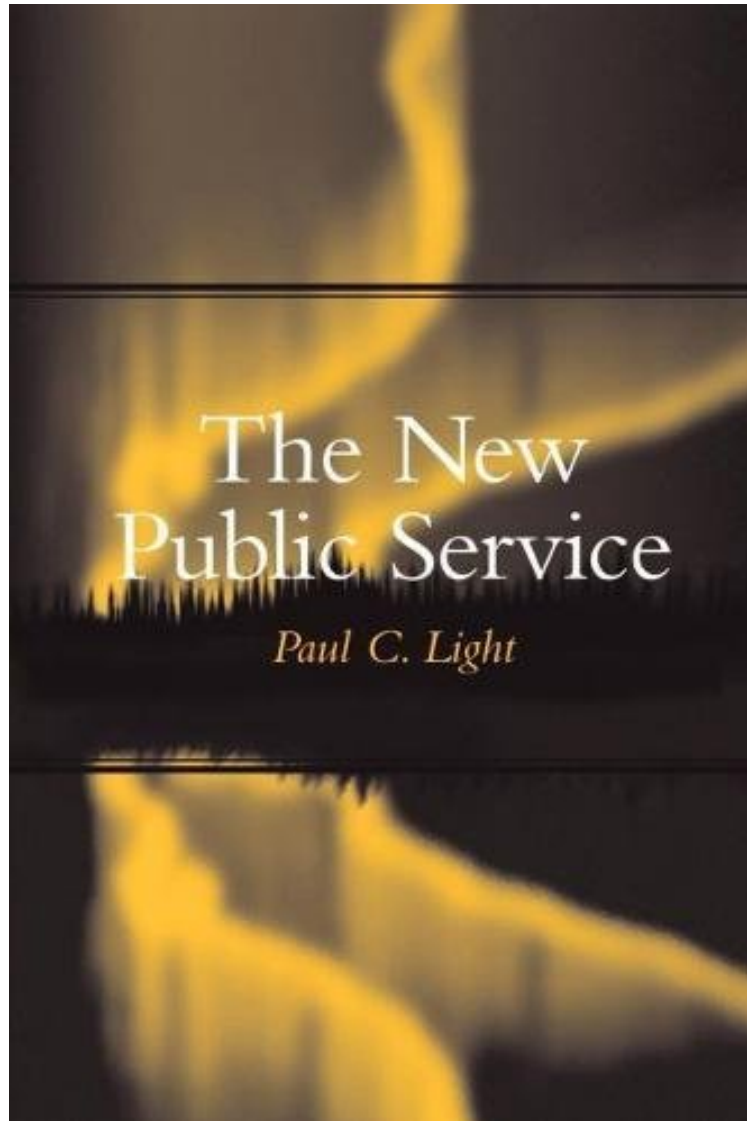


[Free] The New Public Service

The New Public Service

Paul C. Light

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Paul C. Light : The New Public Service before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The New Public Service:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A great book regarding the state of public service todayBy A CustomerIn this book, Brookings Institute scholar Paul Light reviewed Americans' attitude toward public service in late 1990s. He surveyed recent graduates of leading US public administration schools and found that while these graduates still have positive attitude toward public service in general, they no longer believe that the best way to

perform it is through the public (government) sector. Most of them believe that the non-profit and private sector are more effective in making a difference in ordinary people's lives than the government. The reason given for this is that young Americans are more skeptical with the ability of government to make a difference and tend to view government job as bureaucratic and does little to really affect people at the grassroot level. Light recommends that we should stop treating government sector as the only agent where one could perform public service, but should consider the role of private and non-profit (especially the latter) as important agents as well. He believes government should make mid and top level positions more available to those who start their public service career outside of government but now wants to enter the civil service. He also calls non-profits to support those who choose a non-profit career to keep them satisfied with their work and stay in their jobs, something many non-profits have hard time doing. Overall, a great book regarding the state of public service in today's America and every policymakers should read it. Given that half of all federal employees are going to retire in the next decade and fewer than one-third of all public administration school graduates nowadays choose government service after they graduate, Light's recommendations should be taken seriously by policymakers so that the federal government could avoid the "brain-drain" that could make it much less effective and responsive than it is now, something experts have predicted when they see this trend.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Addressing Changes in the Public Sector By Matthew P. Arsenault

Light argues that personnel, organizational structures and administrative devices used in the implementation of federal policy and programs have changed greatly in the past few decades. Light mainly deals with the changes in personnel in the public sector and its move from governmental control to a sharing between the public, private and nonprofit sectors - a phenomenon he terms "the new public service". In the case of personnel, lower ranking positions have been eliminated in the federal bureaucracy. Positions that once were the first step in a public service career have been removed and these positions are being contracted out to the non-profit or private sector. Instead of an employee entering the public sector at young age and working to retirement, many employees move horizontally between private, public and nonprofit sectors. In addition Light adds, "More and more federal employees are doing the supervising and procuring of work with from nonfederal employees, who are doing the delivering and producing" (8). As such, those middle and upper management bureaucrats are required to be contract managers. Light argues that cuts in lower level public service positions and the move towards more "business" oriented administrators are the result of a number of issues. First, the private and nonprofit sectors are recruiting individuals who previously would have entered the public sector, or what Light calls the "quite crisis". Light writes, "Overall, the evidence suggests that government has lost whatever competitive edge it might have held in the 1970s in recruiting talented Americans to service" (6). Light argues that a career in the public sector is not necessarily the first choice of new graduates. Light writes, "At least in recent years, jobs in government are looking less and less attractive, while jobs in private firms and the nonprofit sector are becoming more and more competitive" (46). Light argues that changes in personnel are the result of poor recruiting on the part of government, a slow hiring process, a public disillusionment in governmental efficacy and the high levels of outsourcing. In addition, those who want to enter into the public service can do so without with out entering the public sector. In addition to changes in personnel, the organizational structure of the public sector has changed. The traditional bureaucratic hierarchy must now embrace a horizontal element which deals with contracting and other "business" related issues. As such, many of the mid-level bureaucrats must adapt to an environment of based on equality and negotiation rather than the traditional employer-employee relationship. Public administrators must adapt a method of negotiation rather than one of authority. Both Cooper and Light contend that many of the administrators are ill-trained for such a role. In the 1970s, the government has become more involved in the market sector. It has become a purchaser of services which were formally within its own realm of duties. The move towards contracting out to the private and nonprofit sector is a result of a decrease in governmental capacity. As stated above, levels of governmental employment have decreased since the 1970s which limited the ability of the government to manage all of the goods and services within its discretion. Building upon these structural changes, administrative devices have also changed. A mentality resembling business administration is becoming the mainstay of the administration process. Again, the changes in administrative devices are the result of changes in the organizational structure. As the public sector is more geared to a "business-type" environment, those administrative devices that worked in the old public service are not always applicable to the new public service. With the slow hiring-process of the 1970s and the increased outsourcing, new administrative devices had to be developed to address the changing environment (Light 42). Light is optimistic regarding the new public service. Light contents that the overall belief held by those entering government employment is commitment to furthering the public good. Light believes this has always been a core reason for joining the public service and continues to influence those entering public service. Still, Light acknowledges the change in public service and implies that those training new administrators must also acknowledge the change and adjust their training in accordance with the emergence of a new public service. Light makes a number of suggestions to improve the environment of the new public service. In regards to public administration programs, he sees too much remedial training in graduate programs. Rather than concentrating on necessary job skills, instructors must address academic inadequacies of students. For example, a lack of knowledge in microeconomics or statistical analysis.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting, but limited application By M. Ray

This book talks about the new

attitude trend in public service. It is heavy on the statistical trends in public service as far as employment numbers and demographics over the past few decades.

According to Paul C. Light's controversial new book, *The New Public Service*, this January's 4.8 percent federal pay increase will do little to compensate for what potential employees think is currently missing from federal careers. Talented Americans are not saying "show me the money" but "show me the job." And federal jobs just do not show well. All job offers being equal, Light argues that the pay increase would matter. But all offers are not equal. Light's research on what graduates of the top public policy and administration graduate programs want indicates that the federal government is usually so far behind its private and nonprofit competitors that pay never comes into play. Light argues that the federal government is losing the talent war on three fronts. First, its hiring system for recruiting talent, top to bottom, underwhelms at almost every task it undertakes. Second, its annual performance appraisal system is so inflated that federal employees are not only all above average, they are well on their way to outstanding. Third and most importantly, the federal government is so clogged with needless layers and convoluted career paths that it cannot deliver the kind of challenging work that talented Americans expect. None of these problems would matter, Light argues, if the government-centered public service was still looking for work. Unfortunately, as Light's book demonstrates, federal careers were designed for a workforce that has not punched since the 1960s, and certainly not for one that grew up in an era of corporate downsizing and mergers. The government-centered public service is mostly a thing of the past, replaced by a multisector public service in which employees switch jobs and sectors with ease. Light concludes his book by offering the federal government a simple choice: It can either ignore the new public service and troll further and further down the class lists for new recruits, while hoping that a tiny pay increase will help, or it can start building the kind of careers that talented Americans want.

"Light has shown in this book why he is among the leading scholars in public policy and administration today. This book goes beyond the description of the challenges to offer clear and compelling recommendations to the many sectors involved with the new public service." Paul L. Posner, Johns Hopkins and Georgetown Universities, *Political Science Quarterly*, 7/1/2001 "... Canadian readers will easily benefit from [*The New Public Service*]. It reminds those who are passionate about government and public policy that the challenge is to ensure that the lasting legacy of the new public management is not a wrecked public service." Patrice A. Dutil, Toronto, *A Canadian Journal* (?) "Paul Light has done it again. He has brought to our attention a fundamentally important issue with respect to our federal government--in this case the health and future of our public service. Hats off to a very thoughtful analysis." Senator Carl Levin, United States Senate "Light breaks new ground in this important book. It should be required reading for scholars and practitioners alike." Walter Broadnax, American University "This thoughtful look at the state of public service in this country should be pondered long and hard...With deft strokes, Paul Light paints a face on our faceless and much-bashed bureaucracy." John L. Palmer, Syracuse University About the Author Paul C. Light is the Paulette Goddard Professor of Public Service at New York University. He is also Douglas Dillon Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, where he founded the Center for Public Service. Light is the author of numerous books on public service and management, among them *Pathways to Nonprofit Excellence* (2002), *Government's Greatest Achievements* (2002), *Making Nonprofits Work* (2000), and *The New Public Service* (1999).