



Merit Systems Protection Board

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MSPB SURVEY SHEDS LIGHT ON FEDERAL EMPLOYEE CONCERNS. FORECASTS WARN OF A POTENTIAL SURGE IN TURNOVER

Federal agencies need to be alert to a possible surge in turnover in the coming years, according to a new report from the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB or the Board). The report, titled "The Federal Workforce for the 21st Century: Results of the Merit Principles Survey 2000," summarizes the views of Federal employees before 9/11 and notes that delayed retirements, an improving economy, and increases in job opportunities may exacerbate skill gaps already evident. Agencies need to look beyond raw numbers and examine the likelihood of losing their most productive workers, and to take appropriate steps to ensure they have a well-trained quality workforce in place to accomplish their mission as more experienced employees depart.

At the time of the survey in 2000, half of the 6,958 respondents said their work unit did not have enough employees to do the work. Similar proportions of respondents believed that the downsizing of the 1990s had seriously eroded institutional memory in their work unit (46 percent) and that they needed more training to perform their job effectively (48 percent). Worker frustrations were evident in many of the survey responses. For example, excessive job stress was cited as the most important work-related reason for retiring (45 percent) and only one-third (37 percent) of the respondents were satisfied with the recognition they received for their work.

(over)

“The Federal Government is facing a potentially serious management challenge. As we recover from the events of 9/11 and as the economy improves, experienced Federal workers who delayed leaving Government may suddenly opt to do so. Pressures from organizational restructuring and outsourcing may abruptly shift the balance from employees staying to employees leaving,” said Board Chairman Susanne T. Marshall. “Government managers need to be prepared and not caught off-guard by an unexpected loss of critical employees. Steps need to be taken to ensure that certain expertise is not lost suddenly without appropriate advance planning.”

The report elaborates on these and a variety of other human resource issues—many previously reported in MSPB’s *Issues of Merit* newsletter—and concludes with suggestions that address many of the potential challenges facing Federal managers.

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 STUDIES page of the Board’s website at www.mspb.gov.