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Can Other States Tap Tennessee's Secret Sauce for Government Efficiency?

Once seen as a laggard in public administration, the state is now a leader.

Derek Young is no stranger to the C-suite. As he waits for a client in his 10th-floor corner office in downtown Nashville, he talks about his passion for culture change. One of the services he offers companies is as a motivational speaker and executive coach who charges "anywhere from one to six thousand dollars" a pop.

This morning, Young is meeting with Marcus Dodson, who manages IT operations for a large financial institution. When he arrives, Dodson updates Young on the project he is currently working on. He's been trying to get everyone in his 250-person organization up to speed on Microsoft Excel. But the project isn't going well. Dodson wasn't as prepared as he had wanted to be, and as a result, the first round of reviews from participants let him know that. But then, Dodson worked to improve his presentation, and his subsequent reviews were dramatically better.

Having a coach help an executive work through challenges is common in corporate America. But Dodson doesn't work in the private sector. He works for the state. He's responsible for infrastructure and security at the Tennessee Department of Treasury. He's receiving coaching through an innovative leadership development program known as LEAD Tennessee.

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BY JOHN BUNTIN | NOVEMBER 2017

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