

To: Robert Chapman, director of the PNGV Task Force
From: Sandy Chan, public sector consultant
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Memorandum

Introduction

In our free market economy, it is rare to see collaboration between the government and private industry. To the contrary, government intervention is normally frowned upon because it disturbs the efficient interactions between producers and consumers. When the government sets quotas or price floors, for example, society as a whole loses some benefit, in the form of limited quantities available for purchase or higher-than-market prices for goods. Situations do exist, however, where government intervention can be beneficial, specifically when market failure exists. When the activities of firms result in environmental degradation, for example, or when consumers lack information that would cause them to make different decisions, it is necessary for the government to take action to correct these market failures.

This memorandum describes President Clinton's efforts at collaborating with private industry to preserve the environment and the competitiveness of the U.S. auto industry. It identifies the issues that arose from his initiative, the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles (PNGV) and makes recommendations for resolving each issue.

Background and Summary

The Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles (PNGV) emerged from a confluence of several events and trends in the early 1990s. At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, President George Bush signed a treaty whose terms were to reduce and stabilize US greenhouse gasses at 1990 levels by the year 2000 (Buntin, 1997). Around the same time, Clinton's Vice President, Al Gore, published *Earth in the Balance*, a best-selling book that

voiced his environmental concerns and tagged automobiles as “a mortal threat to the security of every nation that is more deadly than that of any military enemy we are ever again likely to confront” (Buntin, 1997, p. 3). He also predicted that industrializing nations like China and India would add to the market for cars, thereby making fuel-efficient vehicles more desirable. As such, the domestic auto industry needed to take action to maintain its competitiveness. It was against this backdrop of environmental crisis and global competition that Bill Clinton made it a priority to meet the terms of the 1992 treaty when he became President.

The auto industry was wary of the Clinton administration’s campaign message about increasing the average fuel economy of domestic vehicles. The Big Three (Chrysler Corporation, General Motors Corporation and Ford Motor Company) feared a sudden government mandate to meet higher corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards, as this would translate into high research and development (R & D) costs to come up with the vehicle and then possible layoffs for their employees. In an effort to avoid such a mandate and to gain “unprecedented access to the administration’s policy making process” (Buntin, 1997, p. 9), they cautiously agreed to work with the government on creating a generation of vehicles with improved fuel economy. They also wanted to distill the prevailing image of The Big Three as “totally opposed to all actions in the safety and environmental area” (Buntin, 1997, p. 5). Clinton appeared flexible and sympathetic to their concerns, and this demeanor helped garner their support for his project.

The PNGV was an unprecedented private-public partnership between the federal government and the domestic auto industry. The auto industry would have access to the technological resources of the government’s national laboratories, thereby decreasing the costs of R & D efforts. Furthermore, experts on both sides of the partnership could share information on technological developments that would enhance their current research projects. The overall cost

of the PNGV would be born by the government and industry. The government would fund the R & D projects, while The Big Three would fund the development of a production prototype of an 80-mpg car.

Clinton and Gore introduced a new spirit of government when they took office. They set out to reinvent government, that is, to make it more efficient, more effective and less bureaucratic than before (Fenn, 2004). In the same vein, Clinton rejected the idea of creating a separate agency for PNGV, in contrast to President Kennedy, who had created NASA for space exploration. Rather, PNGV would be an inter-agency effort between the auto industry and the following federal agencies: Commerce, Energy, NASA, Transportation, Defense and Environmental Protection. A task force under the Commerce Department's Technology Administration would be responsible for coordinating and supporting the R & D efforts of PNGV, with Robert Chapman as its director.

Managing this task force proved to be a challenge for Chapman. He spent much of his time essentially acting as a salesman for PNGV, having to justify the need for funds to agency heads and running into roadblocks because he lacked authority to redirect funds from them. Because PNGV was a presidential initiative rather than a program with Congressional approval, the participating agencies found it difficult to channel funds for the initiative while their own funding had been appropriated for specific agency goals and was subject to strict Congressional oversight. Furthermore, information sharing was not as open as had been expected. For example, Chapman needed to make a convincing argument before he could gain access to Air Force research on advanced batteries. As such, the participation of the other agencies was only nominal. And, because management authority was separated from funding, PNGV lacked the political and financial clout needed for its effective implementation.

A 1994 review of PNGV operations by the National Research Council concluded that, while “the overall structure and goals of PNGV [were] credible” (Buntin, 2007, p. 20), both the government and industry needed to create a strong, centralized management entity, the budgets for the most important PNGV programs should be combined and submitted to Congress for a unified appropriations request and Congress should give the PNGV’s director clear, statutory oversight responsibilities and clear lines of funding and authority (Buntin, 1997). Support for this recommendation dropped, however, when Republicans took control of both houses of Congress in November of 1994. This Congress was opposed to new regulations and found it difficult to justify assisting the auto industry in R & D efforts when The Big Three had made \$13.9 billion in profits in 1994. At this point, PNGV’s survival was at stake, and this is where I will begin my analysis.

Stakeholder Analysis

The following are groups who have a stake in PNGV’s outcome.

1. Americans – This stakeholder includes employees of the domestic auto industry, whose success or failure has consequences for their employment status. It also includes current and future generations, who stand to benefit or suffer from air quality, the environment in general and the strength of the economy. Furthermore, it includes taxpayers, who hold the government responsible for spending money efficiently and effectively.
2. The domestic auto industry, also known as The Big Three – It is interested in making desirable automobiles at a profit. Big, fast cars are currently desirable, so that is the type of cars the Big Three will make. They are generally against fuel efficiency standards and are unwilling and (argue that they are) unable to invest funds to research and develop fuel efficient cars without cutting jobs.

3. Clinton Administration – Adamant about meeting the terms of the 1992 Earth Summit treaty and about reinventing government, the administration wants to help the auto industry in developing a fuel efficient car. It believes that in order for the environment to be saved for current and future generations and to maintain the domestic auto industry's competitiveness, action needs to be taken now to develop a prototype.

4. Congress – It controls funding and exercises oversight on agency spending. It is excluded from the PNGV initiative, however, as Clinton wants to demonstrate that PNGV does not require additional funding, that it can operate from existing funds from participating agencies. Its exclusion from the initiative would create roadblocks to Chapman's efforts at securing funding.

5. PNGV taskforce – This is an entity headed by Robert Chapman and charged with the task of coordinating and supporting research efforts between the auto industry and the participating federal agencies in implementing the PNGV initiative. It lacks budget authority, which would prove to be a major challenge for Chapman as he tries to secure funding for PNGV.

Issues & Recommendations

Issue #1: Government intervention in a free market economy

In our free market economy, many transactions take place without government intervention. At the supermarket, for example, we pay one dollar for an avocado. This transaction takes place because both the buyer and the seller agree to the other's terms and feel that each is better off with the transaction taking place than not (Steinemann et al, 2005). The government hardly plays a role in this transaction, aside from ensuring that it takes place safely and fairly. Free markets are efficient because they bring together only the parties involved in a transaction, producers and consumers, thereby maximizing benefits to both.

When government intervention takes place, however, it generally reduces benefits to

society as a whole and brings about inefficiency (Steinemann et al, 2005). With rent control, for example, the government is essentially mandating a price ceiling on rent. While the purpose of rent control is to keep rent affordable for tenants, it leads to a shortage of housing units, as more people will want housing when rent is low. This may lead to the unintended consequence of landlords choosing whom they will rent to, and most likely they will rent in secret to the highest bidder, thereby undermining the purpose of rent control to begin with. Another example is a quota, which limits the quantity of a good that can be supplied to consumers. When this happens, buyers are willing to buy more of a good but cannot, and sellers are willing to sell more but cannot, so society as a whole is disadvantaged. When government involves itself in free markets, its policies tend to distort efficient market transactions, which results in sub-optimum prices and quantities of goods and services.

Despite disturbances to the free market, such as increasing unemployment rates, the individuals participating in the market are assumed to be capable of adjusting to the disturbance, by, for example, finding other employment and rejoining the workforce. Because of this self-adjusting nature of a free market economy, active government involvement is considered unnecessary (Steinemann et al, 2005).

Recommendation #1: An environmental marketing campaign to correct market failures

Despite the efficiency of free markets, unintended consequences, or externalities, do occur with some transactions. In the case of PNGV, the unintended consequence of vehicular use is that clean air becomes polluted. In economic terms, the pollution of clean air is an example of the tragedy of the commons (Hardin, 1968). Clean air is a public good, which means it is non-rival – my use of clean air generally does not reduce the benefit of clean air for you, and non-exclusive – I cannot, without force, prevent you from using it (Steinemann et al, 2005). Because

it is free to use, however, there is little incentive for anyone, including drivers, not to overuse or pollute it. If left to our own devices, we would pollute all the clean air available to us and no one would have an economic incentive to curtail or bear the costs of it. To correct this market failure and preserve clean air for future generations, then, government intervention is necessary.

An economist would recommend putting a price on air pollution, so that someone becomes responsible for paying for it and others might change their behavior to avoid having to pay. In the case, the Big Three recommended that, in lieu of increasing CAFE standards, the government should impose a gasoline tax on drivers. The Clinton administration rejected this, however, deciding instead that it was easier for the auto industry to change rather than ask taxpayers to accept yet another tax.

Given that the auto industry's operations must cater to consumer demand for its products, the government would benefit from a marketing campaign to affect consumer demand. Informational pamphlets and television and newspaper announcements can be used to educate the public on the dire air quality problem and the need for, and benefits of, fuel-efficient cars. The campaign must attempt to appeal to the emotions of viewers in order to leave a lasting impression on their minds. Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) is a transit agency in California that has made good use of environmental symbolism on its trains in an effort to increase ridership. One advertisement is of the blue sky with a letter thanking riders for allowing it to breathe by taking public transit rather driving. Such eco-friendly messages need to be repeated by the administration and air quality experts to maintain awareness. Once the public understands the benefits of good air quality and the consequences of bad air quality, it is likely to change its behavior as consumers of vehicles by either driving less or opting for more fuel efficient cars. Either way, the public will be helping to reduce emissions by reducing car use or by forcing the

auto industry to create a car that consumers want.

With an environmental campaign, the government is correcting two market failures. The first is the negative externality of air pollution, as described earlier. The second is information asymmetry. One of the assumptions of perfect competition is that consumers possess all the information needed to make rational and sound decisions (Steinemann et al, 2005). Efficient outcomes arise out of decisions based on complete information. However, because information is sometimes insufficient, inaccurate, unobtainable, unknown or hidden, the outcome is not always efficient. In other words, consumers may end up making decisions that they may not have made had they possessed complete information. As such, an environmental campaign would equip consumers with further knowledge about the consequences of driving cars, and consumers would change their behavior accordingly.

Issue #2: Government assistance to private industry

Taxpayers expect the government to use their hard-earned money for public purposes. The maintenance of our roads and the administration of public agencies, for example, are paid for with public funds. As such, taxpayers will very likely demand justification when they find that the government wishes to assist the private auto industry in staying competitive. Furthermore, the fact that the Big Three earned \$13.9 billion in profits last year makes this justification even more difficult.

Government is supposed to be a neutral entity, not to play favorites with those under its jurisdiction. Madison (1787) wrote of the need for a balance of power within government, so that the interests of one group could not dominate those of other groups. He goes on to say that “you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place, oblige it to control itself” (as cited in Kettl, 2002, p.36). As an entity acting in the interest of the general

public, government cannot have individualistic tendencies. As such, the PNGV initiative, which calls for government to assist the auto industry in particular, presents issues of accountability and the appropriateness of government intervention.

By assisting the domestic auto industry in remaining competitive, the federal government may appear to favor that industry over others. Those who think like Madison could say that the Big Three comprises a faction that often overpowers other industries because of its strength in terms of size and economic influence. Another perception might be that politicians are trying to cater to a powerful industry in order to gain power for themselves. In both cases, government would appear not to be acting in the best interest of the public, but in that of the politicians and the auto industry at the expense of the public.

Recommendation #2: Identify PNGV's public benefits and conduct accountability reviews

To justify government assistance to the auto industry as called for by the PNGV initiative, the benefits for the American public of doing so and the urgency of the situation must be explained to all stakeholders. This will help garner support for the collaboration. To ensure that public funds are being spent efficiently for the public good, a periodic review must be conducted and the findings of the review reported.

Stakeholders must be informed of the trends that make PNGV a crucial initiative to support. The force of globalization has brought increasing pressure on our industries to be competitive in order to survive in the global economy. Whereas in the past, many industries could compete successfully by exploiting economies of scale, competitors outside our nation's boundaries are now able to provide goods and services that are desirable and economical to our consumers (Hansen, 2004). In the U.S., domestic auto brands compete directly with many Japanese and German car makers. Japanese autos, in particular, are desirable for their reliability,

high fuel economy and strong re-sale value (Edmunds.com, 2008). Another trend is population growth in the industrializing nations of China and India. This means that more cars, and therefore more oil, will be in demand. This, in turn, will make fuel-efficient cars more desirable than the powerful but gas-guzzling cars that our domestic auto industry currently makes.

Although the auto industry made large profits last year, we have to remember that R & D costs are very high. To remain operational, the auto industry must meet its day-to-day financial obligations, such as payroll and utilities. To be competitive, however, it must invest in the future (Finkler, 2005). Blunt (2005) stresses that with strategic planning, it is crucial not to let “the urgent drive out the important” (p. 15). This means that despite the urgency of day-to-day operations, careful thought and investment are needed to prepare for the organization’s future. Making our wealth of research facilities available to the Big Three will relieve them of the burden of high R & D costs so that they can stay afloat and invest in the future simultaneously.

Stakeholders must understand that although this assistance helps private industry, the public stands to benefit greatly from it as well. The environmental benefits are described in the marketing campaign from Recommendation #1. The benefits of a stronger economy and a competitive auto industry should be identified in a press conference as well as before Congress within the next month.

Finally, to ensure that the public interest remains served by the initiative, the Governmental Accountability Office (GAO) should conduct yearly reviews of the program to ensure that funds are being spent on projects that are likely to benefit the public. Furthermore, Mr. Chapman, it is crucial that you consistently convey to your staff the importance of using public funds responsibly, as the PNGV is a politically sensitive initiative.

Issue #3: Lack of buy-in from Congress, a key stakeholder that controls the purse strings

President Clinton had good intentions when he decided against creating a new, separate entity to implement PNGV. In the spirit of a reinvented government, he did not want to add another layer of bureaucracy. Furthermore, he wanted to show that PNGV would not require additional funding to implement, that the existing budget appropriations for the participating agencies would be sufficient. However, by excluding Congress from the initiative, he left out an important stakeholder.

Bryson (2004) offers several definitions of a stakeholder, two of which are below:

1. Any person or group that can place a claim on the organization's attention, resources or output, or that is affected by that output.
2. People or small groups with the power to respond to, negotiate with, and change the strategic future of the organization (p. 22).

In the case of PNGV, Congress is in the position to place a claim on the organization's resources, and it has the potential to change its strategic future. Nutt (2002) found that half of decisions fail, i.e., they were not implemented, only partially implemented or otherwise produced poor results, largely because decision makers failed to consider interests and pursue information held by key stakeholders. Stakeholder buy-in is especially important for public agencies because "they are born of and live by satisfying interests that are sufficiently influential to maintain the agencies' political legitimacy and the resources that come with it" (Bryson, 2004, p. 5). Bryson (2004) goes on to say that if stakeholders are not satisfied, "the normal expectation would be that something will change – for example, budgets will be cut, elected or appointed officials will lose their job, new initiatives will be undermined, and so on..." (p. 5). Sure enough, at this point, PNGV's very survival is at stake. Because the initiative began without clear lines of authority and funding, progress has been hindered by a lack of information sharing amongst agencies and a

lack of resources for priority projects. Furthermore, because it lacks the approval of Congress, an important stakeholder that controls funding, its strategic future is at risk.

Recommendation #3: Seek Congressional approval of a program budget

Include Congress as a stakeholder by taking the advice of the National Review Council and drafting a budget proposal to Congress so that authority and funding can be clearly delineated. Because Congress will want justification for the request, the PNGV task force should use a program budget format when preparing the budget document. That way, the mission of the PNGV and its justification for its existence can be fleshed out (Lee, 2008). Furthermore, the need for a partnership with the auto industry and the potential benefits of doing so must be identified.

First, the document should describe the dire environmental situation and the threat to U.S. competitiveness in the global economy. It must stress that these problems can hurt their constituents directly through air pollution and potential job loss. These two problems alone can lead to social burdens like higher healthcare costs due to increased respiratory illnesses and higher crime rates as unemployment rises.

Second, the document should describe the benefits of a partnership with the auto industry and a stronger position in the global economy. Not only will the research conducted within the partnership improve air quality, it can also lead to spillover benefits in other technologies. For example, the technology behind the development of a super fuel-efficient vehicle can be applied to other modes of transport, such as airplanes and public transit. This, in turn, would further reduce greenhouse emissions. Another benefit is that as long as the auto industry remains competitive and innovative, its employees will have jobs, which is good for the economy.

Finally, the document must request funding for permanent staff to run PNGV on a daily basis. Most people on the task force are on loan from different agencies. This mere fact means

that they have other tasks to perform, and if they do not give those other tasks priority, a Congressional oversight committee will question them (Finkler, 2005).

The budget should highlight the environmental marketing campaign that has already begun and that the general public will soon want eco-friendly action from their Congress people. Given that elected officials generally wish to remain in power, Congress people will usually try to give their constituents what they want to ensure their support in the next election (Denhardt, J. and Denhardt, R. 2006).

Issue #4: Network management

The inclusion of numerous PNGV participants, each with their own goals and values, presents network management challenges. The PNGV initiative is founded on worthwhile causes, but the execution of the program is just as important as the concepts behind it. Wilson (1886) makes an analogy to this case by referring to the development of administration in the U.S. government:

Up to our own day all the political writers whom we now read had thought, argued, dogmatized only about the *constitution* of government; about the nature of the state, the essence and seat of sovereignty... about the greatest meanings lying at the heart of government... Amidst this high warfare of principles, administration could command no pause for its own consideration... The question [of] how law should be administered with enlightenment, with equity, with speed and without friction, was put aside as 'practical detail' which clerks could arrange after doctors had agreed upon principles.

Without thoughtful execution of principles, government cannot be effective. Particularly in collaborative efforts, the issue of fuzzy boundaries may arise, where it is unclear who is responsible for managing the network of participants and who can be held accountable for its success or failure (Kettl, 2002). In the case of PNGV, Chapman is charged with the task of managing the collaboration, but he has no authority over funding and information sharing. If

questioned regarding his success as the director of the task force, Chapman could point to many factors, outside of his control, that hampered his ability to manage PNGV effectively.

Recommendation #4: Five-fold path to effective network management

Effective network management requires a five-fold process consisting of the following:

1. Properly staffing and funding the PNGV initiative
2. Interest-based negotiation amongst participants to establish goal congruence (O' Leary et al, 2007)
3. Establishing information systems for open communication
4. Updating hiring practices to align with PNGV goals (Daley, 2002)
5. Continuous and frequent evaluation

First, the PNGV task force should be permanently staffed with an expert from each participating agency or private auto company. This expert should be what Hansen (2004) refers to as a connector – a person who “know[s] where experts and ideas reside and who can connect people who do not know each other” (p. 25). Having a staff of connectors from the participating agencies and companies will facilitate the sharing of research, as the connectors will possess not only explicit but also tacit knowledge, knowledge that, because they have been immersed within their own organizational cultures, only they can understand and transfer to others (Argote et al 2003).

Second, you, Mr. Chapman, should learn the concept of interest-based negotiation and teach it to the rest of the PNGV staff. Interest-based negotiation, or IBN, is a collaborative problem-solving approach that focuses on interests rather than position. A position is “a predetermined solution articulated in statements people use to describe their wants” (O'Leary et al, 2007, p. 14). A position-based approach to managing conflict is necessarily competitive – my loss is your gain and vice versa. In contrast, IBN focuses on the needs of the participants “in terms of security, economic well-being, sense of belonging to an organization or community,

recognition of contribution or efforts and autonomy or control over its decisions” (O’ Leary et al, 2007, p. 15).

IBN is conducive to creative problem-solving because it “uncovers what is most important to stakeholders and allows negotiators to develop solutions that help to overcome previously intractable differences” (O’ Leary et al, 2007, p. 15). Rather than being resolute on one way to perform a task, the negotiator focuses on what he needs, not what he wants. For example, when bus riders are waiting too long for a bus, the problem is not that the bus does not come often enough, as an obvious solution would then be to put more buses on the road. Instead, the problem, the core need that is not being met, is that bus riders are waiting too long to get from Point A to Point B. Possible solutions, then, could be to carpool or ride bikes. As such, when problems are stated according to core needs, many solutions are possible.

IBN can, in turn, be used to establish goal congruence within the network. Of course, each participant will have his individual goals, but these goals must be aligned with the broader goal of developing the fuel efficient prototype. As such, the taskforce must establish clear, performance-based targets that support the entire network so that participants know exactly what needs to be accomplished and that they cannot allow their individual goals to take priority over network goals (Goldsmith and Eggers, 2004).

Third, an online information-sharing program should be created so that each participating entity can log the progress of their developments and request expertise or resources from other departments. Moreover, best practices from each participant can be recorded here so that others can avoid common mistakes and save time and money by learning from them. This program can also be used by managers to assess how well the network is functioning and to identify areas that need intervention or change.

Fourth, Cotten (2007) stresses the importance of human capital by stating that it is “arguably the most important determinant of an organization’s ability to sustain long-term success” (p. 6). As such, human resources procedures must be updated so that agencies can recruit and promote employees according to PNGV goals. Core competencies should be revised to require that candidates possess successful teamwork experience, flexibility and an inclination to search for and offer help (Daley, 2002). Promotion criteria should be revised to include a collaboration component. 360 degree performance reviews can be used to assess the degree to which an employee has collaborated with others (Fox and Klein, 1996).

The last step in successful network management is to continuously evaluate the program. The heads of the task force should meet every three weeks to assess the program’s progress and discuss issues. The task force should determine whether goals are being met at a satisfactory rate. Is money being spent appropriately? What is going on outside of the project? An environmental scan, or a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, should be conducted to see if the project needs to take on a new direction (Higgins and Vincze, 1993). Finally, small victories should be celebrated in order to sustain momentum (Kotter, 1996). Acknowledgement of milestones via award ceremonies or newsletters is crucial to keeping morale high and maintaining commitment to the cause, as doing so provides recognition for hard work (Bowditch and Buono, 2005; Salancik, 1977).

Conclusion

Politicians are often criticized for conceiving initiatives that are poorly executed, as these projects usually result in a waste of taxpayer money and society’s resources. It cannot be emphasized enough that all great ideas must come with great plans for execution. Poor execution undermines the plans and the credibility of the government officials who created them. As such,

it is crucial that initiatives be thoroughly examined, from the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders to seeking out expertise to weigh in on the best implementation approach. As Wilson (1886) states, “to be efficient [we] must discover the simplest arrangements by which responsibility can be unmistakably fixed upon officials; the best way of dividing authority without hampering it, and responsibility without obscuring it.”

The importance and relevance of PNGV cannot be understated. Trends in auto demand, population growth and environmental health tell us that action must be taken now to sustain the domestic auto industry and its employees and to safeguard the environment for future generations. This memorandum has identified administration issues that have arisen from the PNGV initiative and has made a case for government intervention. My recommendations are intended to help the PNGV task force garner stakeholder support and realize effective network management.

We have the potential to change the outlook in our favor. We know that the environment is in danger and that our domestic auto industry is at risk of losing its competitive edge. In other words, the problem stream in Kingdon’s multiple streams theory exists (Theodoulou and Kofinis, 2004). By opening our laboratories and agency research to the auto industry, we have made available an immense amount of resources that will allow the partnership to find solutions for these problems. These solutions comprise the policy stream. Finally, with a marketing campaign to increase awareness and encourage eco-friendly consumer behavior, we can bring salience to the issues and create a political stream. The convergence of these streams will create a window of opportunity for the Clinton administration to make PNGV a success and a victory for the U.S. in terms of economic strength and environmental sustainability.

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