



May 30, 2007

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suggestions for new World Bank chief

By David J. Lynch
USA TODAY

Robert Zoellick, vice chairman of investment banking firm Goldman Sachs and a former deputy secretary of State, is expected to be named to the top post at the World Bank today by President Bush, administration sources said Tuesday. They spoke on condition of anonymity so as not to upstage the president's announcement. The nomination needs approval by the World Bank board, which is composed of representatives from member nations.

Congratulations, Robert Zoellick, on your expected appointment as the new president of the World Bank.

You're about to assume a position that one Washington think tank, the Center for Global Development, once called "the hardest job in the world" — and that was before your predecessor flamed out in a spectacular conflict-of-interest scandal.

Helming an international bureaucracy with more than 10,000 employees, confusion about its 21st century role and political overlords in 185 world capitals is enough to challenge even the savviest leader. Plus, you'll be facing plenty of critics inside and outside the bank who think it's long past time for someone other than an American to hold the top job.

You'll need some help to make this work. So in the spirit of getting you off to a good start, here's a road map to defying the skeptics and making a success of your tenure, based on interviews with some experts on international organizations:

1

Remember who's the boss

Former bank boss Paul Wolfowitz got in trouble for many reasons, and the generous pay-and-promotion package he approved for his bank-employee girlfriend, Shaha Riza, was only one of them. One of his central failings was not cultivating allies on the bank's 24-member executive board, which represents the shareholding countries, says Michael Tierney, a specialist in international organizations at the College of William & Mary. It's hard to do well in any job if you don't get along with your boss. Wolfowitz forgot that. You shouldn't.

2

Dale Carnegie was right

You need to "win friends and influence people." And right away. The bank's staff, which publicly demanded Wolfowitz's resignation early in the unfolding crisis, has been in open revolt for more than a month. Reining them in while simultaneously motivating them to get back to helping the world's poor will be one of your first tasks. Tierney says your first weeks on the job will be critical to assembling the needed allies. "The first three months should be going around the building, office to office, having lunch with people, sitting down and listening to them," he says.

3

Wolfowitz was right, too

Your predecessor had issues as a manager, but he got a couple of big things right. Wolfowitz made priorities of cracking down on corruption in countries receiving World Bank aid and promoting economic development in Africa. "It would be a mistake to back off these issues," says Dennis de Tray, a former bank official and staunch Wolfowitz critic.

4

Keep your eyes on the prize

Global finance today is far different from what it was in 1944, when the bank was created. Flows of private capital to the developing world are torrential, plus new charities that overlap with bank programs have proliferated. For years, development experts have debated the institution's proper role in this new era. Reforming the bank is important, but it's not an end in itself. Eliminating poverty is. "Be careful that the emphasis on the process of policy reform not obscure the on-the-ground performance," advises Tamar Gutner, a professor at American University's School of International Service.

5

Pick a fight with Uncle Sam

Not a big one. The United States is still the bank's largest shareholder. But one of the criticisms that dogged Wolfowitz, who had been instrumental while serving as the Pentagon's No. 2 official in arguing for the invasion of Iraq, was the perception that his decisions at the bank may have been motivated by U.S. foreign policy. Look for an early opportunity to demonstrate your independence from the Bush administration. "Maybe a trip to Cuba for a conversation with Fidel?" jokes de Tray.

6

Image matters

Having an ethically compromised president was damaging to the bank, which lives and dies on its credibility. The bank's development experts hand out an awful lot of advice to poor countries about how they should handle sensitive issues such as health, women's rights, even bribery of government officials. For the advice to be accepted, the bank's public face must be above reproach. "You're a world leader. You're supposed to lead by example and inspire people," says Harvard University's Kenneth Rogoff, a former International Monetary Fund chief economist.

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Remember one more thing

Don't date the staff.

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