How to Run a Government

Sir Michael Barber
Co-founder, Delivery Associates and Chief Education Advisor, Pearson
Author How to Run a Government so that citizens and taxpayers don’t go crazy

Sir Jeremy Heywood
Chair
Cabinet Secretary, Head of the Home Civil Service

Suggested hashtag for Twitter users: #LSEBarber
TO RUN A GOVERNMENT SO THAT CITIZENS BENEFIT AND TAXPAYERS DON’T GO CRAZY BY MICHAEL BARBER

LSE, Old Theatre
London, 16 March 2015
Introduction
“... The book has a moral purpose. More people are likely to lead more fulfilled lives if they live in countries with effective, accountable government.”

How to Run a Government p. xxiv
“Whether your political preference is for a minimalist state or a much larger one, you have an interest in government being effective at what it does.”

How to Run a Government p. xxiii
Priorities
“Socialism is the language of priorities.”

Aneurin Bevan
A map of delivery

- Boldness of reform
- Quality of execution

- Controversy without impact
- Status quo
- Transformation
- Improved outcomes

Successful delivery
Organization
“There was a political confidence, even swagger about us; but it was born of our popularity with the country, not our fitness to change it.”

Tony Blair
How not to think about implementation
Strategy
“Communication could easily break down . . . in sprawling, complicated encounters wreathed in smoke.”

John Sugden, *Nelson: The Sword of Albion*
Five paradigms of system reform

1. Trust and altruism
2. Hierarchy and targets
3. Choice and competition
4. Devolution and transparency
5. Privatisation

- Capability, Capacity and Culture
- Performance Management
- Strategic Direction

Community engagement and mobilization
Planning
“In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless but planning is indispensable.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower
“It becomes our duty to see things as they really are, divested of all disguise.”

William Hooper 1776
## Delivery chains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Roles and Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Person responsible for delivering the results (Me)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Director of the National Literacy Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Regional Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Local authorities, each with someone playing my role at local level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td>Literacy consultants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>Head Teachers, each with a literacy co-ordinator (so another 19,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>190,000</td>
<td>Teachers teaching literacy hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 million</td>
<td>Children, lapping it all up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trajectories

Performance vs. Time

NOW

TARGET
Routines
“People underestimate the importance of diligence as a virtue.”

Atul Gawande
"In all 126 spies have fallen into our hands. Of these eighteen gave themselves up voluntarily; twenty-four have been found amenable and are now being used as double-cross agents."

MI5 monthly note 1943
The implementation dip
Problem-solving
“No experience of the failure of his policy could shake his belief in its essential excellence.”

Barbara Tuchman on Philip II, King of Spain
Kto vinovat?

Sto deliat?
How big a crisis is it?

![Diagram showing the relationship between clarity of solution and problem size, with levels 1 to 4 indicated.](image-url)
Irreversibility
Establishing a legacy

“My predecessor was an idiot and my successor is a traitor.”

Saying quoted by Julio Frenk, former Minister of Health
“I’m reminded of that Belgian car that broke the world land speed record in 1899 . . . the name of the car was La Jamais Contente.”

Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario 2003-2013
Ever-widening circles of leadership

Guiding coalition

System leaders

Unit leaders

Workforce

Consumer/citizens
Conclusion
“The Cameron government has been much more rigorous (than Blair) in taking an axe to existing budgets, but ironically much less clear about defining priorities and outcomes. Maybe one day a British Government will put the whole thing together . . .”

How to Run a Government
p 261
**Government by spasm**
- Everything matters
- Vague aspiration
- Crisis management
- Guesswork
- Post-hoc evaluation
- Massaged impressions
- Remote and slow
- Present-focused
- Hyperactivity
- Soundbites
- Announcements

**Government by routine**
- Clear priorities
- Specification of success
- Routine oversight
- Data-informed
- Realtime data
- An honest conversation
- In touch and rapid
- Future-focused
- Persistent drive
- Dialogue
- Change on the ground
“The danger . . . lies not in the least in the concentration of power in competent and accountable hands. It lies in having the power insufficiently concentrated so that no one can be held accountable for its use.”

Theodore Roosevelt 1909
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@michaelbarber9
#howtorunagovernment
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