



CONGRESSIONAL  
MANAGEMENT  
FOUNDATION

# District/State–DC Office Relations

## The Joys of Harmony, the Perils of Disunion, and the Path to Collective Serenity (almost)

July 26, 2011 • 2:00 – 3:00 pm Eastern

Sponsored by a grant from:  
**Society for Human Resource Management**

Dial In: **1-559-546-1000**

Participant Access Code: **120746#**

# Introduction

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# Society for Human Resource Management

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- World's largest association devoted to human resource management.
- More than 250,000 members in over 140 countries.
- More than 60 years of research on human resource management, including compensation, benefits and workplace practices.
- For more information, visit  
<http://shrm.org>.



# Congressional Management Foundation

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- **Publications**

- *Setting Course*
- *Keeping It Local*
- *Congressional Intern Handbook*



- **Management Services**

- Strategic Planning
- Team Building
- Executive Coaching
- Operational Assessments

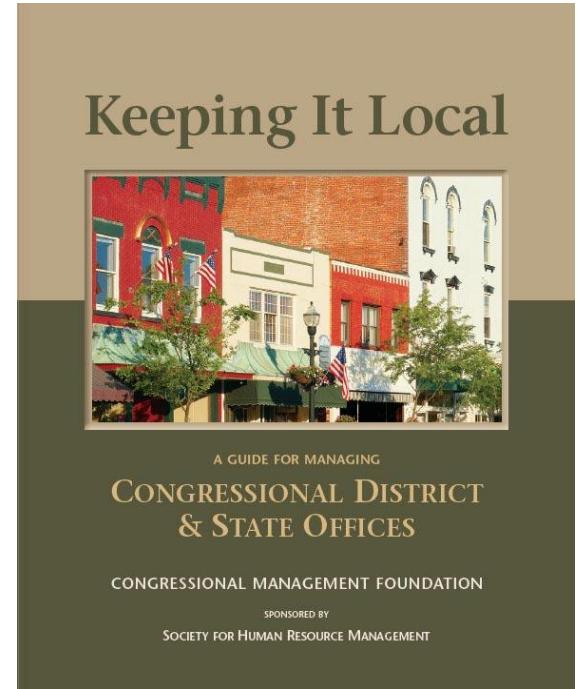
# Congressional Management Foundation

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- **Training**
  - Professional Development for Chiefs of Staff and Legislative Directors
  - District Staff Assistant Orientation Webinars and Writing Constituent Mail Courses (through CAO)
  - Orientation Workshop for Staff of Members-Elect
- **Citizen Engagement Research**
  - Communicating with Congress Project
  - Gold Mouse Awards
  - *Partnership for a More Perfect Union*

# Keeping It Local

- Third edition published 2010
- Sponsored by a grant from SHRM
- Formerly “Frontline Management”
- Survey of and interviews with House & Senate District/State Directors



# Poll 1: Role & Office Location

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The title that best describes my position in the office is:

- District Director
- State Director
- Chief of Staff
- Deputy Chief of Staff
- Scheduler
- Field Rep/Caseworker/  
Constituent Services Rep
- Other

I primarily work in the:

- District/State Office
- Washington, DC Office

# Agenda

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- I. Obstacles to Creating Good Interoffice Relations
- II. Techniques for Enhancing Interoffice Communication and Coordination
- III. Assessing Your Interoffice Relationship
- IV. Q & A

# **Obstacles to Creating Good Interoffice Relations**

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**“A Member’s overall effectiveness will be limited if the Washington and district/state offices fail to develop a coordinated agenda that clearly defines common goals and related activities, and ensures that both offices will work together effectively and efficiently.”**

**— Keeping It Local, p. 5**

## Poll 2: Problems/Tensions Between Offices

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What are the two greatest sources of problems or tensions between the district/state and DC offices?

- Breakdowns in communication between staff
- Differing projects and interests
- Poor interpersonal relations among staff
- Weak working relationship between CoS and the DD/SD
- Attitude of DC staff towards district/state staff
- Unclear sense of priorities/office goals
- Lack of coordination on office projects and activities
- Inefficient systems and office procedures

# **3 Obstacles – 3 Ds**

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- 1. Distance**
- 2. Different core functions**
- 3. Drive for efficiency over effectiveness**

# Poll 3: Communication/Cooperation

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Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the communication and cooperation between your district/state offices and your DC office:

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

# **Enhancing Interoffice Communication and Coordination**

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**10 Techniques**

# **10 Techniques for Enhancing Interoffice Communications and Coordination**

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- 1. Conduct annual planning sessions.**
  
- 2. Ensure a good Chief of Staff–District/State Director relationship exists.**

**“There is no substitute for a solid partnership between the Chief of Staff and the District/ State Director. Mutual respect and open, honest and frequent communication are keys to building a trusting relationship.”**

**— Keeping It Local, p. 75**

# **10 Techniques (continued)**

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3. Demonstrate that the Member highly values the work of each office.
4. Ensure clarity of staff responsibilities and duties.

# **10 Techniques (continued)**

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5. Encourage regular staff communication and interaction.
6. Set expectations for and recognize staff collaboration.

# **10 Techniques (continued)**

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7. Communicate often through a variety of means.
8. Create interoffice teams to implement goals.

# 10 Techniques (continued)

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9. Encourage cross-promotion of staff between the district/state and DC offices.

10. Foster personal relationships between offices.

- Interoffice staff exchanges
- Non-working visits

# **Evaluating the District/State–DC Relationship**

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**“The best offices in Congress, like the best businesses, have a strong capacity for improvement. They regularly identify and address problems. They learn from their mistakes and they turn shortcomings into growth and success. Through this learning process good offices become great offices.”**

**—Keeping It Local, p. 71**

# Assessing Your Interoffice Relationship

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1. Hold quarterly meetings to identify problems and generate solutions.
2. Add to agenda of staff planning session.
3. Conduct staff survey to determine problems and solicit feedback.

# Sample Assessment Questions

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1. Does your office have written goals that the DC and district/state staff work collaboratively to accomplish?
  
2. Do staff pursue separate strategic agendas that require little coordination?
  
3. Do the CoS and the DD/SD have a trusting and supportive working relationship?
  
4. Do the CoS and DD/SD role model how the DC and district/state staffs should treat each other?

# Sample Assessment Questions

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5. What is the level of clarity around the roles and responsibilities of each office and around the general duties of each staff person?
6. Is there confusion related to which staff are responsible for performing what duties?
7. What is the level of understanding around, and the level of respect for, the contributions that the other office provides to your constituents?
8. Is there a tendency for staff in your office to view the staff in the other office with some resentment?

# Sample Assessment Questions

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9. Does the staff feel that the Member highly values the work of both the DC and district/state offices?
10. Is there equity in the resources provided both offices?
11. Are staff collaboration and demonstrations of teamwork between the offices recognized (formally or informally)?
12. Is resistance to collaboration and communication tolerated?

# Sample Assessment Questions

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13. Do both the DC and district/state staffs informally keep staff in the other office informed of their activities or do staff talk only when they have a specific question, request or comment?
  
14. Does your office make it easy for both staffs to access written records of interest to staff in both offices (e.g. schedule, speeches, press releases, positions, votes)?

# 3 Things You Can Do This Week

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1. Sign-up for e-newsletter on Hill activities
2. Find opportunity for the Member/Senator to compliment district/state staff
3. Arrange weekly check-ins between DD/SD and COS

# **Q&A**

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# District/State Director Training

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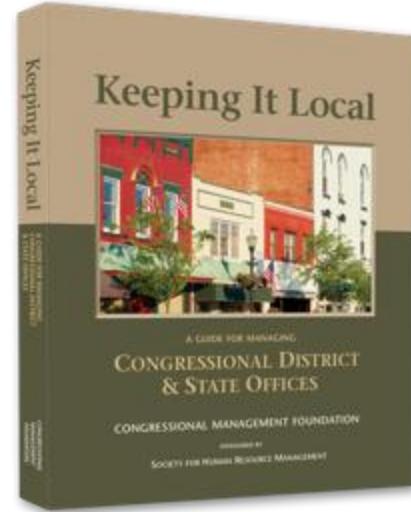
## 1. Scheduling & Events:

Demanding Friends, Crucial Allies,  
and Managing a Three-Ring Circus

## 2. Fostering a Strategic Outreach Culture:

Connecting Members, Staff and  
Stakeholders to Advance Your Agenda

*\*\* RECORDED VERSION AVAILABLE \*\**



## 3. District/State–DC Office Relations:

The Joys of Harmony, the Perils of Disunion,  
and the Path to Collective Serenity (almost)

*\*\* RECORDED VERSION AVAILABLE \*\**

# **Survey**

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**Potential online management  
training programs for 2012**

# Congressional Management Foundation

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CMF is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to helping Congress and its Members meet the evolving needs and expectations of an engaged and informed 21st century citizenry.

Our work focuses on improving congressional operations and enhancing citizen engagement through research, publications, training, and management services.

Visit [CongressFoundation.org](http://CongressFoundation.org) for additional resources:  
Congressional Operations > Resources by Topic > District/State  
Publications > Keeping It Local

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