

Transcript | What Civil Service Reform Means in 2025

1

00:00:11.450 --> 00:00:13.190

Jessica van Onselen: Hello, everyone!

2

00:00:13.500 --> 00:00:15.580

Jessica van Onselen: Hi, welcome! Welcome!

3

00:00:16.129 --> 00:00:19.920

Jessica van Onselen: You're in the right place. We'll just give everyone a second to join.

4

00:00:20.450 --> 00:00:30.810

Jessica van Onselen: We'll get started in a second. Hi, if you're joining us, you are totally in the right place. We're going to start in a minute. Just give everyone a second to do the digital commute, as they say.

5

00:00:31.250 --> 00:00:45.639

Jessica van Onselen: I will kick off in the meantime. Hello, and welcome to this panel event. On what Civil Service reform means. In 2025. Let me introduce myself. My name is Jessica van Onslin. I'm the Director of Communications here at Apolitical.

6

00:00:45.640 --> 00:01:11.989

Jessica van Onselen: It would be great to hear from all of you, so please do post in the chat where you're joining us from, and what organization you work for. It's always lovely to just get a sense of the community of the room. So open up that chat and say, Hi! I really love to get a sense of who's joining us today for those of you who may be joining us for the 1st time. Welcome. Apolitical is the world's largest community for government, used by over a quarter of a million public servants and policymakers

7

00:01:11.990 --> 00:01:22.770

Jessica van Onselen: from more than 170 countries. Our mission is to make government smarter, and we do that by putting the best knowledge and skills at the fingertips, fingertips

8

00:01:22.770 --> 00:01:50.020

Jessica van Onselen: of public servants like you around the world. I can already see that we have some attendees from the UK. And the U. We've got Canada there. Fantastic! Hello! Welcome! We have Katie joining from Ottawa. We have Sadia saying, Hi! From Toronto, Hi, hi! Canada! Again. Poland! Welcome. Leeds is join. We've got Luke from Leeds. Welcome, Peterborough! Oh, fantastic! Yes, a very cloudy London! Hello, Duncan.

9

00:01:50.260 --> 00:02:02.250

Jessica van Onselen: more from Leeds. Fantastic, so fantastic. It's great to see UK and us representative representation, or UK and Canada representation as well.

10

00:02:02.250 --> 00:02:26.159

Jessica van Onselen: But the UK and the US. Are really on our minds, because these are 2 countries amongst those, many of which this year have started to speak about giving their Civil Service a bit of a shake up so. Yes, Civil Service Reform feels very much top of the agenda for many governments around the world at the moment. So we thought we'd run this session today to ask the question, What does Civil service reform mean in 2025.

11

00:02:26.160 --> 00:02:49.879

Jessica van Onselen: How do we achieve success in a way that empowers public servants? Let me just say Hi! To a few more people. Hi! We've got Gio joining from Norwich. Lovely to see you, Javier, from Mexico. That's wonderful! Berlin. I wonder if Berlin is less cloudy than the UK today. Derbyshire, Glasgow. Fantastic. Keep rolling in with the Hellos! Hi, Naomi! From Scotland! Lovely to see you there!

12

00:02:50.060 --> 00:02:59.319

Jessica van Onselen: We're thrilled to kick off today's conversation with an invitation for everyone on this call to join our reimagining public institutions community of practice.

13

00:02:59.350 --> 00:03:22.210

Jessica van Onselen: Over the next hour we'll be exploring how the possibilities that public sector reform holds and the role that public servants can play in making changes to the public sector beneficial to citizens and to services. That's why we created this community. We've done it in collaboration with our friends at Demas Helsinki, the Institutional Architecture lab and the Transition Collective, which many of you may know.

14

00:03:22.480 --> 00:03:46.000

Jessica van Onselen: So the community is a dedicated space where public servants from around the world can connect. You can exchange knowledge. You can spark experimentation and collaborate on reimagining the structure of institutions. If that sounds like something you might benefit from, then we really think you'd love to join. You can find a link to the community in the resources tab. So if you look at the bottom of your zoom Tab, you'll see resources.

15

00:03:46.000 --> 00:03:52.760

Jessica van Onselen: and my colleague will also share it in the chat, and we can't wait to see you there. If you're not already a member, see you over in the community?

16

00:03:53.027 --> 00:04:06.959

Jessica van Onselen: A link should pop up at the bottom of your screen now, and you can go and have a look at the community. I'm gonna quickly, quickly rattle off a couple of technical notes. Now, before we jump in today's conversation. And I'm so excited to introduce you to our 2 guests.

17

00:04:07.270 --> 00:04:18.699

Jessica van Onselen: This event is recorded for on-demand viewing on the apolitical website. So please don't record it yourself. Contact details for privacy concerns are in the apolitical homepage footer.

18

00:04:18.810 --> 00:04:24.359

Jessica van Onselen: Closed captions are available. Those can be toggled on or off on your screen settings as well.

19

00:04:24.520 --> 00:04:39.110

Jessica van Onselen: So we're almost getting to the exciting bit. Our speakers. You can see them on screen. I am dying to introduce you to these 2 incredible public servants. But before we introduce them we're going to run a few quick polls to get a sense of where you are coming to today's discussion from.

20

00:04:39.530 --> 00:04:43.070

Jessica van Onselen: let's have a look at the 1st poll. And the question here is.

21

00:04:43.460 --> 00:05:11.840

Jessica van Onselen: what is your primary concern regarding upcoming Civil Service reforms? Is it job security is it changes in job responsibilities? Is it adaptation to new technologies? Maybe

it's about the impact on public service delivery for citizens. Maybe it's something else, and if it is something else, and you want to share that, you know, pop it in the chat. What is your primary concern regarding upcoming Civil service reforms. Give it a vote very keen to see what the answers are there.

22

00:05:11.840 --> 00:05:15.230

Jessica van Onselen: I wonder if our 2 guests are having a look at it as well.

23

00:05:15.510 --> 00:05:27.840

Jessica van Onselen: what is your primary concern regarding upcoming Civil Service reforms? And even if they don't have reforms in your country, maybe watching reforms in another country is also, you know, sparking these questions for you as well.

24

00:05:28.200 --> 00:05:39.679

Jessica van Onselen: Let's see the results. Give it a few seconds. Okay, fantastic. I'm seeing the results rolling in here. It's looking to me like we have quite a clear winner. So with 33% here.

25

00:05:40.220 --> 00:05:59.180

Jessica van Onselen: impact on public service delivery is the number one concern. But there is a close second here, and that's job security. So what I'm hearing from all of you is, what does reform mean for citizens? And what does it mean for me and my career and the ability to deliver impact here? So thank you for voting in that really interesting great to see everyone.

26

00:05:59.180 --> 00:06:09.389

Jessica van Onselen: Next question another poll will pop up. How prepared do you feel to adapt to the proposed changes in the Civil Service? How prepared do you feel to adapt to the proposed

27

00:06:09.390 --> 00:06:32.409

Jessica van Onselen: changes in the Civil Service. Very prepared. Maybe you're a bit neutral, maybe very unprepared. You've got a scale there. Let us know how prepared. You feel your boss comes in. They're like, we're changing everything. How prepared do you feel for that? I can see that Brandon is smiling. So I'm hoping later I can ask him what his thoughts are on that one. How prepared do you feel personally?

28

00:06:32.450 --> 00:06:39.129

Jessica van Onselen: Let's give it another second, so that everyone has a chance to vote, and then we'll share some results as well.

29

00:06:39.310 --> 00:07:05.610

Jessica van Onselen: Let me know your answers. Okay, 41% of you say, somewhat prepared. And 10% of you good for you say, very prepared. So if we lump those 2 together, 51% of you say, bring on those reforms. We're kind of ready for them in some form. We've got 29% there feeling a bit neutral. Then we've got 20% of you feeling somewhat unprepared. 0% of you said you are very unprepared, and that is because you are apolitical members

30

00:07:05.610 --> 00:07:10.939

Jessica van Onselen: and organized and future thinking and being amazing. So thank you very much for sharing those.

31

00:07:10.940 --> 00:07:34.750

Jessica van Onselen: Oh, fantastic! We've got some answers in the chat here as well. Joshua Aaron, Luke are popping in their thoughts there, fantastic. We'll try and come back to those really brilliant to see your thoughts. There. We've got one last poll before we get going. What support would be most beneficial to you during the reform process. What support would be most beneficial to you during the reform process? Training and development programs.

32

00:07:35.330 --> 00:07:41.239

Jessica van Onselen: clear communication from leadership? Who doesn't want that. What about opportunities to provide feedback

33

00:07:41.310 --> 00:07:55.649

Jessica van Onselen: peer support networks? Maybe it's something else again. Pop them in the chat there. What support would be most beneficial to you during the reform process? Or have you watched another country's reform and thought I'd kind of need X type of support if I were to go through it.

34

00:07:55.700 --> 00:08:20.029

Jessica van Onselen: Give everyone a second to vote, and then we'll see the results there. What support would be most beneficial to you during the reform process you can only choose one answer. I was just thinking I might want to answer to more than one of those. Let's see if the results are in Poll number 3. It's just popping up here, Leah Winner. 52% of you want clear communication from leadership. That is super important.

35

00:08:20.030 --> 00:08:35.789

Jessica van Onselen: Second in there with 27% just over a quarter of you saying training and development programs would really help few less on opportunities to provide feedback and 4%. Some peer support networks very, very useful. Thank you so much.

36

00:08:36.080 --> 00:09:00.570

Jessica van Onselen: Thank you for taking part in those polls. I now get to this really exciting part. I get to introduce our speakers. We are incredibly fortunate to have 2 brilliant guests joining us today. We have Professor Rodney Scott and Brandon Lee. I'm going to introduce Rodney first, st Rodney, 1st of all is joining us at one Am. From New Zealand. If that isn't commitment to share insights with all of you. What time Rodney.

37

00:09:00.570 --> 00:09:01.236

Rodney Scott: 2 Am.

38

00:09:01.570 --> 00:09:03.469

Jessica van Onselen: 2 am. Oh, my God! It's even worse.

39

00:09:03.500 --> 00:09:20.050

Jessica van Onselen: Rodney, we are so grateful that you have stayed up late for us. Let me introduce him. Rodney is Vice Chancellor's Fellow at Rmit University, Melbourne, an adjunct professor at the University of New South Wales, and an affiliated researcher with the Bennett Institute of public policy at Cambridge University.

40

00:09:20.050 --> 00:09:35.039

Jessica van Onselen: He is also the former chief policy Advisor and Deputy Chief Executive for strategy, policy, and integrity. At the Public Service Commission of New Zealand. He is an experienced and fantastic public service servant of many decades. What a joy to have you!

41

00:09:35.040 --> 00:09:41.589

Jessica van Onselen: Brandon is the Director General of the grants and contributions, transformation initiative at global affairs. Canada.

42

00:09:41.590 --> 00:10:06.409

Jessica van Onselen: Previously Brandon served as Consul General of Canada in San Francisco, Seattle, and as Canada's ambassador to Silicon Valley, Brandon, you must have

some incredible stories there. Brandon is also squeezing in this webinar before he needs to run off and see a minister. I think you're all aware, Canada's got a new cabinet. So, Brandon, we are super grateful for you squeezing us in. We are going to put their full bios into the resources tab at the bottom of your zoom screen.

43

00:10:06.410 --> 00:10:18.530

Jessica van Onselen: So head over there and look at the speakers section, you'll be able to read their bios in more detail. So just, you know, really fantastic. Before we jump into the discussion, I wanted to ask both of you a quick icebreaker.

44

00:10:18.530 --> 00:10:36.649

Jessica van Onselen: and maybe you in the audience can think about it as well. So just pop your answer in the chat, Rodney Brandon. Oh, you can follow the link in the chat there as well to join the community. So, Brandon Rodney, could you finish this sentence for me? Civil service reform is like

45

00:10:36.660 --> 00:10:43.440

Jessica van Onselen: dot dot civil service reform is like Dot Dot Brandon. What is civil service reform like.

46

00:10:45.190 --> 00:10:51.130

Brandon Lee: So the the image I get right away is navigating

47

00:10:51.360 --> 00:10:56.160

Brandon Lee: the barren countrysides of Canada with a compass

48

00:10:56.440 --> 00:11:02.040

Brandon Lee: and no GPS. So so the it's the analogy there is.

49

00:11:02.150 --> 00:11:13.080

Brandon Lee: There's no fixed route. There's no clear way to go, but we have to be principled to find our way and be present every moment and every step along the way.

50

00:11:13.800 --> 00:11:27.389

Jessica van Onselen: You can see, our community is like they're just cheering. That really struck a nerve, all right. So navigating the beautiful Canadian countryside compass. But no GPS. Rodney. Civil Service reform is like.

51

00:11:28.110 --> 00:11:48.159

Rodney Scott: Thanks, Jessica. So in Wellington, where I am now, I would say that reform is like the wind. Sometimes it's a howling gale here, but even on a calm day in Wellington it's still windy. That's 1 of our curses. So if we think of Civil Service reform as as something, the Prime Minister has a press conference about, then it's an uncommon and potentially scary thing.

52

00:11:48.260 --> 00:12:01.849

Rodney Scott: But if you think of reform simply as change, then the Civil Service is always changing. Sometimes it changes a lot, sometimes it changes suddenly, other times it changes more gradually, but it's but it's always in motion. And so that's why, I think for me it's a lot like the wind.

53

00:12:02.840 --> 00:12:20.099

Jessica van Onselen: I love that vision of government as something dynamic that is always changing. I'm sure, that will resonate with a lot of people on this call fantastic? All right, let's jump into our panel discussion. So we're going to start off looking at. Why, now, basically, what does civil service reform mean in 2025.

54

00:12:20.100 --> 00:12:40.280

Jessica van Onselen: We are seeing governments all over the world announcing reforms to their civil service, sometimes with a lot of pizzazz, sometimes a little bit more quietly. So in this part of this global reform wave, is this part of a global reform wave? Or is it simply the political cycle restarting after sort of the big year of elections we had

55

00:12:40.280 --> 00:12:46.979

Jessica van Onselen: in 2024, with leaders making promises about fixing government in their sort of political manifestos.

56

00:12:47.050 --> 00:12:54.530

Jessica van Onselen: Rodney, from your global experience. How do you see this moment? Is there really something different happening now? Or have we been here before?

57

00:12:55.090 --> 00:13:24.520

Rodney Scott: Thanks, Jessica. There's a few trends at the moment that perhaps mean we're likely to see governments attempting more reform. You mentioned a lot of elections over the past 18 months. A lot of the international economic indicators don't look great at the moment, and despite what the Keynesians would recommend, we often see governments doing cost cutting during recessions that tends to be one driver of reform. Demographic changes mean that the long term forecasts don't look great, either, so there'll be an emphasis on making public service affordable in the long term.

58

00:13:24.630 --> 00:13:29.730

Rodney Scott: We've also gone through a period of high inflation, and that's often associated with populism.

59

00:13:29.830 --> 00:13:39.240

Rodney Scott: and during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a particular strand of anti-intellectualism. So we're seeing these anti public service Populist leaders pop up in a few places

60

00:13:39.670 --> 00:13:54.380

Rodney Scott: and then the other one is, technology has been a big driver of past reforms. And right now there's a lot of enthusiasm for some of the machine learning large language models. AI tech that perhaps hasn't delivered on its promise, and that people are keen to see that rolled out in the public service.

61

00:13:54.820 --> 00:14:01.630

Rodney Scott: But with the exception of of the Us. Which is perhaps an outlier at the moment at a Federal level

62

00:14:01.750 --> 00:14:14.340

Rodney Scott: within the anglosphere, I wouldn't say that the magnitude of change we've seen in the past few years, or currently promised by leaders, is as large as we've seen in in some periods in history. Like, for example, the late eighties and early 19 nineties.

63

00:14:14.570 --> 00:14:21.780

Rodney Scott: And the other thing I would say about that is that announcing reforms and implementing change are not the same thing.

64

00:14:21.980 --> 00:14:22.520

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah.

65

00:14:22.520 --> 00:14:40.370

Rodney Scott: Examples of big announcements that didn't amount to much. One of my favorite examples is the Quango hunt. So every generation, every jurisdiction seems to decide. They have too many arms, length, bodies. They spend a lot of time and money wondering whether, for example, we need a separate artificial limb service that's separate from our disability support service.

66

00:14:40.430 --> 00:14:59.399

Rodney Scott: Then, 5 years later, we discover actually there were specific reasons for each of those entities to exist, and so very few end up being amalgamated. But what we tend to do is compare what actually happened in the past to what is promised to happen in the present, and that makes us feel like a particularly momentous reform moment. But the proof of the pudding will be in the eating.

67

00:15:00.370 --> 00:15:13.240

Jessica van Onselen: A really important distinction. There, you know what's talk and what's action, Brandon? What's your take? I mean, what's driving the urgency behind these reforms, and how much of it is about perception versus substance.

68

00:15:14.680 --> 00:15:24.869

Brandon Lee: Thank you, Jessica. I agree fully with Rodney, and, in fact, without getting too political to to amplify or to double down on what Rodney mentioned.

69

00:15:25.620 --> 00:15:31.469

Brandon Lee: We are seeing most of the the Western Hemisphere, and most countries

70

00:15:32.520 --> 00:15:57.529

Brandon Lee: take a sort of conservative bent being. They are more focused within their own countries rather than globalism and international humanitarian support international assistance. So in that way, governments are being asked to do more. And you know, as Rodney mentioned technology for me. I would see this.

71

00:15:57.700 --> 00:16:03.070

Brandon Lee: We are entering, you know, if we want to put a label on it, the digital economy.

72

00:16:03.490 --> 00:16:14.210

Brandon Lee: And with this I liken. You know, the citizens experience with technology in the nineties and early 2 thousands. We could download an app

73

00:16:14.440 --> 00:16:18.790

Brandon Lee: that didn't really work. That would crash. And we would still stick with it.

74

00:16:19.010 --> 00:16:25.669

Brandon Lee: But in today's world even a 5 person startup. If the app doesn't load work within a few seconds.

75

00:16:25.780 --> 00:16:30.279

Brandon Lee: most people would probably just delete it. So expectations on government

76

00:16:30.390 --> 00:16:34.939

Brandon Lee: to be digital to offer services

77

00:16:35.060 --> 00:16:52.440

Brandon Lee: that that are much more progressive than queuing up in in a few hour line, and rethinking how government is spending its money is is top of the top of the priority list for all heads of state. Right now, I would say.

78

00:16:53.750 --> 00:17:07.250

Jessica van Onselen: Brandon, pointing out there that it's also about that expectation change. And as someone who is just about to delete her Uk train app out of sheer rage. I completely. I'm part of the problem, Brandon, like 100%.

79

00:17:07.250 --> 00:17:30.529

Jessica van Onselen: But I want to linger a little bit on the distinct because we started off with this sort of distinction here between the political layer and bureaucrats, public servants, our community here at apolitical Rodney. You've described ministers as tourists and civil servants as residents as a little provocation. Could you share a case where civil servants took the lead on reform successfully? What happened, and what made it successful.

80

00:17:31.260 --> 00:17:47.319

Rodney Scott: Thanks, Jessica. Alas! That's not my my metaphor. I borrowed that one that's from. I heard it from Tom Christensen, but a Norwegian researcher. But the idea of politicians and bureaucrats is these 2 separate communities dates back to at least Woodrow Wilson in the 19th century

81

00:17:49.210 --> 00:17:58.950

Rodney Scott: the idea of this. This metaphor is that civil servants often saw ministers as temporary interlopers, and that civil servants could just wait out reform periods.

82

00:17:59.090 --> 00:18:16.639

Rodney Scott: This tourist resident metaphor doesn't really apply anymore, because we see a lot of senior civil servants jumping around from agency to agency with almost the same frequency as ministers. So if you want a reform to persist, and generally successful reforms require persistence over time for them to be successful.

83

00:18:16.890 --> 00:18:22.360

Rodney Scott: An early question should be, how can this change outlast any given leader.

84

00:18:22.620 --> 00:18:38.009

Rodney Scott: So I think the example I'd give is New Zealand reform. From 2,011 till 2024 was a time when there was a shift from agencies operating in silos to a lot more horizontal leadership across different agencies.

85

00:18:38.110 --> 00:18:42.570

Rodney Scott: And why? I think it's noteworthy, is it spanned 2 different changes of government.

86

00:18:42.640 --> 00:19:08.359

Rodney Scott: 5 Prime Ministers, 2 Public Service Commissioners, 2 Secretaries of the Treasury, 3 Secretaries of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and it sustained the same theme and the same focus throughout all that time. And I attribute that to something we call the Public service leadership team, which is known in Australia as the Secretaries board. And there's examples of this elsewhere. It's the administrative heads of department working together as a group.

87

00:19:09.007 --> 00:19:23.750

Rodney Scott: So this is a group that now spends a lot of time together. You usually have about 4 overnight retreats every year, and several other full days meetings. They took upon

themselves the responsibility to be the collective stewards of the Civil Service, and for driving change together.

88

00:19:23.890 --> 00:19:26.960

Rodney Scott: And because reform was owned by a group.

89

00:19:27.200 --> 00:19:37.829

Rodney Scott: individuals could leave the group, and as long as not everybody left at the same time. Then there was a chance that this idea of the way things are done around here would persist beyond an individual leader.

90

00:19:38.840 --> 00:19:48.748

Jessica van Onselen: That's such a great practical example. Sort of forming that group. Yeah, just giving it a little bit more. It can endure a little bit more there,

91

00:19:49.230 --> 00:20:02.819

Jessica van Onselen: Brandon, from your experience in the Canadian Government, I mean, what's the balance? Can you give us an example where political will and civil service in a Civil Service initiative may be aligned, I mean, or maybe clashed if you want to share it, but also maybe aligned.

92

00:20:04.140 --> 00:20:11.506

Brandon Lee: Absolutely so for me and my experience in over about 2 decades now,

93

00:20:12.100 --> 00:20:19.759

Brandon Lee: in Canada, we have the Westminster system, which is the largely most commonwealth governments. Countries have this, and

94

00:20:20.420 --> 00:20:23.370

Brandon Lee: what we have found. What I've found is that

95

00:20:23.650 --> 00:20:35.850

Brandon Lee: ministerial attention is always useful. There are moments where perhaps it could get political, but it's always useful. But, in fact, public service civil Service reform

96

00:20:36.200 --> 00:20:41.019

Brandon Lee: is done within the bureaucracy. It's done within the public service. So

97

00:20:41.489 --> 00:20:50.220

Brandon Lee: the challenge is, you know, it's not that public servants are not intelligence. Don't have the skills, don't have the ambition, we do. They do.

98

00:20:50.660 --> 00:21:12.609

Brandon Lee: But it's the system that we work within so procurement security. There are these frameworks within which governments operate. That private sector largely has a very different landscape within which they operate. So, having that political attention from the Ministerial level helps.

99

00:21:12.810 --> 00:21:27.399

Brandon Lee: but it's if it's if it's not driven and owned by the bureaucrats by the public servants, there's no way any political ministerial mandate could ever succeed actually.

100

00:21:27.760 --> 00:21:41.600

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, yeah, I mean, what's sort of in your question in your answer. There, I suppose, is just the power of when the 2 do align just how much you can get done, which which I think is something we we maybe don't pause and

101

00:21:41.600 --> 00:22:05.460

Jessica van Onselen: think about enough. The relationship is so often seen as adversarial, but if they are pulling in the same direction, we can just get so much more done. Brandon, you mentioned the private sector, and you are obviously Canada's ambassador to Silicon Valley, the home of move fast and break things. What did you learn from working closely with big tech firms? And has that shaped your understanding of reform

102

00:22:05.460 --> 00:22:10.729

Jessica van Onselen: like? Can governments adopt private sector approaches? Or are they just fundamentally different beasts.

103

00:22:11.490 --> 00:22:15.099

Brandon Lee: Absolutely. Here I have a couple of points, one.

104

00:22:15.420 --> 00:22:27.340

Brandon Lee: The move fast and break things doesn't work in government mainly because I believe the political capital required

105

00:22:27.550 --> 00:22:36.919

Brandon Lee: to to break something. The the redo button, the undo button in government is very hard to to to press.

106

00:22:37.140 --> 00:22:38.080

Brandon Lee: so

107

00:22:38.240 --> 00:22:55.199

Brandon Lee: in my experience, the the best thing from Silicon Valley that got that I've been able to bring into government is the agile product methodology. So instead of having the the waterfall way, where we go away for X number of months or years, and we just press

108

00:22:55.500 --> 00:23:08.949

Brandon Lee: the green button at the end. That is the recipe for disaster. So being agile and being product based, which means being iterative, based on user feedback, just improving systems and policies

109

00:23:09.950 --> 00:23:19.220

Brandon Lee: on an ongoing basis is the is the best that we in government can take or assimilate from Silicon Valley.

110

00:23:19.770 --> 00:23:29.630

Brandon Lee: But just our budget cycles and the political capital needed to break something. It's it's not possible. And and to your other question, one

111

00:23:30.505 --> 00:23:35.190

Brandon Lee: success story, I guess, from having ministerial attention.

112

00:23:35.450 --> 00:23:41.040

Brandon Lee: is that I'm currently leading the biggest reform of the Canadian Foreign Ministry.

113

00:23:41.910 --> 00:23:47.540

Brandon Lee: and because we have ministerial attention, we were even in the Ministerial's Minister's mandate letter

114

00:23:47.860 --> 00:23:51.150

Brandon Lee: to reform. How we manage grants

115

00:23:51.250 --> 00:24:03.750

Brandon Lee: because of that, I'm leading the biggest investment in our foreign ministry. I have a dedicated team. I even have all coders security business analysts reporting to me directly.

116

00:24:03.850 --> 00:24:07.870

Brandon Lee: So in this way for those of us in government. We know

117

00:24:07.920 --> 00:24:14.350

Brandon Lee: when a minister or a deputy minister has a priority, sometimes a task force is created.

118

00:24:14.360 --> 00:24:38.830

Brandon Lee: That means a few people will be called. They'll keep their day job and off the side of their desks they're on this new task force trying to deliver a huge innovation, and that, again, is a recipe for disaster, missed timelines, burnout, etc. So, having that minute ministerial attention allowed me to have a fully dedicated team to, and a big budget to deliver this reform.

119

00:24:40.160 --> 00:25:01.720

Jessica van Onselen: Very interesting. So yeah, I mean agile, is something we hear so much about. But I noted about the I mean, it's so true, very difficult to undo things in government, and maybe exercising some caution about breaking things that can be hard to rebuild. Rodney. What about from your perspective? Where do you see governments falling into the trap of chasing private sector models that might not fit.

120

00:25:02.650 --> 00:25:17.690

Rodney Scott: Thanks, Jessica. There's a famous quip about this. It's attributed to Wallace, but I'm not sure if he actually he said it. The line goes, something like public and private management are fundamentally alike in all unimportant respects.

121

00:25:17.870 --> 00:25:28.539

Rodney Scott: So the idea is that they look superficially the same. There's administrative units that look a bit like a firm that spend money that have employees that deliver goods and services.

122

00:25:28.690 --> 00:25:33.770

Rodney Scott: But these superficial similarities often don't stand up to stop closer scrutiny.

123

00:25:34.490 --> 00:25:49.750

Rodney Scott: Track record of people with private sector experience and no public sector experience trying to implement change within the core. Civil Service hasn't been great over the past few decades. So the 1st thing to note I think in this is that public and private are not absolute distinctions.

124

00:25:49.850 --> 00:26:05.290

Rodney Scott: and Boseman talks about dimensional publicness. That is, some activities that the public service do are unique to the public service, and some are a lot more like things that are done in the private sector, and it's probably more appropriate to borrow private sector ideas for things like

125

00:26:05.440 --> 00:26:16.639

Rodney Scott: publicly owned energy, utility that competes in a market, that it would be to apply private sector practice for the delivery of child protection services which there's no private sector equivalent.

126

00:26:16.780 --> 00:26:36.110

Rodney Scott: But if we talk about the most public of services. I think it's important to keep in mind some of the fundamental differences. So the goals of public and private management are different. The service recipient is not the only relevant stakeholder. There's democratic and procedural constraints. Some of the ones that Brandon talked about. Public services operate in a natural monopoly.

127

00:26:36.450 --> 00:26:50.539

Rodney Scott: and don't compete for market share, and that affects the dynamics of how innovation works. A key function of many public services is to provide stability and continuity for citizens and businesses, so you can't move fast and break things. Breaking things just isn't an option.

128

00:26:50.660 --> 00:27:18.680

Rodney Scott: Public service often involves the use of coercive powers of the State that are unique to the State, and there's no private sector equivalent. And what study after study has shown is that the motivations and behaviors of public and private sector employees are different on average, so public servants just act differently and respond differently to incentives. So I think we should definitely be looking for inspiration from the private sector, just as we should be looking for inspiration from other jurisdictions and from any other examples we can find.

129

00:27:18.710 --> 00:27:28.359

Rodney Scott: But I think we just need to be aware that we need to adapt these ideas rather than just lift and shift them from the private sector and apply them directly in the public sector.

130

00:27:29.540 --> 00:27:42.300

Jessica van Onselen: I love that sketching out of just government as fundamentally being something unique and different and just so eloquently described. That's just really fantastic, thanks, Rodney.

131

00:27:42.340 --> 00:28:10.129

Jessica van Onselen: but even if it is very different from the private sector, and all institutions at time need renewal, they need to look at their processes. They need to look at reform. So, Rodney, if I can just stick with you for a second. You've spoken about the informal procurement network in New Zealand, and the quiet momentum that created. Could you maybe share with this audience the inside story there? What made that story work? And maybe just tell folks a little bit more about it.

132

00:28:10.460 --> 00:28:15.130

Rodney Scott: Yeah, thank you. I think procurements really interesting example, because it was

133

00:28:15.270 --> 00:28:28.859

Rodney Scott: demonstrates how policies can follow practice rather than the other way around. I think this speaks a little bit to Brandon's comments about agile versus waterfall in New Zealand. Procurement had traditionally been done by each agency separately

134

00:28:29.010 --> 00:28:36.400

Rodney Scott: in 2,008. The Ministry of Economic Development was seen by other agencies is just being an agency that was quite good at procurement.

135

00:28:36.520 --> 00:28:48.949

Rodney Scott: and their procurement director was a dynamic individual by the name of John Evil. He just thought, I can get better procurement deals by using the Government's combined buying power than I can as an individual agency.

136

00:28:49.070 --> 00:28:59.420

Rodney Scott: So we said to some other agencies, if you want to, I'll negotiate just 4 contracts on your behalf. And it was laptops, mobile phones, printers, and cars.

137

00:28:59.990 --> 00:29:07.699

Rodney Scott: If you want to join, join. If you don't want to join, you don't have to. There's no mandate for this. It's just if you want to do it cooperatively with me.

138

00:29:07.940 --> 00:29:29.620

Rodney Scott: but I think I can save you. A lot of money and agencies, respected John's capability, which I think is a key component of this model, and emerged as a barrier when we tried to roll out similar approaches elsewhere, but because they respected him. A lot of agencies agreed. He could negotiate those contracts in just those 4. He was able to save over a hundred 1 million dollars a year in hard savings.

139

00:29:29.820 --> 00:29:40.799

Rodney Scott: Other agencies saw the savings have been made and said, I want to be part of that, too. Their ministers said, Well, why didn't you join on that thing that saved money for other agencies so sad to become sort of peer pressure and momentum behind it.

140

00:29:40.800 --> 00:29:41.324

Jessica van Onselen: And

141

00:29:42.080 --> 00:30:03.839

Rodney Scott: By the time I interviewed John a few years later, cross agency procurement had realized over a billion dollars in savings which in a small country like New Zealand is a huge amount had been expanded to other procurement deals as well, and eventually Cabinet agreed that all agencies would join in on the procurement process unless they had a specific requirement that couldn't be accommodated.

142

00:30:04.080 --> 00:30:14.580

Rodney Scott: A couple of years after that the Blavatnik School of government at Oxford did their comparison of procurement practices around the world, and New Zealand is ranked first. And this what hadn't been traditionally seen as being a leader in procurement before. This.

143

00:30:14.840 --> 00:30:19.150

Rodney Scott: This principle, I think, illustrates there's multiple paths to reform.

144

00:30:19.280 --> 00:30:27.489

Rodney Scott: There's the top down. Rule driven change typically relies on a burning platform or political capital. As Brandon said before,

145

00:30:28.180 --> 00:30:32.220

Rodney Scott: And that's when, for example, you might set a rule. This is how procurement is going to work.

146

00:30:32.760 --> 00:30:50.679

Rodney Scott: The other approach is to enable and encourage bottom up innovation where innovators can convince their colleagues of potential and they can experiment, learn, try things, improve over time, and the official system is only brought into alignment with the innovation once it's proven its value.

147

00:30:51.670 --> 00:31:16.259

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, that really touches on Brandon's point of you know, just the small, iterative sort of changes. John is amazing. I wonder if he's free for freelance work. I definitely need John in my life. Brandon, you're in the middle of leading an enormous reform. So the Grant reform you led in Canada is a great example of surgical data-driven change. Could you walk us through that journey and what it taught you about getting reform to stick.

148

00:31:17.150 --> 00:31:17.945

Brandon Lee: Absolutely

149

00:31:19.180 --> 00:31:28.309

Brandon Lee: I was very fortunate, because once I had finished my my serving as our ambassador, I was asked to lead this reform.

150

00:31:28.620 --> 00:31:42.649

Brandon Lee: and we all know it was going to be, and it is a very difficult reform. So I was able to negotiate a few things. So the 1st thing I was able to negotiate. I mentioned it earlier, but it was

151

00:31:42.930 --> 00:31:46.960

Brandon Lee: to have everyone involved in this reporting directly to me.

152

00:31:47.270 --> 00:31:54.319

Brandon Lee: So we have all our imit staff, our all our technical architects. We have a small procurement team.

153

00:31:54.560 --> 00:32:07.790

Brandon Lee: so so we would not. We would be as minimally dependent on the service corporate services of the department, and we could be move as fast as we could by ourselves.

154

00:32:08.320 --> 00:32:19.350

Brandon Lee: But really the the success that we've found so far is because of our multi-tiered product, agile approach, so.

155

00:32:19.350 --> 00:32:19.720

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah.

156

00:32:20.097 --> 00:32:23.869

Brandon Lee: To to really get into the details a little bit.

157

00:32:24.310 --> 00:32:32.630

Brandon Lee: Most government we're we're managed through governance committees. We have all our senior managers who sit on governance and they give direction.

158

00:32:33.240 --> 00:32:44.850

Brandon Lee: But I quickly realized the last time any of these senior managers, even myself included, actually managed a grant was minimum 10 years

159

00:32:45.250 --> 00:32:50.989

Brandon Lee: earlier in our careers, or never at all, because we do rotate as senior managers.

160

00:32:51.400 --> 00:32:54.760

Brandon Lee: And I found actually the people managing grants

161

00:32:55.280 --> 00:33:16.410

Brandon Lee: go all the way to the Admin assistant project officers, senior project officers who don't sit on governance. So I really crafted our way forward to have our scrum teams communicating and pulling in the actual people, managing grants. And that's where, as Rodney mentioned, we have this bottom up.

162

00:33:17.830 --> 00:33:28.410

Brandon Lee: overwhelming enthusiasm to improve things for the users, the actual people managing grants. And so I've tried to kind of keep separate

163

00:33:28.780 --> 00:33:36.200

Brandon Lee: the scrum and agile product based iterations versus in government. We have to have governance.

164

00:33:36.350 --> 00:33:39.929

Brandon Lee: So I just give updates. I give budget updates.

165

00:33:40.150 --> 00:33:44.290

Brandon Lee: and I keep it as separate as possible so that

166

00:33:44.540 --> 00:33:51.829

Brandon Lee: no scrum team is waiting for a governance decision. And we can go as fast as we can. So to give an example

167

00:33:52.120 --> 00:33:59.980

Brandon Lee: to onboard a new, a program within global affairs, Canada, it takes about 10 to 12 months

168

00:34:00.730 --> 00:34:06.489

Brandon Lee: using this new process, we've on boarded a new program in 5 weeks.

169

00:34:06.890 --> 00:34:20.100

Brandon Lee: So this is the the difference. 5 weeks versus close to a year is the speed we're working and and the programs. The department is seeing that kind of speed now which is incredible.

170

00:34:21.060 --> 00:34:48.340

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, lots of love for those points there, Brandon, I just saw a flurry of applause when you know co-designing reform or solutions with the actual people doing the work is just so critical. They know all the secrets they know the history, but they also are often the fastest way to understand? What could I improve and why? And what's blocking us doing this faster? So yeah, absolutely fantastic. We're going to move on to Q. And A, just now, so get your questions ready. Pop them in the chat. But

171

00:34:48.340 --> 00:34:54.780

Jessica van Onselen: just let's wrap up the questions here. It wouldn't be reform if I didn't talk a bit about fatigue, right?

172

00:34:54.780 --> 00:35:18.869

Jessica van Onselen: Any public servant who's on this call, you know their cycles of reform. Sometimes you get a little eye roll when you talk about it again. So, Brandon, just to stick with you for a second. I mean, what have you learned about leading teams through the discomfort of change? Especially if this is something that comes around more than once, because I think fatigue and reform is definitely something. People on this call will be thinking about.

173

00:35:19.480 --> 00:35:24.340

Brandon Lee: Absolutely. And in fact, I did a little social experiment.

174

00:35:24.520 --> 00:35:28.580

Brandon Lee: and so far it seemed to, it seems to be working.

175

00:35:28.710 --> 00:35:33.900

Brandon Lee: and what I did was because I had the opportunity to build my own team from the ground up.

176

00:35:34.770 --> 00:35:42.079

Brandon Lee: I had all of my directors do the interviews for the new staff, as we do, as we do our recruitment and hiring.

177

00:35:42.490 --> 00:35:57.300

Brandon Lee: But I interviewed every single person, and so, as long as the directors told me, they were qualified, competent, and could do the job. Then everyone I met what I interviewed for was emotional intelligence.

178

00:35:57.630 --> 00:36:09.630

Brandon Lee: and this links to that burnout, this links also to stakeholder engagement being open to co-design, and not forcing what they think on upon others. So

179

00:36:09.740 --> 00:36:13.199

Brandon Lee: emotional intelligence for me checks a number of boxes.

180

00:36:13.500 --> 00:36:20.379

Brandon Lee: and I hired every, you know, almost 80 people the 1st 2 years, almost 80 people

181

00:36:20.930 --> 00:36:26.089

Brandon Lee: individually, through my own interview of emotional intelligence and

182

00:36:26.810 --> 00:36:33.189

Brandon Lee: you know I won't lie. It's extremely exhausting. Transformation is emotional.

183

00:36:33.190 --> 00:36:33.720

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah.

184

00:36:33.720 --> 00:36:36.929

Brandon Lee: The minute you, me or my team walk into a room.

185

00:36:37.180 --> 00:36:44.489

Brandon Lee: It's talking to people who we are going to change your day job. So the reaction is emotional. It's visceral. So it's.

186

00:36:44.490 --> 00:36:45.010

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah.

187

00:36:45.010 --> 00:36:49.240

Brandon Lee: We really need this kind of emotional intelligence to survive in transformation.

188

00:36:49.930 --> 00:37:05.879

Jessica van Onselen: It's such a good point, actually, that the cognitive load of this change is significant. Rodney, what about you? From New Zealand's experience with incremental reform. What advice would you give to civil servants in 2025, who might feel reform, fatigue, or maybe even skepticism.

189

00:37:06.980 --> 00:37:11.824

Rodney Scott: Thanks, Jessica. I I would agree entirely with with everything that Brandon said.

190

00:37:12.350 --> 00:37:20.219

Rodney Scott: I think that in general it's fun to lead change, and it's no fun to have change done to you.

191

00:37:20.350 --> 00:37:44.090

Rodney Scott: So where we started, this conversation was about residents and tourists, and how bureaucrats can drag their feet in implementing change and hope. Politicians run out of steam. I'm going to argue against this approach. I'm not going to say it doesn't work. We've seen over and over again that it's really hard to sustain the political impetus for civil service reform. But there are 2 downsides to resisting change.

192

00:37:44.240 --> 00:37:55.229

Rodney Scott: One is that it damages the relationship between politicians and civil servants, and this results in less discretion afforded to civil servants in the future. So you're more likely to have change done to you.

193

00:37:55.500 --> 00:38:07.729

Rodney Scott: The second Downside is that things don't actually improve. If you're just resisting change. If you're not in the Civil Service to improve outcomes for society. I don't know why why you're there. So the alternative approach.

194

00:38:08.186 --> 00:38:13.040

Rodney Scott: I think, is to push hard for the reforms that you want to see

195

00:38:13.560 --> 00:38:31.550

Rodney Scott: most politicians that want to see Civil Service reform know that they don't know how to fix it. It's all too complicated. It's complicated enough for us, and we're in it. It's really complicated for people who aren't part of the Civil Service to understand what's broken and how it could be fixed. They're just frustrated, and they want it to be better

196

00:38:31.810 --> 00:38:35.850

Rodney Scott: so if civil servants can identify their own solutions, if they can build

197

00:38:35.890 --> 00:39:02.569

Rodney Scott: coalitions of willing collaborators across the Civil service, and then they can demonstrate to ministers that they're as committed to making that change as the ministers are, that ministers couldn't push them any harder than they're already pushing themselves. Then I think what you've got is a chance to actually be part of a positive change, and to earn over time the agency and autonomy to pursue further the changes that you see that would make that you think would make the Civil Service work better.

198

00:39:03.460 --> 00:39:19.196

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, fantastic. Thank you so much. Gee! Such just so much experience and insight there from both Brandon and Rodney, please submit your questions in the Q. And a tag tab. That was such an enjoyable discussion.

199

00:39:19.580 --> 00:39:44.100

Jessica van Onselen: so we're going to move on now to the Q&A section. While you're submitting those, I want to remind you all or share for the 1st time. If you've joined us, that we have a fantastic, reimagining public institutions, community just waiting for you to add your thoughts and reactions to this discussion. If it sounds like something you want to get behind, we'll copy the link into the chat. Do head over there. We can kind of carry on the conversation over there

200

00:39:44.100 --> 00:39:45.719

Jessica van Onselen: over in that community.

201

00:39:45.740 --> 00:40:15.169

Jessica van Onselen: I'm going to move to some Q. And a questions. So Brandon and Rodney, we were able to answer the early questions a little more at length. Here, I'll ask you to be a bit more quickfire, so that we can make sure we get to everybody. I'll kick off with the 1st one, Brandon. It's for you, and it's from Scotty. Can Brandon speak to how the size of the Canadian Civil Service increased by roughly 30 to 40% under the recent government? How will this additional size, be utilized, reformed, cut, etc. Under the Carney Government.

202

00:40:15.170 --> 00:40:18.719

Jessica van Onselen: Do you have anything on that that you'd be able to talk to? Brandon.

203

00:40:20.420 --> 00:40:25.160

Brandon Lee: Sure I I can mention it, but there is a political dimension there that that maybe I'll stay away from.

204

00:40:25.160 --> 00:40:26.850

Jessica van Onselen: Stay away from that. Yep.

205

00:40:28.540 --> 00:40:52.390

Brandon Lee: But but it's true that the Canadian Government has grown, but our population has also grown. The government growth has outpaced the growth of Canadian population. So I think there is some some areas to to look at to make sure that we right size. But you know, with this new government, this New Kearney government that was just elected a few weeks ago.

206

00:40:52.856 --> 00:40:56.449

Brandon Lee: One thing that I have heard which makes sense to me is that

207

00:40:57.120 --> 00:41:02.329

Brandon Lee: the government has such a strong change, transformation agenda

208

00:41:02.560 --> 00:41:06.299

Brandon Lee: that it wouldn't make sense to cut public servants on day one.

209

00:41:06.490 --> 00:41:29.460

Brandon Lee: you know, that would just compound the difficulty and the rehiring, the restructuring required within the bureaucracy. When each department has a a very strong,

ambitious mandate, so I would. I would see. My personal sense is that it looks like it. Within Canada we'll see transformation and

210

00:41:29.500 --> 00:41:39.969

Brandon Lee: the harmonization of the public service the right sizing, but maybe more in the medium term, which I think is a healthy thing to do. You know, Rodney had mentioned that

211

00:41:40.540 --> 00:41:54.849

Brandon Lee: government is a monopoly, so so naturally, governments grow so so you have to adjust and trim the government in a big process. Once, you know, once a decade, once every 8 to 10 years.

212

00:41:55.280 --> 00:42:21.140

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah. And it will be something that our global members of the audience will be thinking about as well. It's been true of civil services around the world right? That they got large often, but not exclusively, because of Covid. And that's a conversation a lot of governments will be in. So it might be Canada today, but I'm sure that those kind of principles are true for many governments around the world at the moment, and if your government is addressing some of those questions. We'd love to hear from you as well.

213

00:42:21.170 --> 00:42:37.440

Jessica van Onselen: Rodney, I'm going to ask one from Paige to you. So what are the key skills. Civil service leaders need today to deliver successful reforms. You know, interviewing all those people thinking so deeply about this, could you? Maybe let's pick the top 3 skills, Rodney, that you think civil Service might need to lead reform.

214

00:42:38.370 --> 00:42:56.640

Rodney Scott: Thank you. That's a really good question. So I think historically, we've used this kind of agentic leadership model. It's all about what you can achieve as an individual. I think some of the the new skills that we're going to see in Civil Service reform in the future is going to be a lot more collaborative and relational leadership

215

00:42:57.590 --> 00:43:11.539

Rodney Scott: and a lot more inclusive leadership. And this is something that Brandon alluded to earlier with importance of getting the right people involved in the conversation. And those people are often lower in the organization than you might think, they being able to actually

216

00:43:12.126 --> 00:43:32.283

Rodney Scott: seek input from a wide range of voices, both internal and external to your organization, and being able to bring those different voices to the fore. I think it is going to be increasingly important. The the 3rd one, because I think I was asked for 3, and I only came up with 2, and I'm stalling for time. So I can come up with my 3rd one

217

00:43:33.320 --> 00:43:52.340

Rodney Scott: particularly in a change context, just the ability to engage with the humans that work with you at an empathetic and human level. Change is something that affects everybody differently. Some people are excited by it, some people are scared by it. Some people are exhausted by it. People's behaviors change in unexplained ways.

218

00:43:52.470 --> 00:44:06.320

Rodney Scott: and so just be able to empathize with that change and the different way that people. Experience changes, I think, is something that's crucial to helping people to sustain their effort and their focus on work through what can be a challenging period.

219

00:44:07.673 --> 00:44:14.380

Jessica van Onselen: Thanks so much and incredibly articulate for sort of almost 3 in the morning. So doing. Great Rodney

220

00:44:14.380 --> 00:44:39.370

Jessica van Onselen: Brandon! I'm going to come to you. So Joshua has asked a couple of questions, and I'm going to like mash 2 of them together. So Joshua seems to be interested in about communicating reforms. How can civil servants articulate reforms, maybe to the users that may see a change in the service there, and what that might mean for Service provision. Have you learned any lessons over the years about communicating reforms to citizens and users like? What do they need to know?

221

00:44:39.370 --> 00:44:40.290

Jessica van Onselen: Oh.

222

00:44:40.760 --> 00:44:46.999

Brandon Lee: Absolutely so on this. It goes along with my comment on product and agile. But

223

00:44:48.970 --> 00:44:54.999

Brandon Lee: for for me, our our mantra, our motto on communication is under promise and over deliver

224

00:44:55.130 --> 00:45:03.110

Brandon Lee: in a short period of time. Every time we do a survey, or we engage, we set expectation, and we can't

225

00:45:03.230 --> 00:45:10.710

Brandon Lee: ask people what they need, and then come back 8 months later, you know. So so speed and civil service reform.

226

00:45:10.890 --> 00:45:13.449

Brandon Lee: It's something we all have to be very mindful about.

227

00:45:14.364 --> 00:45:23.929

Brandon Lee: Because our our corporate processes take so long. So 6, 8, 9 months is not unusual for certain decisions to be taken.

228

00:45:24.110 --> 00:45:27.980

Brandon Lee: But we can't operate at that speed. So the communication

229

00:45:28.110 --> 00:45:31.959

Brandon Lee: for me is to to use a very small expert group

230

00:45:32.180 --> 00:45:39.830

Brandon Lee: and ramp up communication when it's closer to us having a prototype, a minimum viable product and really

231

00:45:40.070 --> 00:46:02.370

Brandon Lee: being timely in our communication. But it's it's all based in change management, setting expectations, asking what they want, and then communicating to see where, if our solution will meet, what their needs are. So it's it's quite a different kind of communication than perhaps the typical corporate communications of of the Government.

232

00:46:02.580 --> 00:46:17.170

Jessica van Onselen: And maybe that communication is obviously I'm a communications professional. So I'm thinking about these as well communication as a form of expectation, raising itself. So making sure that when you pull the trigger on that, you're you're really ready to talk about something.

233

00:46:17.260 --> 00:46:42.220

Jessica van Onselen: Rodney. Another question from Joshua, who's on fire today. So and it builds on Brandon's point of speed speed in reform. So Joshua's wondering about how much environmental factors, economic downturns, or the rise of anti-establishment you know, political figures, demographic pressures, you know, aging societies. How might those influence the speed at which reforms are implemented? And then I'll just add my spin on that.

234

00:46:42.220 --> 00:46:52.479

Jessica van Onselen: I'm wondering if we've been talking about what we do control with reform inside government. But there are obviously lots of factors that can shape reform that we have less control over any thoughts on that.

235

00:46:53.340 --> 00:46:57.065

Rodney Scott: Yeah, thanks, Joshua. A couple of of thoughts.

236

00:46:58.110 --> 00:47:17.379

Rodney Scott: there are generally considered to be 2 main ways that reform occurs. One is crisis driven burning platform top down, and we know what that looks like. It tends to be theoretically pure. It tends to be implemented through policies and regulatory change as opposed to by practice. Change

237

00:47:18.730 --> 00:47:23.959

Rodney Scott: and the more severe the environmental factors are, the more likely you are to go with that particular approach.

238

00:47:26.640 --> 00:47:29.369

Rodney Scott: The other approach is this kind of long.

239

00:47:29.750 --> 00:47:52.810

Rodney Scott: What I've described before is radical incrementalism. The idea that you can achieve substantial changes by moving slowly over time in a consistent direction. And for those sorts of things. If you've got a crisis, then you're going to struggle to get people to buy into the

idea of slow reform. So that kind of the degree to which you think you're operating within the context of a crisis does affect the pathway of change that you're likely to pursue

240

00:47:53.180 --> 00:47:57.520

Rodney Scott: on the economic downturn side of things. There is one

241

00:47:58.106 --> 00:48:06.390

Rodney Scott: contrast that New Zealand took in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, I think, is worth describing. Briefly.

242

00:48:06.770 --> 00:48:13.259

Rodney Scott: most countries went with an austerity approach they thought the best way to cut costs is to cut services.

243

00:48:13.260 --> 00:48:13.970

Jessica van Onselen: Hmm.

244

00:48:14.630 --> 00:48:29.920

Rodney Scott: New Zealand's approach was to look at what are the drivers of Government expenses, and to understand that actually the most expensive thing that government can do is let people who are experiencing poor outcomes continue to experience poor outcomes.

245

00:48:30.350 --> 00:48:38.030

Rodney Scott: If you can find people with problems, help fix those problems, you will reduce the Government's future liability.

246

00:48:38.620 --> 00:48:44.160

Rodney Scott: And so that was the entire basis behind an actuarial valuation model, which is

247

00:48:44.350 --> 00:48:55.820

Rodney Scott: an overly nerdy way of thinking about this. But we started to look at problems based on what's the lifetime cost to government of this of each individual harm that we could find? And

248

00:48:55.880 --> 00:48:59.590

Rodney Scott: how could we introduce changes by making public services. Better

249

00:48:59.620 --> 00:49:29.450

Rodney Scott: that reduce the government's long term fiscal position. Now, that's a tough sell when you're facing a budget deficit, that actually, what you need to do is invest in early intervention in youth crime, for example, because that's going to reduce by billions of dollars your lifetime expense in terms of the correctional system. But if you've got good evidence for it, and you're able to present a compelling business case sometimes the best thing that government can do to cut costs is actually to deliver better services.

250

00:49:30.420 --> 00:49:50.440

Jessica van Onselen: Lots of love for that point. Rodney really landed with a lot of our audience there. I have a last question, and I'm going to put it to both of you. So this originally came from Javier in Mexico, and his question was, I think, really about fashion, or about fads in reform. So Javier asks.

251

00:49:50.620 --> 00:50:12.970

Jessica van Onselen: do you recognize a current administrative reform paradigm, such as the new public management in the 19 nineties or then in the 2 thousands? The big phase was like evidence-based policymaking. Do you sort of see a pattern that might describe this current era? I'll ask both of you. But, Brandon, do you see anything that's kind of defining a lot of how we think about these, about reform right now.

252

00:50:14.290 --> 00:50:16.429

Brandon Lee: Absolutely, and I would even

253

00:50:16.930 --> 00:50:31.929

Brandon Lee: pinpoint it to these 2 letters. AI. We saw it in the private sector, you know, companies that have nothing to do with AI. If the Board asks what is our AI strategy, they suddenly have to start incorporating, and I'm a little bit worried that

254

00:50:32.490 --> 00:50:58.370

Brandon Lee: governments who don't have a lot of visionary, transformative capacity are going to spend millions, tens, hundreds of 1 million dollars on AI tools when actually, what we need is business process. Reengineering. What we need to do is think from 1st principles and make our government services fit for purpose. And so this

255

00:50:58.930 --> 00:51:01.979

Brandon Lee: this tech digital economy

256

00:51:02.480 --> 00:51:08.179

Brandon Lee: pressure, I think, is really it's a it's a big risk, I would say, within government.

257

00:51:09.675 --> 00:51:18.920

Jessica van Onselen: So, Brandon. Great, you know, straight out the gates in Paradise definitely. AI, Rodney, what do you think the current trend is around? Reform.

258

00:51:19.310 --> 00:51:31.820

Rodney Scott: I think it's probably a combination of 3 different drivers. Brandon's mentioned the 1st one, which is digital and AI it's often described as kind of digital era governance as the new kind of buzzword on it.

259

00:51:33.090 --> 00:52:02.450

Rodney Scott: The question mentioned new public management, and we often talk now in the literature about post new public management, which is just that we've gone away from new public management. We don't know quite what we're going towards yet, just that we've we're kind of in that uncertain stage of not knowing quite where the next direction is digital era. Governance is one something called new public governance is the other. So we privatized a lot of services. We devolve them to Ngos. We shifted them to local government. And now central government has this unenviable task of trying to coordinate

260

00:52:02.450 --> 00:52:12.580

Rodney Scott: all of these different entities that it devolved services to. So we're seeing a lot more governance than government. So it's about, how do you work together with other organizations.

261

00:52:12.700 --> 00:52:20.999

Rodney Scott: and the 3rd one is something called the New Public Service, which was originally described by Bob and Janet Denhart. And that's really about what is the role of citizens

262

00:52:21.280 --> 00:52:48.280

Rodney Scott: in government. There's no longer an expectation that citizens will be passive clients who receive a pre-designed menu of services from government. People want to be involved. They expect to have a say they expect to be able to co-design. That's where you're

starting to see all these participatory processes being described and and people experimenting around the world. I'm not sure if anyone's actually fully landed it yet, but I think those are the 3 big trends that are going on at the moment.

263

00:52:48.680 --> 00:52:59.660

Jessica van Onselen: And I think if I was to boil down what you're saying there, Rodney, it comes back to your opening remark, actually around collaboration that that is really the new era. We're into

264

00:52:59.790 --> 00:53:23.229

Jessica van Onselen: fantastic. Well, lots of brilliant questions and answers apologies. If we didn't get around to your question. But if we didn't. You can always post it in the community. We've had some incredible wisdom from our speakers. I'd really like to ask you to join us in giving Rodney and Brandon a virtual round of applause. I think we can all agree. They have just been sensational, bringing that deep experience, fantastic insights, so eloquent.

265

00:53:23.230 --> 00:53:30.840

Jessica van Onselen: both either doing it in the middle of the night or just before ministerial meetings. We are just, yeah, so grateful for your time and expertise.

266

00:53:31.710 --> 00:53:41.900

Jessica van Onselen: most importantly, thanks to all of you for attending. You've invested an hour in your learning. You've been engaged in this topic. You really should feel good about the way you've spent this Thursday afternoon.

267

00:53:41.900 --> 00:54:02.489

Jessica van Onselen: The team is going to pull up a quick poll to find out how you felt about today. That is not going to be shared. It's just to help us improve our work here at apolitical. So we really appreciate your responses on a scale of one to 10 rank. Your agreement with the statement. This event was a valuable use of my time. One means you completely disagree. What a waste of time you're mad.

268

00:54:02.490 --> 00:54:32.490

Jessica van Onselen: 10 means you completely agree. It was fantastic, you know. Just everyone knocked it out of the pot. So just give us a rating from one to 10. Thank you so much while you respond to that. I just wanted to emphasize that the conversation isn't over today. We've been talking about it the whole time. You can share your ideas and challenges and questions in the reimagining public institutions. Community join the Forum. It's just a great way

to keep the conversation going. We've created a new resource just for you as attendees. So it's a content playlist

269

00:54:32.490 --> 00:54:55.780

Jessica van Onselen: of our top reads on public service reform with insights shared from apolitical members, from the UK. From Nigeria, from Slovakia, the US. So that is something special. Just for you, the attendees today. If you'd like to access the readings, just go to the community, the reimagining public institutions community now, and you can comment in the thread that my colleague Doug, has just started, and you'll see the link there.

270

00:54:55.780 --> 00:55:17.870

Jessica van Onselen: and there's a link in that thread to the chat now. So yeah, we would be delighted to share that piece of content with you if you just let us know. That is all we have time for today. We hope you found it helpful. And we want to say a huge thank you again to everyone who's made time today taking time out of your day to be here. Keep an eye out for the email coming your way today with today's recording and resources.

271

00:55:17.870 --> 00:55:27.219

Jessica van Onselen: and we hope to see you at another apolitical event soon. That just leaves me to say Thank you, Rodney. Thank you, Brandon. Have a great day and goodbye. Everyone.