



United States Merit Systems Protection Board

Contact: Arlin Winefordner
(202) 653-6772, ext. 1162
V/TDD 1-800-877-8339
(Federal Relay Service)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 15, 2004

MSPB ON AUTOMATED FEDERAL HIRING SYSTEMS: THE KEY IS EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Most Federal agencies are using or planning to use automated systems to help with their hiring, according to a report released today by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB or the Board). Agencies have a choice of several different systems to use, from those developed commercially to those developed by Government agencies. According to the report, titled "Identifying Talent through Technology: Automated Hiring Systems in Federal Agencies," which system they choose is less important to success than having the leadership and involvement of top management in the hiring process. The report contains recommendations for agencies and the Office of Personnel Management aimed at making the best possible use of automated hiring systems.

Federal use of automated hiring systems has increased significantly over the past 3 years, and the results have varied considerably. The more successful agencies have treated the introduction of an automated hiring system as an investment in their agency's future. These agencies invested in the planning and implementation of their systems, and did not focus solely on the hiring technology.

"One key to hiring success is combining the automation with a well thought-out hiring process and valid assessment tools," said MSPB Acting Chairman Neil A.G. McPhie. To get good results from their automated hiring systems, agencies found it necessary to review and update how they assess job applicants. The agencies most successful in getting the full benefit of their automated hiring systems performed this vital step early in their implementation plan. Similarly, agencies with the most initial success invested heavily in planning and training and set clear and high expectations for their line managers and human resources staffs.

The report notes that the automated hiring systems used by Federal agencies fall into two broad categories. One is question-based; the other relies on “reading” resumes to extract information about the applicants. Used properly, systems in either category can improve an agency’s ability to make better employment selections.

Many agencies were originally drawn to automated hiring systems by their potential to make hiring faster and more efficient. Most have subsequently found that those goals are not enough; hiring quality must be better to justify the costs of their systems. After gaining experience with their automated hiring systems, many agencies have refocused their expectations and improved their hiring. These agencies can still hire faster, but the real return on investment is a better pool of candidates.

As Acting Chairman McPhie noted, “Automated hiring systems are here to stay. It’s important now for agencies to get the most out of whatever system they use. The American public we serve deserves no less than the best.”

The MSPB is an independent, quasi-judicial agency with responsibility for deciding Federal employee appeals from personnel actions taken against them, protecting the integrity of the civil service and other Federal merit systems, and conducting studies of the civil service and other merit systems in the Executive Branch. To request a printed copy of the report, e-mail STUDIES@mspb.gov; call (202) 653-6772, extension 1350, or write: Merit Systems Protection Board, Office of Policy and Evaluation, 1615 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20419. The report may be downloaded from the Board’s website at www.mspb.gov.

-end-