

JANUARY 2020



# HOUSTON FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

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## THE ART OF MAKING SELECTIONS: A PERSONAL REFLECTION

by Gregory Motl

One of the distinct privileges of our positions as a senior leaders in federal service is the selection of other candidates to fill the many critical leadership positions that routinely become vacant during the course of agency business. These selections are the lifeblood of maintaining excellence in public service. In fact, over the course of the year, I would rank it as one of the top 2 or 3 most important activities that I will accomplish. It didn't take me long, though, to realize that doing this well is not as easy as it looks.

We live in an increasingly technical world and as a result, we rely on technology to simplify many of our decisions. There are measurements and formulas for just about everything, and these metrics can be captured and analyzed in all manner of spreadsheets and analysis tools. As tempting as it may be to harness these powerful tools to make our decisions, it is the savvy manager that understands that there is a limit to what mathematical processes can do; that at the end of the day, many decisions come down to judgment. This is particularly true for selections.



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## TOPICS OF INTEREST

- Emergency Preparedness
- Workforce Development and Recognition
- Strategic Partnerships

## Visiting Social Security Administration

Social Security Administration (SSA) hosted the 2019 Federal Executive Board Leadership class for a half-day site visit and tour on November 7th, 2019. Erika Campuzano, Assistant District Manager welcomed the group, and gave an overview of SSA.

Mrs. Campuzano gave us a brief history related to founding of economic security and how the first Social Security retirement program was put into effect in Germany in 1889.



President Franklin Roosevelt implemented the Social Security Act in the 1930's, when the US Great Depression triggered a crisis in the nation's economic life.

Mrs. Campuzano explained the benefits that SSA provides, which are:

1. Retirement Benefit, Medicare
2. Supplemental Security Income
3. Disability
4. Social Security Number and Card
5. Survivors Insurance



To conclude the visit, we discussed challenges that SSA has dealt with over the last few years and how they overcame them. Some challenges were; 1. how to deal with performance issues, 2. training, 3. team morale, 5. work-life-balance, and 6. teleworking, etc.



## Environmental Protection Agency

The afternoon session was hosted by Mr. David McQuiddy, Director of Environmental Services Laboratory at Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). He informed the class that the Laboratory provides quality assured analytical support using state-of-the-art techniques and



methodology for organic, inorganic, and biological analyses. The lab also performs technical audits of environmental monitoring laboratories and public water supply laboratories. The lab:

- manages Region 6's Contract Laboratory Program, performing sample scheduling, sample routing, data verification, data validation and data usability;
- provides technical expertise to the Region, as well as to federal, state, tribal and local entities;
- coordinates technical assistance, including performing analytical methods and procedures; and provides expert witness support for both civil and criminal enforcement cases.

The Houston Environmental Laboratory meets the requirements of ISO/IEC 17025 and is accredited to perform analysis of contaminants in



air, drinking water, non-potable water, solid and chemical materials.

The class then went on a tour of EPA's Laboratory Analysis Section and experienced how analysis are collected and processed.

The leadership session ended with a discussion about EPA's challenges and how EPA is trying to meet them.

# THE SELECTION PROCESS

*(The Art of Making Selections (continued from cover)*

I have had the privilege of making dozens of selections during the course of my career. In the course of doing so, I have used different techniques and processes: supervisory assessments, resume' evaluations, experience analytics, selection/interview panels, spreadsheet metrics, etc. You know the drill. The list goes on, right? And I am sure many of you have tried most of these, and others as well.

Many of the selections I have made over the years, using these various processes, proved to be highly successful. However, if I were to be truthful, there have also been several that did not work out so well. Why is that? As I reflected on that simple question, I tried to honestly ask myself: Why were the "good" ones good? And the "bad" ones bad? That reflection drove me to a simple but somewhat surprising conclusion: A good selection is not really about the candidate. Rather, it is always about the need of the organization in which the vacancy exists. I spent so much time analyzing a candidate's experience and resume' that I forgot to focus on the reason for the process: to find the best skill set match to fit the organizational need of the target position. Therein lies the answer to a good selection. If my selection was based on identifying an optimum skill set-to-need match, then the odds of success were high. On the other hand, if my selection was primarily based on any other reason, then the odds of success went down dramatically.

Here is a situation that illustrates this. I had a manager at one of my air traffic facilities that had a long career doing a variety of jobs, and doing them very well. Based on his strong record of success, he was selected to manage this particular facility. As time went on, it became apparent that there were unique needs in this facility and at that airport, which were not being met. His staff was becoming frustrated, the airport stakeholders were becoming frustrated, and, not surprisingly, he was becoming frustrated as well. So, what did the manager do? He started working harder. You see, he had always experienced outstanding success in anything he had done throughout his career to this point. So, in his mind, he just needed to apply himself harder, using the same methods that had always served him well. There was only one problem: what the facility and airport community needed from him was not his strong suit.

As a result, on his best day, he could only be average in meeting these needs; and what the facility/airport needed was excellence. So as time went on, the manager tried harder and harder, and his stress levels got higher and higher. This cycle, unfortunately, resulted in a variety of related health issues. Whose fault was this? Was it poor performance on the part of the manager?

I believe the responsibility for this situation rests with the selecting official and a breakdown in the selection process. The selecting official did not accurately assess the true need(s) of the target facility and did not effectively evaluate the skill sets of the candidates bidding on the position so that an optimal skill set-to-facility need match could be identified. In this case, the manager selected was still as good as he always was in the skills that he had. The only problem was, those weren't the skills needed!

This insight has further informed me in the guidance I give to employees who come to me seeking advice on career progression and being successful in selection processes. This is what I tell them: "Your primary job as a candidate is not to get selected." (You should see the look on their faces when I say that!) "Rather, your job as a candidate is to present to the selecting official as complete and accurate a description as possible of the skills and abilities that you have, so that the selecting official can make the best possible decision on the skill set that fits the need of the facility. In this way, you will be selected for positions for which you have the highest potential for success and fulfillment, and the agency will be best served in meeting the existing need."

And there is one other insight that I have learned: Before I look at a referral list for selection, I give myself permission to NOT make a selection. You see, there may not be a candidate on the list who has the requisite skill sets to fit the need. It is often much easier to deal with an ongoing vacancy than to deal with a poor selection.

For me, using this thought process and approach has not only resulted in better overall selections, it has also greatly improved my non-selection feedback sessions, as well as career progression guidance.

These are simply my views, and I claim no expertise. I know that there are many other approaches that work as well. Hopefully, though, these reflections will provide you with a little "food for thought" as you, too, strive to excel in the elusive art of making selections.

Best wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year!!

Gregory Motl | General Manager, Air Traffic Services

# IAH-TSA 2019 AIRPORT OF THE YEAR

Each year, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) holds its Annual Honorary Awards Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia, where the achievements of field offices from across the Nation and the Administration's Headquarters staff are recognized.

Locally, the TSA, at George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH), was honored as the 2019 Airport of the Year (Cat X-I) while its Compliance division was also recognized with a National "Mission Focus" Team Award.

Under the leadership of Federal Security Director Juan M. Sanchez, Jr. and a supporting cast of astute senior leaders, IAH upheld a sustained trajectory for continued successes during routine operations, throughout evolving priorities and when unforeseen challenges and difficulties arose in 2019. TSA-IAH maintained its core responsibilities of committing to its employees, to stakeholder engagement and outreach, and otherwise safeguarding the transportation system.

With a myriad of challenges in 2019, some expected, others unforeseen (particularly at the start of the Fiscal Year), TSA-IAH overcame hurdles, delivering on critical services and expectations to its employees, stakeholders and industry partners and otherwise demonstrated its capabilities under fluctuating conditions. This in part was due to the senior leadership



**HOUSTON, TX**

team providing incisive vision and its employees putting on a suit of armor consisting of professionalism, service, compassion and mission focus.

To sum up the year under the leadership of Director Sanchez, it befits one of the Administration's key priorities-----Accelerated Action. Director Sanchez championed this priority and, as a result, obstacles became pebbles on the road to mission achievement. TSA-IAH NEVER LOST ITS FOCUS!!! In a fast paced environment, TSA-IAH employees counted on and received quick decisive leadership and action. In turn, employees committed and dedicated themselves to the organization.



# WHAT'S COMING?

Plan to attend these upcoming events



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### January 2020

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FEMA Continuity of Operations Planning Program Managers  
Jan. 27 & 28, 2020

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FEMA Continuity Planners Workshop  
Jan. 29 & 30, 2020

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## FEMA TRAININGS

*Sponsored by the Walker County Office of Emergency Management, in partnership with the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Initiative (RCPI) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).*

### Continuity of Operations Planning Program Managers

This 2-day course is for Continuity Managers or agency leadership that manage continuity planning for essential functions and anyone responsible for training departmental or agency employees on COOP. It is set up as a COOP overview to help you explain COOP terms and considerations for enhancing department or agency continuity of operations. It is a recommended pre-requisite for the L550 Continuity Planner's Workshop.

Walker County Storm Shelter | 455 SH75 North, Huntsville, TX 77320  
January 27 & 28, 2020 8:30 am - 4:30 pm [Register Here](#) | Use code: L548

### Continuity Planners Workshop

The 2-day course is for COOP Planners or anyone responsible for writing the departmental or agency COOP Plans. This course provides a step-by-step approach to completing elements within continuity plans. There are also wonderful stories shared about planning considerations and lessons learned between participants that can help you during your own planning, training, and/or plan writing approach.

Walker County Storm Shelter | 455 SH75 North, Huntsville, TX 77320  
January 29 & 30, 2020 8:30 am - 4:30 pm [Register Here](#) | Use code: L550

LEARN  
HOW  
TO

# PLAN AHEAD



*helping you maximize*

# RETIREMENT

Your Federal Retirement Wallet Strategies  
Training Coming Soon to Houston



*Congratulations*  
**ON YOUR RETIREMENT!**

**"Thanks for the gift, I will use it often and proudly. Thank you for allowing me to join a great group of professionals!"**

Patrick Contreras

# PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION AWARDS

## 2020 NOMINATION CALL

The Houston FEB is accepting Award Nominations for the Public Service Awards Ceremony scheduled for May 2020. The awards categories are listed as follows:

- Administrative Excellence
- Community Service
- CFC Volunteer
- Customer Service
- Interagency Excellence
- Legal / Law Enforcement
- Supervisor / Team Leader
- Team Excellence

Please review the attached application and submit it by March 6, 2019.

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Environmental Protection Agency  
Internal Revenue Service  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Social Security Administration  
Transportation Security Administration  
Department of Labor  
Small Business Administration  
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission  
Small Business Administration  
U.S Department of Commerce  
Housing and Urban Development  
NASA-Johnson Space Center  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

NASA-Johnson Space Center  
Defense Contract Management Agency  
Federal Executive Board

HAPPY  
*New Year!*



**FEB Leadership Team**

Left to right:  
Julius, Natalie, Tausha, Bob

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