

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/in-brief/learning-to-fit-in/>

When working with government (or any other complex, bureaucratic organization), the greatest impact often comes from building an incremental relationship over time, observes The Last Mile co-founder Chris Redlitz. One important piece of that puzzle, he adds, is finding champions inside the organization you're trying to work with. Carefully following protocols, rather than immediately trying to change everything, will also earn you respect and cooperation, adds co-founder Beverly Parenti.



Transcript

- So, we have another question from another student, 00:00:06,257 she says, "Government can be infamously challenging and slow to work with, "but they're necessary to have a legitimate impact, "do you have any advice on working with bureaucracies "to produce effective results?" You know, what has been most effective and what kind of clues can you give others? - Yeah, you know, I think really, 00:00:28,940 it's building an incremental relationship.. What I mean by that is that you can't.... If I went in to CDCR 10 years ago and said, "I wanna build a technology center inside San Quentin "to teach coding," They would have said, "There's the door," right? So you have to start very early, and develop relationships.. And also, this is not just government, but it's anything when you're trying to develop a business, is find champions that believe in your cause.. So, we had Matt Cate, who I mentioned in my talk 10 years ago, he was the Secretary of Prisons at the time.. He and I connected, and he understood the cause, Chuck Pattillo, who was the GM of CALPIA understood the course.. And so, we really built those relationships.. And now, you know, we do have a tech center in San Quentin, as you've been in there.. We took the old print factory, gutted it.. We have five classrooms, soon to be eight classrooms..

So, it is really a flagship facility that many States now come and visit, and see what they could do.. But I think really starting those incremental relationships are really important.. - One thing I would add to that is that, 00:01:44,610 there are all these processes and procedures that are in place today, that have been in place for a long time.. I would say, doing your research and understanding what the proper protocols and procedures are, within whatever the type of business or program you're trying to implement in that governmental agency, and start working within the realm of what is available to you, and then establish yourself.. And then, as you decide to change and add, you will have already situated yourself within the agency, or with the relationship.. And I think one of the things that they said about us early on, is that we learned how to fit in, and make incremental change, but we didn't come in, and try to change everything over night...