
Critical Core Issues for the Future of the Agency

General John R. Dailey

General John R. Dailey, USMC (retired) has been Acting Deputy Administrator of NASA since March 1993 and also serves as Associate Deputy Administrator. In his 36 years in the Marine Corps he clocked 6,000 hours of flight time, including 450 fixed wing missions during two tours in Vietnam. Prior to his arrival at NASA, he was Assistant Commandant of the Corps.

General Dailey focused on three general areas in his hour and a half with delegates to the Project Management Shared Experiences Program: NASA's strategic plan, project management and communications.

He began by urging everyone to study and work the newly approved *NASA Strategic Plan*, the Agency's blueprint to year 2020. He spoke directly to NASA's 36% cut in budget, from \$122 billion to \$82 billion over five years, and a staffing decrease to approximately 18,000 civil servants by October 1999. Why change things? "We can't afford to do it the old way," he noted. Directives are in place, the process is being developed, but resistance is Agencywide. His job is to push the change process and drive the deadline. The NASA culture is strong, creative and collaborative, he acknowledged. He and others noted that Office of Management and Budget proclaims NASA as a model of reinvention in government.

"Project management is the absolute heart of NASA," he said. One major shift is from operations to R&D. The recent NPG 7120.4/5 Directive and forthcoming Handbook must become "bibles for our programs," especially with more lead Center and cross-Center projects. "Your projects are measurable," he said, and "technical competence is first, last and always."

In terms of communication, General Dailey said: "Communication is our biggest problem in the Agency," internally and externally. While each government Agency is forbidden by law to advertise or

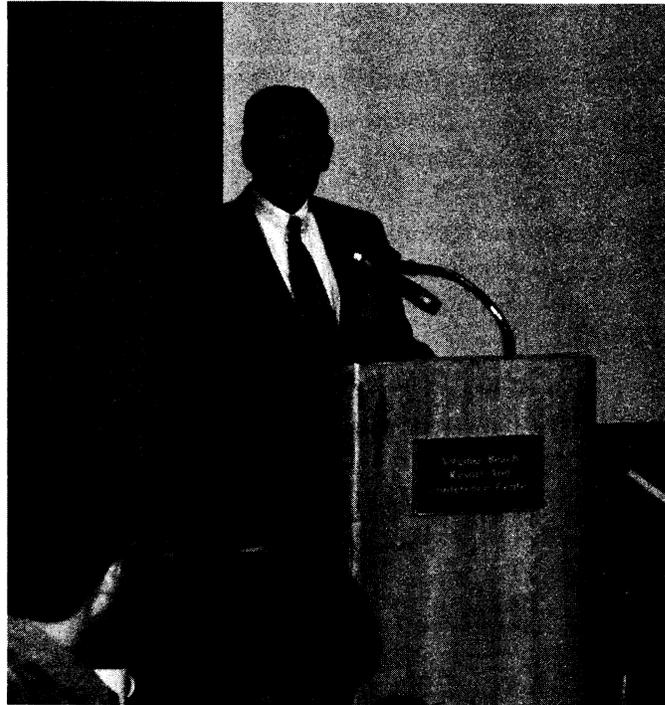


Figure 1. Gen. Dailey speaks to the NASA shared experiences program participants

promote its successes, NASA could learn from politicians and public affairs specialists. Technical briefs, for example, must be "consumable," written at eighth grade level.

In summary, General Dailey said: "We decided we would design an Agency that worked as a team of Centers, each providing its unique capabilities to this total, which enables us to maintain our position of excellence in doing the hard things nobody else can do, providing the technology that enables American industry to develop its products and maintain its supremacy in the industrialized world."

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