



AGENT OF CHANGE

by / KEVIN PERKINS

SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE
BALTIMORE DIVISION / FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

One thing all highly successful organizations have in common is exceptional leadership through turbulent times of change. Throughout its 108-year history, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has encountered numerous periods of organizational change driven by world events, none however, as significant as the tragic events of September 11, 2001.






Robert S. Mueller III was sworn in as director of the FBI on September 4, 2001, a mere one week prior to the 9/11 attacks. He inherited a proud agency, long known for its success in fighting crime and exposing foreign spies bent on harming our national security. Within days of the attacks, President George W. Bush asked Director Mueller what the FBI was doing to *prevent* the next terrorist attack. That one question became the basis for the change Director Mueller knew was going to be required of him and the Bureau. The challenges he faced involved understanding the external influences of the changing world and setting a course to meet a new mission. With his keen insight into what it would take to protect the country going forward, Director Mueller set a strategic course of change like none ever experienced by the FBI.

My FBI story began in 1986 as a young CPA just four years removed from the halls of Hankamer. Today I reflect back on a 30-year career that took me from being a special agent in Kansas City to serving as the FBI's associate deputy director where, as the No. 3 executive in the FBI, I was responsible for the business operations of a \$9 billion dollar enterprise with 35,000 employees and worldwide operations.

To my good fortune, I also had the opportunity to grow up in the FBI known for taking down the mafia and other violent criminals, confronting corrupt public officials, uncovering complex financial frauds, and exposing foreign adversaries stealing national security and trade secrets. The valuable experience I gained while working and learning with special agents from the pre-9/11 era has stayed with me throughout my career. To my even greater fortune, I held a front row seat to witness and participate in the planning and execution of Director Mueller's organizational change and mission shift, the results of which have positioned the FBI to address the threats confronting our country today.

The threats posed by international terrorism, cyber criminals and other 21st century criminal activities present new dynamics that require the agility to shift from a reactive organizational posture to one of proactive prevention. Such change rarely comes easily, especially in an organization long known for its sustained success.

THE FBI DESIGNED A PLAN AROUND **FIVE CRITICAL ELEMENTS** TO SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATE THE MYRIAD OF CHALLENGES SUCH AN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE REQUIRED.

-  **CRISIS MENTALITY.** There had to be a mass recognition that the organization needed to change.
-  **LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT.** A core leadership team was driven to implement the change.
-  **COMMUNICATION.** The vision was effectively shared with and accepted by the organization.
-  **REMOVAL OF OBSTACLES.** A plan to identify and eliminate obstacles to change was established.
-  **ENSHRINEMENT.** The reinforcement of the change continues to ensure sustained success.

During his 12-year tenure, Director Mueller not only changed the mission of the FBI but also changed its culture, ensuring it maintained an operational agility capable of addressing not only current threats but those unknown threats looming over the horizon.

James B. Comey succeeded Director Mueller after the latter's term ended in 2013. Director Comey quickly adopted those elements of change to continue to build business practices and organizational infrastructure to sustain the FBI's ability to confront today's threats and those of tomorrow.

Due to the exceptional leadership of these two men through very turbulent times and seemingly unending challenges, the FBI is in a much better place to protect our country.

As I reflect back over 30 years of serving as an FBI special agent, I realize the foundation for life, provided first by my parents and further shaped and developed by my challenges and experiences at Baylor, is what I've drawn most upon in upholding the FBI motto of Fidelity, Bravery and Integrity. 