

# The Dallas Morning News

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## North Texas leaders: If I were President... How they would handle Bush's post-Katrina image problem

by Cheryl Hall

I asked local executives and academicians to offer leadership advice to President Bush.

The responses arrived before Friday's news that FEMA director Michael Brown had gone back to Washington and that Vice Adm. Thad W. Allen had taken over in New Orleans. Here are some of their replies.

Jon Shapiro, chief executive, Alliance Systems Inc.

Mr. Bush needs someone with the qualifications to run an agency of this magnitude. How about [Gen. Norman] Schwarzkopf? [Gen. Colin] Powell?

Mike Hernandez, president, D&M Leasing

I would treat this as a full-scale military operation: Identify the closest Army and Air Force bases and turn them into tented refugee camps. I would have fleets of transport vehicles bring people to the airports where they will be flown to a designated base. If people need emergency care, they would be flown to the closest VA hospital.

Mary Frances Burluson, president, Ebby Halliday Realtors

FDR had his fireside chats. Mr.

Bush needs to have his camp fireside chats in his jeans and his boots, talk to the country and tell it like it is.

Albert Black, president, On-Target Sales & Logistics

My suggestion is to rebuild infrastructure with resident employment practices like the public works programs of the Roosevelt administration.

The people of Louisiana and Mississippi need a "New Deal." There have to be investment tax credits to reconstruct businesses and homes.

Carl Westcott, private investor

He has the pulpit. He needs to be honest and sincere and appoint a truly bipartisan independent committee.

Suzanne Charriere, managing principal, Corgan Associates Inc.

I would ask for a total review of the whole process. Then eliminate the bottlenecks that delayed the response.

Roy Miller, vice president, TransSynergy Group/PR

My counsel to the president is address the nation during

primetime TV. The message is that America needs to pull together. United we stand, divided we fall.

Gene Street, chairman, Consolidated Restaurant Operations Inc.

Confidence has been undermined by bureaucratic behavior. The president can salvage America's trust with a bold vision for the Gulf Coast followed by quick, clear action.

Jo Staffelbach Heinz, principal, Staffelbach Design Associates

This is the time to over-communicate and reinforce with clarity and assurance.

Karen Shelton, owner, Hair Boutique.com

He should immediately clean house and start by firing the head of FEMA and the head of the Department of Homeland Security. He should appoint a strong military leader like Colin Powell to clean up the mess.

Paula Lambert, owner, Mozzarella Co.

Accept responsibility and admit all the weaknesses and mistakes along the way.

Owen Hannay, president,  
Slingshot LLC

He must give the people credible evidence that his administration is going to cooperate with Congress in uncovering the root of the problems and act aggressively to fix them.

If he reaches out to the country, they will respond to him.

Pat Hunn, president, Focus Foods Inc.

When the nation sees Mr. Bush spending a lot of time in the area, they will see that he is deeply concerned and is committed to restoring the area.

His image is already defined. The nation chose to love and respect his image in the immediate aftermath of 9-11. 9-11 and Iraq are going to be his legacy.

Dan Short, dean, M.J. Neeley School of Business at Texas Christian University

I'd like to see the president identify the structural errors that made a difficult situation worse and correct them. The most difficult days may remain.

Beverly Brooks Miller, founding partner, BrooksBittner & Associates

Our president must work with cities across the U.S. to identify risks, rank those risks and devise appropriate infrastructure to address them.

He must convey, with compassion and consistency, the value he perceives for each person affected.

Denny Carreker, chairman and CEO, Carreker Corp.

Mr. Bush has two strengths that are most relevant in this situation: One is to draw dedicated, brilliant people to his strong vision and let them carry it out. The other is his capacity for showing his empathy for suffering people in small, unrehearsed settings.

He comes up short in artificial, photo-op-type settings, staged for the press rather than individuals.

I would like to see Mr. Bush name a Katrina relief team and team leader, spell out what they are responsible for and let this team leader decide how his father and President Clinton can best be used.

Mariano Martinez, restaurateur

He should appoint an information czar to get the facts out there. I believe the president really does care, but the American public needs to see that.

Fred Kleisner, CEO, Wyndham International Inc.

While many issues may not be Mr. Bush's fault, the delayed reaction to a horrific natural disaster happened on his watch.

He should form a coalition supervisory group, including one of his administrative leaders, the mayor, three governors and [Army Lt. Gen. Russel] Honore as the

leader.

When the smoke clears, heads need to roll at FEMA. Aside from being incompetent, Mr. Brown comes off as totally untrustworthy in media interviews.

Gloria Eulich Martindale, CEO, Belmont Wealth Management

George Bush will need a large, heavyweight shovel to dig himself out, but these are my top line recommendations:

\*Move to the offense. Don't let the press take control.

\*Mend fences. Make sure officials have the resources, i.e. money, troops and supplies to do their jobs. Let them take credit.

\*Focus on the "hot buttons." Whatever the negative press is bearing down on, address it with a positive action. Some refineries are already repaired. Strong European alliances and backup U.S. stockpiles of oil have helped prevent shortages. The levee is repaired, and water is receding.

Henry Gilchrist, partner, Jenkens & Gilchrist LLP

One tragedy does not wait for another to pass. It is conceivable that another major natural or manmade disaster - such as a nuclear explosion or terrorist attack - could occur.

Contingency plans should be in place now for for additional housing and support facilities throughout the U.S. Based on the

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lack of evacuation transportation available before Hurricane Katrina, plans should be made to maintain an inventory of buses that could be used in an emergency to transport people and stockpile individual survival kits.

Thomas C. Leppert, CEO, Turner Corp.

He has to establish a powerful lead presence in the field.

He also needs to rely much more heavily on the Department of Defense and away from FEMA.

Once the situation is stabilized, he needs to make management changes.

Hattie Hill, chief executive, Hattie Hill Enterprises Inc.

Mr. Bush should lead with a determined passion that makes not only the people of the Gulf Coast

but the people of his organization, our country, feel safe.

**John Goodman, founder and president, National Center for Policy Analysis**

**Mr. Bush's main problem is that he doesn't have [former New York City Mayor] Rudy Giuliani as mayor of New Orleans, and he doesn't have [New York Gov.] George Pataki as governor of Louisiana. He's dealing with a weak mayor and a weak governor.**

**He needs to appoint a czar of the whole region. Mr. Giuliani would be great.**

Brenda Jackson, senior vice president, TXU Electric Delivery

He should take the kind of decisive action he appears to be taking. For example, he has made visits to assess the situation himself. He is getting additional

money allocated. His office is communicating more widely through e-mail and the press.

Now may be the time to consider which regulations need to be relaxed for a time in order to expedite assistance to the victims.

Mike Rawlings, Dallas' new homeless czar and principal, CIC Partnership LP

When you have a perception problem, over-react.

He should say, "We (meaning local, state and federal) failed. I am going to find out what went wrong and why. The federal government is in this for the long haul. We will stay around until everyone is taken care of."

Remember, the media usually focus on the now, not yesterday.

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