insights & analyses for Federal human capital management

Issues of Merit

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Engagement versus Satisfaction

Can you be satisfied without being engaged?

In the Merit Systems Protection Board's (MSPB) report, *The Power of Federal Employee Engagement*, we defined employee engagement as a heightened connection between employees and their work, their organization, or the people they work for or with. We found that engagement is positively related to organizational results and other important workplace outcomes. Job satisfaction, on the other hand, may be defined as the extent to which people like or dislike their jobs. One question that emerges is how an engaged employee is different from a satisfied employee. In other words, what does engagement tells us about employees that satisfaction does not?

To answer this question, we used the Governmentwide Merit Principles Survey 2005 data to examine differences in the engagement level among employees who agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their jobs. Of the survey respondents who were satisfied with their jobs, 49 percent were fully engaged, based on our engagement scale. The remaining 51 percent of employees reported that they were satisfied with their jobs but were not fully engaged. Below, we refer to employees who were satisfied with their jobs and fully engaged as "engaged." Those employees who were satisfied with their jobs and not fully engaged are referred to as only "satisfied."

The differences we found between employees who were fully engaged and those who were merely satisfied with their jobs fall into three areas: communication, performance, and retention.

Communication: We found that 37 percent of "engaged" employees strongly agreed that supervisors provide constructive and timely feedback compared to only 6 percent of employees who were "satisfied." Seventy-eight percent of engaged employees understood their agency's mission and how they contribute to it, which stands in contrast to the 45 percent of satisfied employees who had this understanding. Thirty-four percent of engaged employees stated that they have been rewarded and appraised fairly compared to only 7 percent of the satisfied employees.

Performance: We found differences between engaged and satisfied employees in terms of what motivates them to perform. Engaged employees consistently rated intrinsic rewards (something that gives internal satisfaction as opposed to extrinsic awards such as money or other formal recognition) as more important in motivating them than did employees who were satisfied. Not wanting to let down a coworker (67 percent vs. 41 percent) or supervisor (60 percent vs. 30 percent)

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The MSPB Office of Policy and Evaluation conducts studies to assess the health of Federal merit systems and to ensure they are free from prohibited personnel practices.

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We offer insights and analyses on topics related to Federal human capital management, particularly findings and recommendations from our independent research.

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DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Model Strategy for Recruiting and Hiring People with Disabilities: Is Your Plan Ready?

Agencies must submit plans to OPM by March 8, 2011.

On July 28, 2000, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13163, which called for hiring an additional 100,000 individuals with disabilities into Federal jobs over a 5 year period. Similarly, on February 1, 2001, George W. Bush announced the New Freedom Initiative—a comprehensive program to promote the full participation of people with disabilities in all areas of society by increasing access to assistive and universally designed technologies, expanding educational and employment opportunities, and promoting increased access into daily community life.

Despite these initiatives, the employment rate for persons with targeted disabilities[1] remains low in the Federal Government. The highest rates were seen in fiscal years (FY) 1993 and 1994 when these individuals represented 1.24 percent of the workforce. Since then, there has been a general decline in their employment rate. During FY 2009, the employment rate of Federal employees with targeted disabilities was .88 percent.

As a result of these disappointing numbers, President Obama signed Executive Order 13548 on July 26, 2010. The Order requires executive departments and agencies to improve their efforts to employ workers with disabilities through increased recruitment, hiring, and retention of individuals with disabilities.

The Executive Order (EO) emphasizes the President's commitment to increasing the number of individuals with disabilities in the Federal workforce. As the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), John Berry, put it, "The President made it clear in the EO that he wants regular reports to track progress and make sure this gets done. And let me tell you, Kareem Dale, his disability policy advisor in the White House, will make sure those reports get read and acted on."[2] With this announcement, agencies were put on notice—the President wants it done.

Under the direction of Executive Order 13548, OPM gave all Federal agencies until March 8 to submit plans for improving efforts to employ Federal workers with disabilities and targeted disabilities.[3] Agency plans should address the recruitment, hiring, and retention of these individuals, specifically 100,000 over the next 5 years. The objective is to make the Federal Government a model employer in this area.

To assist agencies in this endeavor, OPM's November Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies outlined the requirements of the EO, answered potentially common questions agency officials might have regarding compliance, and provided tips and reporting guidelines.

[1]Targeted disabilities include deafness, blindness, missing extremities, partial paralysis, complete paralysis, convulsive disorders, mental retardation, mental illness, and distortion of limbs and/or spine.

[2]Remarks of OPM Director John Berry, Perspectives on Employment of Persons with Disabilities Conference, December 8, 2010.

[3]U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, "Model Strategies for Recruiting and Hiring of People with Disabilities as Required under Executive Order 13548," November 8, 2010.

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Hiring People with Disabilities

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It should be noted that while the OPM memo outlined tips agency officials should consider when complying with the EO, the memo did not provide specific formulas and goals for each agency. Instead, the development of agency-specific plans was left up to agency leadership. This memo and its strategies were to be thoroughly reviewed by senior agency officials accountable for ensuring this reporting requirement is met, including hiring managers, human resources (HR) specialists, Selective Placement Program Coordinators (SPPC), Disability Program Managers (DPM), and others responsible for supporting the initiative.

The memo also instructed agency heads to encourage all managers to recruit, hire, and retain people with disabilities in compliance with the EO and to publicize and market specific tools necessary to make this happen. Agency heads are also required to: create a plan that designates a senior-level agency official accountable for overseeing the plan, establish protocols for mandatory training of HR personnel and hiring officials regarding individuals with disabilities, set performance targets/ numerical goals, use the Schedule A Hiring Authority, and consider centralized funding for reasonable accommodation and accessible technology including recruitment tools.

So, has your agency started to develop its plan yet?

If not, there are a number of steps agencies can take to get started. First, I suggest agencies seek input from their SPPC and/or DPM. Each agency should have one, either in your HR or Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEO), and they are a great resource for exploring effective hiring strategies. Second, evaluate current hiring processes and conduct exit interviews of people with disabilities to determine how to build on current successes. Also, explore your baseline numbers by consulting your EEO office for your agency's MD-715's disability numbers. You might also consider surveying the current workforce to obtain an accurate read on the numbers. And don't forget to use the revised (July 2010) Self-Identification of Disability Form, SF-256, when onboarding employees to further increase the reliability of your data. Finally, Department level officials should consider working with subcomponents to come to an agreement for your plan's milestones and numerical goals.

I encourage agencies to make it a priority to submit a reasoned plan to OPM by March 8, 2011, and be part of making the Federal Government a Model Employer. Hiring people with disabilities is not only a public policy, but is a good way to reach an untapped talent pool at a time when the Government may find it increasingly difficult to compete with the private sector for the talent it needs to meet its many missions. ❖

Director, Policy and Evaluation

Fast Fact: Federal Civilian Employees Serving in the Uniformed Services

As of September 2009, there were over 15,000 permanent full-time Federal employees in a leave without pay (LWOP) status in order to serve in the U.S. armed forces. The table below shows that the Department of Defense is the primary, but not the only, employer of these individuals.

Army	58%
Air Force	19%
Homeland Security	6%
Veterans Affairs	6%
Navy	4%
Justice	3%
Other agencies	4%

Source: Central Personnel Data File. Employees in nonpay status under permanent, full-time appointments

We look forward to the safe return of these service members and remind Federal agencies that they have special obligations to these employees before, during, and after their military service. An overview of these obligations, including restoration, is available in the Office of Personnel Management's *VetGuide* (www.opm.gov/staffingportal/vetguide.asp).

Coping with the Education Crisis

The Federal Government will likely face challenges in recruiting employees with advanced degrees.

The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce released a report last summer that provided a sobering look at the gap between the education requirements of future jobs and the future education level of the U.S. population. The report, *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*, projects that America will need 22 million new workers with postsecondary degrees (Associate's or better) by 2018 to staff new jobs, but will fall short of that number by at least 3 million.

According to the report, a trend in our economy is the ever-increasing need for better educated workers. Between 1973 and 2008, the share of jobs in the U.S. economy which required some postsecondary education increased from 28 percent to 59 percent, and the report projects that over the next decade this share will increase to 63 percent. Some of this increasing demand is due to projected growth in industries that require more education of workers. But another important driver is the shift in many industries to technology that favors more skilled workers.

We have been seeing the trend toward more educated workers in the Federal Government for a number of years. The percentage of Federal employees who hold Bachelor's or higher degrees has steadily increased from 27 percent in 1980 to 46 percent in 2010. In addition, half of the new entrants to the Federal workforce in 2010 held at least a Bachelor's degree—21 percent held a Master's or higher degree. Educational attainment has also been increasing in the civilian labor force. According to the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, between 1992 and 2008 the percentage of the civilian labor force who held at least a Bachelor's degree climbed from 26 percent to 34 percent.

The report also predicts that by 2018 the government and public education industry (one of the 13 industries into which it splits the U.S. economy) will be the second leading employer of workers who hold Bachelor's degrees (behind only the professional and business services industry) and the third leading employer of workers who hold Master's or higher degrees (behind the professional and business services and healthcare services industries).

Couple the report's projections of a shortage of well-educated workers with its projection that the government sector will have one of the highest demands for such workers and it is easy to see the hiring challenges Federal agencies are likely to face. One challenge will likely be attracting adequate numbers of highly educated workers to Federal employment, especially in an era of political rhetoric that often intentionally or unintentionally denigrates the value of Federal employees. Workers who possess advanced degrees will have ample opportunities to find employment in other sectors against which non-recession Federal employment may struggle to compete.

Another challenge may be finding adequate numbers of highly educated workers among different racial and ethnic groups to fulfill the goal of a Federal workforce representative of all segments of society. According to the Census Bureau's 2009 current population survey, only 13 percent of Hispanics and 19 percent of African-Americans who are at least 25 years old had obtained a Bachelor's or higher degree, which is far less than the rate for Asians (53 percent) and non-Hispanic whites (33 percent).

One creative way to meet these challenges is to foster partnerships with colleges and universities. Federal agencies should have contacts at college placement offices to keep them apprised of current and projected vacancies and to ensure students know how to apply. Agencies can also foster partnerships at colleges and graduate schools which offer the fields of study agencies need by seeking out opportunities to speak to classes about Federal programs or related issues, providing internship programs, and providing case studies for research exercises or capstone course requirements. Forging such partnerships, along with the use of more formal student employment and loan repayment programs, can help agencies meet the future hiring challenges they will face. ❖

Federal Career Intern Program

Does your agency rely on the Federal Career Intern Program to hire? If so, you need to be aware that the program is being terminated effective March 1, 2011. It is being replaced with the Pathways Programs which establish the Internship Program, the Recent Graduates Program, and modifies the Presidential Management Fellows Program. See the President's Executive Order for more information:

www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/27/executive-order-recruiting-and-hiring-students-and-recent-graduates

Managerial Involvement in Hiring: Looking Beyond Recruitment

Agencies should be asking some key questions as they determine how to involve managers in the hiring process.

The Presidential memorandum on hiring reform directs Federal agencies to increase managerial involvement in hiring, envisioning a substantive role for managers in job analysis (identifying the skills required for the job) and actively engaging them in the recruitment process. Rightly so—hiring reform cannot succeed unless agencies develop a full and accurate understanding of their talent requirements and attract pools of interested, qualified applicants. Managers are integral to identifying these requirements. But truly effective managerial involvement extends beyond the initial stages of the hiring process. While the memorandum tells agencies that managers must be involved in various aspects of hiring, the questions below are intended to help agencies think through the "why" and "how" of managerial involvement.

Is the agency clearly communicating the purpose—and the limits—of managerial involvement? The purpose of managerial involvement is to advance the timely, merit-based hiring of highly-qualified employees, not just to increase the satisfaction of managers. Managerial satisfaction is an important indicator of whether the hiring process is working well but should not drive managerial involvement in hiring.

That has two implications. First, involving managers must not be confused with encouraging or enabling managers to pre-determine the outcome of a job competition. As discussed in the September 2010 *Issues of Merit*, it is a prohibited personnel practice to "[define] the scope or manner of competition or the requirements for any position…for the purpose of improving…the prospects of any particular person."[1]

Second, if managerial involvement is essential, it cannot be optional. That means that agency leaders cannot allow individual managers to determine whether, and how, they will be involved. For example, if an agency decides that job analysis requires input from managers, it cannot allow managers to be "too busy" to participate in a job analysis. Similarly, if agency leaders decide that unsuccessful finalists for a job should receive feedback on how they fell short, then agency leaders must be willing to require that selecting officials provide timely and informative responses to such requests.

Is managerial involvement adequately supported by employee development and employee relations? Hiring does not end with a successful job offer or the entrance on duty. Accordingly, the President's memorandum properly emphasizes managerial accountability for "the successful transition of [highly-qualified employees] into Federal service." Managers will need support from the employee development staff to ensure that new hires are given a good start—including orientation, necessary training, and meaningful work assignments—to build commitment and enhance retention. Also, even a successfully reformed hiring process cannot perfectly predict success or failure on the job. Consequently, managers will need support from employee relations staff to take action, such as a termination during the probationary period, when a new hire does not succeed.

> ...truly effective managerial involvement extends beyond the initial stages of the hiring process.

Does involvement include training for managers? All Federal managers should receive instruction on the basics of HR management, such as the merit system principles, prohibited personnel practices, and veterans' preference. But managers who will be influencing or making hiring decisions need more. Good hiring is the result of systematic assessment and decision making, not of instinct or snap judgments. For example, assessments such as interviews and reference checks are much more effective and defensible when they are structured. Therefore, an agency that expects managers to conduct these interviews or reference checks should provide guidelines and training.

Managerial involvement in hiring is not only required, it's important to the recruitment and retention of great employees. Clear vision, clear communication, and solid support from the HR function are the keys. ❖

[1]Adapted from 5 U.S.C. 2302(b)(6).

Engagement

(continued from page 1)

were much stronger performance motivators for engaged employees compared to satisfied employees.

Retention: Neither engaged nor satisfied employees reported that they are likely to leave their agency in the next 12 months (14 and 9 percent, respectively). But the survey did reveal differences in the factors that drive engaged and satisfied employees' intent to leave the organization. Satisfied employees were more likely to cite better opportunities for advancement, training, recognition for performance, and making better use of their skills and abilities as motivations for leaving their organization. It seems that engaged employees feel they already have these opportunities.

The survey results seem to indicate that engagement engenders more active information-seeking behavior among employees who, possibly as a result, also seem to be more content with the rewards and appraisal processes. The performance of engaged employees also seems to be driven more by a personal sense of responsibility, consistent with engaged persons having a strong personal connection to the job. Finally, engaged employees are not drawn away from the organization for the same reasons as those who are merely satisfied. Advancement and development opportunities are less compelling to those who have them in greater abundance.

Our research shows that engagement and satisfaction are two different attitudes and that it is possible to be fully satisfied with one's job without being fully engaged. In our reports, *The Power of Federal Employee Engagement* and *Managing for Engagement—Communication, Connection, and Courage*, we discuss ways to promote an engaged workforce and strengthen the connection employees feel to their jobs. We encourage agencies to take employee engagement into consideration when assessing the workplace climate and taking steps to facilitate a productive workforce. ❖

MSPB Transparency Efforts

Oral Arguments

For the first time in over 20 years, the MSPB conducted oral arguments in September and October 2010. Oral arguments are spoken presentations of issues in a pending case of special significance because the outcome could have a broad impact on the Federal civil service and merit systems. The Board permitted interested parties to submit either amicus briefs, which are documents filed by those not directly related to the case but which may be useful in evaluating the case, or other comments on the issues involved. In addition, the opposing parties gave oral statements and answered questions before the Board members. More information regarding the arguments may be found at www.mspb.gov/oralarguments.

When asked why the Board was conducting oral arguments, Chairman Susan Tsui Grundmann responded that, "In an era of unprecedented Government transparency and openness, it is incumbent upon the Board to exercise its existing abilities to request amicus briefs and conduct oral argument in order to shed light on the issues, the debate, and the process. Doing so should result in the best decisions for Federal employees and agencies, and the American people."

The Government in Sunshine Act Meeting

On December 8, 2010, the Board held its first fully open Sunshine Act Meeting since 1996. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed MSPB Research Agenda for 2011-2013. The Office of Policy and Evaluation presented the proposed agenda to the Board members, and seven key stakeholders publicly presented their comments regarding the agenda. Represented were three national labor unions, the Senior Executive Association, and three good Government groups. The feedback MSPB received was largely positive, with insightful yet often divergent views of what stakeholders believe MSPB's research priorities should be. More information can be found at www.mspb.gov/sunshineactmeeting.

The public was given the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed agenda through the end of the calendar year. MSPB is in the process of finalizing the research agenda for approval by the Board members and hopes to have it in place this spring. We thank all of our stakeholders who provided input during the agenda-setting process which produced what we believe are an exciting, diverse set of topics.

Agency Corner: Lessons in Tweeting from NIH

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is an agency whose mission to improve the health of the nation and the world through medical research needs no embellishment. Individuals who work at the 27 institutes and centers of NIH have a wide range of specialties requiring a myriad of different capabilities, ranging from microbiologists, firefighters, contract specialists, computer scientists, and librarians, to engineers, police officers, dieticians, social workers, and technical writers/editors. While such diversity in job function and talent is critical for accomplishing NIH's mission, it appears daunting from an applicant recruitment standpoint. How do you efficiently and effectively reach out to such a vast array of different talent populations to send a consistent and compelling story about working for NIH on the one hand, while maintaining timely and tailored job information on the other hand?

Among other practices, the HR staff at NIH has successfully integrated social media, especially Twitter, into its recruitment strategy and has used it to complement branding, advertising, and relationship-building functions.

HR representatives at NIH indicate that Twitter has provided them with an efficient means to speak in a consistent and personalized voice about NIH to a wide range of individuals in a fresh, instantaneous, and engaging manner, while simultaneously allowing them to target specific populations (e.g., biologists) with tailored information. They indicate that the broadcast nature of Twitter allows them to be "lethally generous with information," with minimal resource requirements from either the user or the receiver.

Indeed, the Twitter feed that emanates from the HR staff at NIH on a daily basis is concentrated with multiple themes of information which collectively aim to tell a personalized story about working at NIH. Alerting individuals of available jobs is just one of many messages HR at NIH aims to share. Tweets also provide followers information about relevant HR news, benefits, work/life information, upcoming events such as career fairs and scientific presentations, and less known flexibilities like their loan repayment program. HR staff at NIH additionally utilize the freely-available bit.ly application (a URL shortener and metrics service) to manage links within Tweets and to determine interest in those links. They also use the Hootsuite application to schedule Tweets, track mentions of their Tweets, and track Tweets about NIH in general.

NIH's HR staff emphasize that all agencies can learn to use social media, and highlight that it has immense value for getting the right information to the right populations in a low effort, low cost, and low risk fashion. However, they point out that once initiated, it is critical to stay committed to the applications and to remain social; have interesting, timely, and useful content; and proactively seek out individuals who are likely to want the content. Finally, they stress the importance of integrating the applications within the overarching recruitment strategy and branding message.

The achievement of over 1400 Twitter followers within the first year suggests that NIH has this social dynamic, commitment, and integration down to a *science*. Given the increasing amount of attention afforded to social media applications in recent years and the desire by many agencies to explore and utilize such applications for business purposes, it is encouraging to see evidence of agency success. As with many other endeavors, it appears that NIH is at the forefront of discovery; hopefully other agencies will be able to benefit from their example.

To see NIH's HR Twitter account in action, go to www.twitter.com/NIHforJobs and click "Follow."❖

Follow MSPB on Twitter

MSPB recently joined Twitter as well. Our Twitter handle is www.twitter.com/USMSPB, and we encourage interested individuals and organizations to follow us.

We will tweet whenever there is something newsworthy, for example, a new study or publication, *Issues of Merit* newsletter, oral argument, case report, Federal Register notice, or website update. Please let us know what interests you and how we can better serve Federal employees, agencies, and the American public.

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