governor. If the chief of staff cannot return a call before the end of the day, an assistant can do so and say that the chief will be happy to call back between 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. that evening, if the caller will leave a home number. Often this is enough to convince the caller that someone else on the governor's staff can be of equal assistance.

Still, many people who want to see the governor—be they campaign contributors,

old friends, or irate citizens—are not easily sidetracked. Said one chief of staff, "Everyone wants to touch the claw." Some may not even be willing to state their purpose, demanding that their status warrants an opportunity to talk with the governor, period. Others who are willing to state a purpose may have multiple purposes in requesting to see the governor—the ostensible purpose, which indeed can be handled by somebody else, and the real purpose, which may be nothing more than simply talking with the governor. In failing to recognize the dual purposes of a request to see the governor, the doorkeeper may create rather than solve a problem.

Thus, the job of gubernatorial doorkeeper is a delicate one. The task calls for more tact than logic. The chief of staff needs to ensure that all real questions are answered, all real problems are solved, and all egos are stroked. In the end, the only way that the chief can persuade a person not to see the governor may be to handle the request personally.

## Avoiding Gubernatorial Isolation

The gubernatorial doorkeeper may err in letting too many people through, needlessly using up one of the governor's most precious resources—time. But that is not

the only possible error. The doorkeeper also may keep too many people out, preventing the governor from learning about key developments in the state. As the governor's chief policy advisor, the chief of staff needs to serve as an "honest broker," ensuring the governor is exposed to a diversity of views before making a decision. Similarly, as doorkeeper, the chief of staff needs to be sure the governor has an opportunity to talk with those who will provide him or her with a diversity of perspectives about what is happening in the state.

As the gubernatorial doorkeeper, the chief of staff must balance two conflicting objectives. The chief must guard the governor's time. At the same time, the chief must not isolate the governor from what is happening in the state.

### **Saying "No"**

As President Eisenhower's chief of staff, Sherman Adams earned himself the sobriquet of the "abominable no-man." Since then, numerous chiefs of staff—both presidential and gubernatorial—have been given that or similar nicknames. Part of the job of any chief of staff is to say "no."

Many people—legislators, campaign contributors, and citizens—come to the governor's office with requests. Not all of them can be told "yes." A Governor needs people "who can gently say „no,“" observed one governor. Said a colleague, "You have to say „no“ in a nice way," but a governor needs people who know how to say „no.“" Often this task of saying "no" falls to the chief of staff.

The governor (and the chief of staff) is constantly dealing with the legislature.

Consequently, they may get more requests from the legislature than from any other quarter. The first person to deal with these requests is the governor's legislative liaison. This person's job is, as one governor described it, "to try to accommodate them [the legislators] in every way." Still, not every request—whether to sign a bill or have a picture taken with a constituent—can be accommodated. Sometimes, the legislator understands the rejection; other times, the situation may escalate. If so, it may be necessary for the chief of staff to enforce a decision made by others. (In fact, if the chief of staff overrides the "no" of the legislative liaison or any other member of the governor's staff, he or she is inviting many future efforts to override the decisions of others.)

### **Talking the Governor Out of a Bad Idea**

Often the person who needs to be told "no" is none other than the Governor. Governors have many ideas, and some of them are better than others.

(One veteran gubernatorial staffer observed that on trips with the governor, it is easy to distinguish between those staff members who have been on the job for a brief while and those who have experienced several such trips. The newcomers want the room next to the governor's—to be available whenever the governor so desires. In contrast, the pros want a room far away; they know the governor is bound to get at least one idea on this trip, and the first available staffer inevitably will be the one asked to get to work on it.)

Even if a governor is battling .990 in the good-idea league, he or she still misses 1 percent of the time. If the governor comes up with several ideas a day, that means one big miss a month. When this happens, someone has to talk the governor out of it.

The traditional approach is to ensure the governor gets all the information necessary to make an intelligent decision. It often is through the roles of office manager (organizing the presentation of information to the governor) and policy advisor (organizing the decision-making process) that the chief of staff can be most effective in talking a governor out of a bad idea. However, in practice it may be more difficult. Said one chief of staff: "Our role is to point out the consequences." This chief believes that he lets the governor down when he says, "Okay, if you want to do it, we'll do it." I'm not going to tell him we can't do it," said another chief. "I might tell him how he can't do it; I want to tell him how to do it."

It is quite possible to provide the governor with enough information—from a different perspective—to convince him or her to reevaluate the idea and make a different decision. One chief of staff advocates bringing additional people into the process. "These should be the people who the governor trusts the most." On these occasions, some chiefs of staff bring the governor's kitchen cabinet into the process; the governor may believe government officials are biased but may think differently about outsiders. Another chief calls five of the governor's best friends, who then call the governor saying that the chief has called.

## **Enforcing the In-House Rules**

Some gubernatorial offices have firm rules limiting when it is possible to say "yes." This is particularly true in scheduling. Some governors will simply not schedule anything more than three months ahead of time. At least one governor took this rule a step further: his scheduling office automatically sent out a letter of rejection to every request for a gubernatorial appearance. Later, if the scheduling committee decided to accept the invitation, a call from the governor's office could quickly reignite the enthusiasm of the inviting organization. No matter what revised plans organizers had made in the interim, they still would be happy to squeeze the governor into the program.

Of course, some people attempt to circumvent these rules. They may try to force the governor's scheduling office to make a commitment six months or a year ahead. They may invite the governor personally and pressure him to accept on the spot. More significantly, they may misinterpret—unconsciously or consciously—the governor's willingness to consider such an informal invitation as a firm commitment. If this happens, and the governor's office starts receiving details about involvement in an event the governor has yet to decide to attend, someone has to gently tell the inviting organization "no." The responsibility for this task may fall to the governor's scheduler. If the organization gets aggressive, however, the chief of staff may need to act.



The best way to handle this problem is to prevent it from occurring. Governors and their chiefs have two strategies for coping with this problem.

First, the governor needs to make it clear that he or she never accepts a verbal invitation. “Don’t say, „I’d like it. I’ll try to do it if my schedule will permit,“” warned one governor. “Rather, say „I don’t do my own schedule.“” Most gubernatorial schedulers require all invitations to be in writing. Unless the governor makes this clear whenever given a verbal invitation, the scheduler’s rule will be of little consequence.

The second approach is never to let anyone talk with the governor alone. Many experienced chiefs of staff follow this rule because they have found people who ask the governor a question hear the answer they want to hear. Cautioned one chief of staff: “Don’t let anyone in there (the Governor’s office) with him alone, because they heard exactly what they wanted to hear and will quote it back to you. If the governor responds „Yes, but . . .“ to a verbal invitation, they will hear only the „Yes.“” To ensure no one can quote the governor as saying “I’d be happy to attend your event,”—or “I’d be happy to” do anything else, a chief of staff needs to arrange for someone to sit in on every gubernatorial discussion.

However, despite such precautions some people will try to get around the rules. “Old friends” and contributors may claim special status. In such circumstances, it falls to the chief of staff to say “no.”

## Firing People

“No matter how well you screen people [for jobs], no matter how well you set up the [personnel] system,” observed one governor, “you are going to make mistakes.” That means the governor—or the chief of staff—will have to terminate some employees.

“The most unpleasant thing you have to do,” one governor told his colleagues, “is fire people.” Indeed, nobody likes to fire anyone. And governors, who did not get elected to office by making people unhappy, may find this job particularly distasteful. Consequently, the task of firing a cabinet secretary or department head may well fall to the chief of staff. “He gets to hire,” said one chief of staff. “I get to fire.”

Rather than openly firing an employee, he or she may be given the opportunity to resign. “We’ve had a number of resignations in my administration,” continued the governor quoted above, “but nobody’s been fired.” Regardless of whether it is a firing or resignation, someone will have to tell the person his or her career in state government is over. Again, that someone may be the chief of staff.

## Learning About and Reporting the Bad News

Observed one governor: “Bad news doesn’t travel up.” The last one to learn something was handled poorly may be the governor. The next to last person may be the chief of staff. The chief needs to guard carefully against this. Part of the job of protecting the governor is not to protect him or her from bad news but to make sure the gover-

nor learns about it in time to respond effectively.

This responsibility relates to the chief of staff's role as chief operating officer. As COO, the chief is in touch with the cabinet secretaries, department heads, and agency

directors, making the task of collecting information relatively easy. Still, some information—particularly information that makes an agency look good—may be reported more frequently than other information. As COO, the chief needs to be sure the bad news also is reported upward.



# Headhunter

Most governors place a major emphasis on the people they hire to run state government. “Any organizational model will work,” said one governor, “if you get good people.” Said one chief of staff, “The critical management decision anybody makes is who you hire for a job.”

At the beginning of an administration, every political position must be filled. After a reelection, many of these positions may change hands. Whenever one of these people resigns, a new appointee must be recruited. Sometimes the governor delegates the recruitment of agency heads to the appropriate members of the cabinet. Sometimes the governor wants to control these appointments—or at least some of the more sensitive ones (e.g., the corrections commissioner). Some governors have hired executive search firms to undertake the recruitment of some or all top-level employees. Others have obtained the pro bono services of professional recruiters to screen candidates. More often, the search is run out of the governor’s office.

If the recruitment process is deemed important enough to be conducted or controlled by the governor’s office, the responsibility for overseeing, if not actually carrying out, the search will fall to the chief of staff. Moreover, this process needs to be an active rather than a passive one.

“Rather than waiting for people to come to you,” emphasized one chief of staff, “you have to reach out and grab the person you want.”

The process of recruiting anyone—agency head, gubernatorial staffer, or cabinet secretary—involves a number of generic steps. These steps are defining the job, creating a pool of candidates, investigating individuals, interviewing the finalists, and making the final selection.

## Defining the Job

Before deciding who should fill the job, the chief of staff needs to define exactly what the job is. As COO, the chief of staff will need to consider exactly what should be the mission of a new cabinet secretary. As office manager, the chief of staff will need to decide what a number of the governor’s staff should do. It makes little sense for the chief to start looking for someone until he or she knows exactly what that individual is supposed to accomplish.

## Creating a Pool of Candidates

Having determined the responsibilities of the new recruit, the chief of staff needs to generate a large pool of candidates for the position. This requires extensive use of the chief’s contacts and reliance on the phone.

Some of these calls will be made personally by the chief. Others can be made by other members of the governor's staff, cabinet secretaries, and other associates of the governor. The objective is to create a very large list of possible candidates.

### **Investigating Individuals**

After creating a large pool of potential candidates, the chief needs to narrow the list down to a few finalists. The chief of staff will make some of these calls, while some will be carried out by other staff members.

### **Interviewing the Finalists**

When a position is of a high profile nature, the chief of staff will want to interview the finalists. The chief may conduct one round of interviews before the governor talks with any of the candidates. Alternatively the chief and governor may talk with the

candidates back-to-back. Regardless of how these interviews are conducted, the purpose is the same: to learn about the candidates' experience, successes, and failures so their ability to handle the job can be evaluated.

### **Making the Final Selection**

In some situations, the chief of staff may recommend one finalist for the position. Sometimes, the governor will make the choice after hearing the views of many advisors. In other cases, the chief may be the final decision maker. However, if the search has been thorough, several final candidates will be more than acceptable and the ultimate decision may be based on subtle factors that cannot be completely articulated.

# Crisis Coordinator

Every governor's office has a formal plan for emergencies, which can range from natural disasters to prison breaks. This plan covers everything from the initial response, to who should tell the press what, to who should talk to the governor. Usually, the chief of staff will have a formal role in that plan. Regardless of what the plan says, the chief of staff inevitably will be drawn into the crisis. Indeed, the crisis is a crisis precisely because it cannot be handled in a routine way; management of that crisis—if it is a real crisis—will require actions and decisions not included in the formal emergency plan. When this happens, the chief of staff's role becomes even more important and central.

## **Establishing the Standard Operating Procedures**

The chief of staff's first step as crisis coordinator is to develop standard processes for managing standard crises. The previous governor will have had such a plan, as will other states. So the chief may need to do little more than assign someone—perhaps a person with the title of crisis coordinator—to pull together such a plan for review by the chief and governor.

A critical element of this plan concerns access to the governor. Specifically, who first

informs the governor of the crisis. One governor emphasized the central role of the chief of staff in crisis management:

When you [the governor] get a call about an emergency, you should get it from your chief of staff. You have a tendency to want to do what the sheriff, mayor, etc., wants done. To ensure that you get the call from the chief of staff, you need to establish a clear procedure for handling all emergencies. Then you won't get called by someone in a way that doesn't give you all the facts or all the options, or that puts pressure on you to act precipitously.

## **Pulling Together the Team for Each Crisis**

Once a crisis occurs, the chief needs to assemble an ad hoc team to handle the emergency. Even if the crisis management plan was reviewed only twenty-four hours earlier, it will not apply to the crisis at hand. This is because the plan was designed for a generic crisis, and the real crisis has complications that were never addressed in the plan. Even if the crisis is a hurricane or a prison takeover—events that have occurred before—the specifics of the new situation will never mimic the past completely. Consequently, the chief of staff will need to augment the standard crisis man-

agement team with people who have the expertise, contacts, or status to help deal with the new situation.

## **Rationing the Governor**

The governor is an important symbol and asset during a crisis. Sometimes the governor needs to be immediately and publicly involved. Indeed, the nation's governors have a basic rule for dealing with a crisis. "Do get out to disasters."<sup>6</sup> The reasoning is obvious. The governor needs to show personal concern for disaster victims. Moreover, by going to the scene of the disaster, the governor is sending a visible if implicit message to the state's disaster relief team: "I care about this problem. Let's get our help here fast." "If there is a crisis in your state, you damn well better be there," said one governor. "You want to be the symbol of leadership in your state."

However, the governors have a caveat to this basic rule: "Don't go to a prison disaster."<sup>7</sup> This caveat suggests an important subtlety in crisis management: if the governor is present, he or she is, by definition, in charge. When the police captain arrives at the scene of an accident, that officer automatically takes over from the lieutenant. When the fire chief arrives at a fire, that official automatically relieves the fire captain of the command. Similarly, whenever the governor is at the scene of a crisis, he or she is assumed to be in charge. Said one governor, "If the governor is in town where the riot is, he or she becomes the negotiator." Another governor cautioned,

"Be careful that you don't put yourself in a position where you are not in control of the situation."

In some cases, the governor should, in fact, be in charge. In other situations, the governor should not appear to be in charge. For example, during a prison crisis, if inmates who have taken hostages or blockaded themselves in part of the prison believe they can negotiate with the governor, they will escalate their demands. When prisoners are negotiating with a person with little status or power, outrageous demands are just that—outrageous. If the governor is the negotiator, those demands suddenly sound reasonable. After all, the governor is in charge of the state. The governor cannot say, "I don't have the power to do that." Even when it is true, the governor looks foolish saying it."

Consequently, during a crisis, one of the tasks of the chief of staff is to ration the governor's visibility. The governor may be intimately involved in the negotiations, but that does not mean he needs to be visibly engaged in them. After the crisis is over, the governor's true role may be revealed (although this may create expectations for future crises). During the crisis, the governor's visibility is strictly a tactical question.

This principle also may apply in other, non-crisis situations. The chief of staff, a cabinet secretary, or an agency head may be the highest level person who is publicly involved. Meanwhile, the governor privately is making all the critical decisions.

# Personal Confidant

The chief of staff spends many hours with the governor. Often, the chief spends more time with the governor than anyone else on the staff, anyone else in the government, maybe even anyone else outside of government. One governor described his chief of staff as his “alter-ego.”

## Sharing the Absurdities of Their Jobs

Inevitably, the governor and the chief share more than just the job of governing and achieving the governor’s agenda. They share the highs and lows of their jobs, the victories and defeats, the tensions and trivialities, and the frustrations and accomplishments.

Governors and their chiefs of staff create their own private jokes about the absurdity of their business, about the perverse personalities and macabre processes that somehow produce public policy. These confidences help them make it through yet another day and provide a bond that links them together in ways not found between most superiors and subordinates.

## Helping the Governor Let off Steam

The governor needs someone with whom he or she can let off steam. Said one chief of staff to his colleagues, “When the governor yells at you, try to take it as a compliment.” The governor cannot yell at other people. If he cannot yell at the chief of staff, who can he yell at?

As one governor explained, a governor needs to have one single point of responsibility, accountability, and coordination. Obviously, this individual is the chief of staff. But with these functions comes yet another one. Continued this Governor; “I like to have one single person to yell at—preferably someone who is not more than four inches taller than you are.” Again, that person is the chief of staff.

## Managing Relations with the Governor’s Family

Conflict between the governor’s staff and family can quickly sap the energies of an administration. One chief of staff cautioned his new colleagues about the possibility of warfare between “the wicked witch of the West and the terrible young Turks,” particularly warning the newcomers to guard against becoming one of those “Turks.” Indeed, many chiefs of staff consider it part of



their responsibility to prevent these hostilities from emerging.

Usually, the conflicts focus on scheduling. Someone accepts an invitation when the governor's spouse has other plans. This is not necessarily the scheduler's fault. "He doesn't manage his own time well," said one chief of staff. "I have a governor who wants to say yes to everybody," continued the chief. "I think it's some kind of universal characteristic," said a colleague. "The governor wants to accept everything," this chief observed. The result is a conflict that appears to be between scheduler and spouse but can, at its core, be between governor and spouse.

To solve this problem, many chiefs have the spouse attend all scheduling meetings. However, even this will not solve everything. As a result, some chiefs become the spouses' advocates at such sessions. Said

one chief, "My primary role at scheduling meetings is to argue against doing things." This chief of staff wants to prevent the governor from becoming overscheduled and exhausted. One consequence of this effort to resist extra gubernatorial engagements has been to make the chief "the hero of his wife."

In addition to being the governor's personal confidant, said one chief, "I have a separate role—and I can't help but think most of you [other chiefs] must—with the governor's family as well. All chiefs of staff," this chief continued, "have some kind of relationship with the governor's family. And that takes a tremendous amount of energy to manage."

In the end, the chief of staff may not simply be the personal confidant of the governor. The chief also may be the personal confidant of the spouse.

# Balancing the Many Roles

The nine outlined roles for the gubernatorial chief of staff can exhaust any mortal soul. How can anyone be the chief operating officer of state government, the governor's key policy advisor, the primary headhunter for state government, and the governor's personal confidant? Surely, no one person can do all these things, let alone do them well. After all, even the best chief of staff can still squeeze only 168 hours out of any week. Said one chief, "My assessment was that the job was too big for one person."

Indeed, no one person does all these things well. There are other members of the governor's staff and other people in state government. Depending upon the interests of the governor, the talents of the chief of staff, and the interests and talents of others, the responsibilities for these various roles will be sorted out among many individuals. The chief of staff need not be the person primarily responsible for each of the nine roles. But someone has to do each one, and if there is no one else willing or able to do the job, that role inevitably falls to the chief of staff. "Nature abhors a vacuum," commented one chief, and "the chief of staff is going to fill the vacuum if one is there."

Part of the job of the chief of staff is to sort out—with the advice and consent of the governor—which roles to take and which to delegate. In addition, the chief needs to find some personal and institutional mechanisms for keeping sane in a hectic environment.

The task of balancing these nine roles is never easy. Any chief of staff accomplishes it only through an iterative process of trial and error.

## Coping with Conflicts

These nine different roles create inevitable conflicts. The chief of staff cannot be both the designer of the governor's overall strategy and a completely honest broker when presenting the governor with the pros and cons of an important decision. It is hard to be both the nonpartisan chief operating officer of state government and the key liaison with the governor's political party. A central part of the tension of being a gubernatorial chief of staff is coping with these conflicts.

For example, modern governors tend to be less partisan than their predecessors. Senior governors—Republicans and Democrats alike—advise their new colleagues to pay particular attention to the needs of legislators of both parties. For example, whenever

visiting legislators' districts, they advocate inviting those legislators to travel with the gubernatorial party. Moreover, they hold to this advice during a political campaign. At the same time, they warn that the governor's own political party will try to cut the other party's legislators out of the event.

As chief lobbyist for the governor's legislative program (and chief legislative diplomat), the chief of staff will be responsible for inviting these legislators to the events. At the same time, as the governor's party liaison, the chief of staff needs to develop a working rapport with the party's most aggressive partisans.

The governor and chief of staff also must choose how closely to mesh their own reelection campaign with the campaigns of other party candidates. The decision may well depend upon the relationship between the governor's policy agenda and the party's partisan agenda. If these reflect similar themes, integrating the campaigns will be dominantly a matter of scheduling, personalities, and tactics. The chief of staff may be involved only peripherally.

When there is little similarity between the governor's policy agenda and the key emphasis of the party's official platform or unofficial strategy, the potential for real conflict exists. Under such circumstances, it will be necessary for the chief to integrate the governor's government agenda with the party's partisan agenda and align the governor's campaign strategy with that of the party.

Initially, an agreement may be negotiated at a conceptual level. However, if the governor and the party have fundamentally

different perspectives, no generalized treaty will last for long. Under such circumstances, the chief repeatedly will be dragged back to negotiate a new, detailed treaty over, for example, joint appearances and party events.

## **Choosing and Delegating Role Assignments**

One way to handle conflicts over the roles of the chief of staff is to divide up the responsibility. If the chief handles party matters, perhaps the legislative liaison looks out for all the legislators. If the chief of staff also is the chief legislative masseur, maybe the legal counsel is best suited to work with the party.

Clearly, the assignments must complement the interests and skills of the individual members of the governor's staff, cabinet, and administration. In addition, they must reflect the priorities and needs of the governor. One chief commented, "So much of it is dictated by the personality of the governor." Said another, "The governor dictates the role." ("Your chief of staff should be your opposite," one governor warned his colleagues. "If you're not a very good administrator, your chief of staff should be the very best administrator you can find.")

In the end, the chief of staff is accountable for all nine roles. Even if the chief of staff has no direct duties with respect to the governor's political party, he or she still is responsible for overseeing that role and ensuring it is performed well.

## Keeping Perspective

“Only one person is being sworn in as governor,” one chief of staff reminded his new colleagues. Moreover, this chief cautioned that gubernatorial staff should avoid becoming obsessed with the “perks.” To illustrate this point, he told a story about some new gubernatorial staffers who changed the signs on their parking spaces from “Reserved” to “Reserved for governor’s staff.” Needless to say, this did not please those legislators whose own parking spaces were not as close, and the legislature cut back the number of close-in parking spaces allocated to the governor’s office to one—for the governor. Remember, warned this chief of staff, “You’re not the governor!”

## Managing the Stress

The job of chief of staff involves a great deal of stress. “When the governor wants something,” noted one chief, “your schedule goes out the window.” Said another, “There’s this monster called the telephone, which follows you wherever you go.” Observed still another: “You’re like a punch-drunk boxer in the corner. You have no control of what’s happening.” Moreover, continued this chief, “Your personal life is never personal. Everything you say, someone is picking at it.”

Despite all the stress, chiefs of staff seem to love their job. “It’s the best job I’ve ever had,” remarked one chief. “The last job I had was low on stress. I hated it.”

The final challenge facing the gubernatorial chief of staff is one of personal management, i.e., how to manage the stress of the

job. Each chief has a number of strategies for managing stress.

These strategies typically involve either acting expeditiously or delegating. Said one chief of staff: “I always feel—if it was an area of my expertise—that I could do a better job than my staff. But I don’t get the time. I have to accept that. I can’t put my own stamp on it.” “Don’t try to bring something to closure,” admonished another chief of staff, “you only (get to) deal with it in a minor way.” To many chiefs, their job is not to work out the details of any program or project. The demands on the chief of staff do not permit that luxury. Rather, the chief’s work involves making decisions based on the work, analysis, and recommendations of others.

Several chiefs of staff advocate simply following the practices they recommend to their governors. “We talked a lot of limiting the governor’s agenda,” observed one chief. “We have to limit our own personal agendas.” At the same time, another chief emphasized the necessity of acting expeditiously on the items that do end up on the chief’s agenda: “You will get in more trouble for the things you don’t do than the things you do. So any decision is better than no decision.” Still, said another chief, “Delegating is absolutely, absolutely mandatory.” Another one noted the importance of “teaching your boss how to delegate;” this chief wanted the governor to delegate more assignments directly to others on the gubernatorial staff.

Finally, there are those personal actions each chief takes to remain sane in a world of constant tension. “Never lose your sense of humor,” advocates one chief. Another

tries to isolate himself at the end of the day to reflect (if only briefly) on what has happened and clear his mind in an effort to “try not to take the job home.”

Still another chief advocates doing something on the job that is fun. This chief of staff makes sure his boss has time for occasional recreation. Argues this chief, “You’ve got to let the governor do some

things he likes. Fun things. Or why be governor?” This chief takes the same attitude toward his own job: “Chiefs of staff get to do the same thing . . . I’m entitled to do at least one thing I enjoy. I don’t like saying „no” to people. I don’t like doing that. But I do it and do it pretty well. But you’ve got to have something that you like.”

Fun things. Or why be chief of staff?

# Endnotes

1. Henry Mintzberg, *The Nature of Managerial Work* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), Chapter 4, "The Manager's Working Roles," pp. 54-99.
2. Several years ago, the conventional wisdom handed down at the biennial Seminar for New Governors was: Don't hire your campaign manager to be your chief of staff. In fact, however, many Governors-elect did precisely that. That was not all that illogical. After all, throughout the campaign, the campaign manager had demonstrated some ability as office manager, policy advisor, party liaison, Dr. No, headhunter, crisis coordinator, and personal confidant. Moreover, the campaign manager had developed some skills as a strategist. Little wonder—despite the campaign manager's obvious lack of experience as the chief operating officer of state government—that Governors-elect occasionally chose their campaign managers to be their first chiefs of staff.
3. Richard T. Cole, "Managing Through Messages," *The Journal of State Government*, vol. 62, no. 4 (July/August 1989), p. 151.
4. Anthony Downs, "Up and Down With Ecology—the „Issue-Attention Cycle,“" *The Public Interest*, no. 28 (summer 1972), pp. 38-50.
5. Charles H. Williams, "The „Gatekeeper“ Function on the Governor's Staff," *Western Political Quarterly*, vol. 33 (1980), pp. 87-93.
6. Thad L. Beyle and Robert Hueffner, "Quips and Quotes from Old Governors to New," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 43, no. 3 (May/June 1983), p. 268.
7. *Ibid.*