




The Accidental Leader: How to Thrive as a Revenue Estimator

Julia Friedman
Deputy Chief Financial Officer and Chief Economist
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Categories of Government Leaders?

- Elected to Lead 
- Appointed to Lead 
- Accidental Leader 



Revenue Estimators have to Lead

- Why do we do it?




- For the Money ? 
- For the Recognition? 
- To be in the Line of Fire? 

3



Revenue Estimators have to Lead

- Why do we do it?

- To solve puzzles? 
- To have good colleagues? 
- To make a difference? 

4



Revenue Estimators have to Lead The Tricky Part – How do we do it?

Ten Clues to Success

1. Be transparent
2. Manage your boss
3. Respect the bureaucracy
4. Keep track of the history
5. Anticipate the question
6. Be clear and be quick
7. Accept accountability
8. Be kind to yourself
9. Be brave: Jobs don't love you back
10. Be ready to leave – 3 good reasons



1. Be Transparent

Many of you have been faculty members

- The academic model:
Go behind a closed door,
Stay there for 6 years,
Come out for a tenure decision.



We are Revenue Estimators

- Our model:
 - Collaborate publicly to improve our knowledge base (helps with CYA, too).
 - Collaborate across and within agencies to check your reasoning and findings.
 - Do not cream the data.
 - Seek external review – Act before you are told, to get it on your own terms!



2. Manage your Boss

- **Some say the secret to success is to please your boss.**

- This is OK sometimes, but not always.



- **Our bosses are charismatic, articulate, ambitious, focused on mission, expedient.**

- But, your boss can only have one highest priority. Everything else is compromised, a little or a lot, to get there.

- **Manage your boss**

- To keep the focus on the “one thing”
 - To maintain the standards of our profession.

Otherwise the budget (and you) will get flattened in the stampede.



3. Respect the Bureaucracy

- **Appreciate that bureaucracies are run by the people who show up on Monday morning:**

- The administrative assistant has trained a succession of executives.
 - The front line tax processor has been at it for 20 years. And so on.
 - They keep the boat afloat through good leaders and bad.



- **Don't forget that bureaucracies are run by the people who show up on Monday morning:**



- Having your impact may be viewed as reducing their power.
 - Never under-estimate the power of passive aggression!



- **Find a way for everyone to win.**



4. Keep Track of the History


- **For everyone else, history begins the first day on the job.**
 - From the Governor to the dog catcher 
- **History should NOT begin the day you arrive on your job.**
 - If history is destiny, you'd already be gone!
- **You need to know where each person fits into history.**
 - You don't analyze data without the past.
 - Try it with people and situations, too. 

9




5. Anticipate the Question

Too often, we get only one chance to make a point - and that's not scheduled.

"I'll look it up and get back to you" is not an answer. That's called "blowing it". 

Be prepared before the question comes.

Know what is in the paper, on CNN, and discussed behind closed doors before you go to work, before the next meeting, before the hearing, before. . . . 

If you are going to need an opinion, get to work on it now.

10



6. Be Clear and Be Quick

When the question does come,
say it all, say it clearly, say it concisely.

My rule:

- Tell them what you know.
- Tell them what you don't know.
- Tell them what you think.
- Tell them why you think it (professional opinions only, please).



– How will you do this in 15 seconds? In 2 minutes? In one page of bullet points?

11



7. Accept Accountability

You still have to make judgments!

- Even our science just gives a confidence interval;
Who picks the point and how and why?



In estimating revenue for D.C., we choose a point south of the most likely estimator.

- Who does it? The CFO, by federal law.
- How? Our recommendations tempered by his concerns.
- Why to the south? Because basic democratic liberties are at stake in D.C.
- Who is accountable? My Boss – who relies on my advice.

My Rule: Collaborate or be doomed!

12



8. Be Kind to Yourself

Mistakes Happen!

- Really! They do!

We all face the same challenge:

- to apply professional skills and standards
- to achieve the best possible findings
- given the constraints of time, data, and other resources
- under pressure.

• Don't let the perfect drive out the good.

- The mantra – what you know, what you don't know, what you think, why you think it.
- Try this line: “We know the forecast will be wrong. And we know you won't ace a par 5 hole. Still, our forecast will be pretty close because . . . unless. . .”



13



9. Be Brave: Jobs don't love you back.

Never, ever think of it as “my” job

- It is a job you are doing.
- Remember this; you will be happier and stay longer.

Every new person changes the dynamics for everyone else.

- **New people elected and hired above you**
 - This document is about managing them; but you might not succeed.
- **New People hired parallel to you**
 - A new budget director or treasurer may challenge your turf. How do you manage that/them?
- **New people hired by you**
 - What you see is almost never what you get. Be as ready as possible.



14



10. Be Ready to Leave – 3 Good Reasons

1. To take a better job.



2. To get away from the current job.

- Let’s hope it doesn’t happen, but you might need to:
 - protect your professional standards.
 - avoid being moved to the basement .
 - (This destroys your mobility)
 - protect your values if they differ from those on the job.
 - Alas –avoid being fired!!!!

3. To retire and cap off a remarkable career with new life adventures.



And on that Happy Note:

The job of a state revenue estimator is one of the best in the world.

- It is very complex and deeply rewarding.
- It is the basis for government, i.e.,
 - the starting point for the budget
 - that supports all the programs
 - that all the politicians propose
 - in the name of the people.



The people who do it are really strong, really smart, really savvy, really dedicated to the public good.

It has been a great honor to serve with you in this work.

