

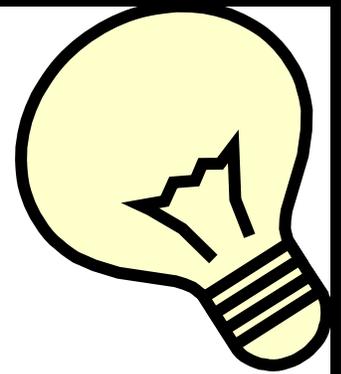
The

Illuminator

Shedding Light on the HR World

8-2011

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This publication is issued to ensure the Fort Benning commanders, managers, supervisors, and employees are kept informed of employment and staffing issues. Monthly issuances will contain updated information on specific employment topics (i.e., compensation, recruiting procedures, travel entitlements, classification issues, the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCOE) civilian transition, etc.).

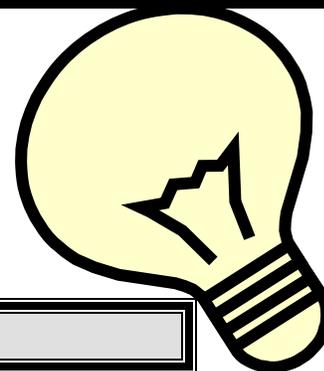
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Retirement, Life/Health Insurance, TSP, Social Security and Such

Retirement: Planning the Rest of Your Life. In a time when fewer workers than ever can count on their employers to help provide a comfortable retirement, the federal government continues to offer comprehensive solutions. It's up to employees, however, to take full advantage of the retirement benefits offered to them. The best way to ensure your golden years are indeed golden is to plan right now.

Determining Retirement Eligibility

There are so many individual factors that go into determining when you're eligible for retirement, but this will provide a general overview. Most federal employees fall into two categories: Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Each has its own set of criteria, though there is some overlap.

Most CSRS employees can retire at age 55 with 30 years minimum service, age 60 with 20 years of service or age 62 with five years. Some special conditions include: Air traffic controllers may opt for retirement at any age, as long as they have at least 25 years of service.

Fields such as law enforcement and firefighting have their own requirements.

If you're forced into non-voluntary retirement because your position or agency service is discontinued (not due to disciplinary action), you can access retirement benefits as long as you have 25 years of service or have 20 years of service and are over age 50.

If your department or agency has a significant shake-up, you can retire at any age with 25 years of service or at age 50 with 20 years of service—though your annuity will likely be reduced if you're under age 55.

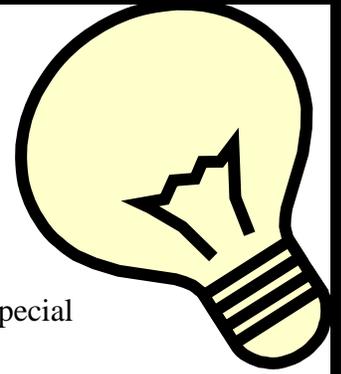
If you sustain a disability and have served for five years, you're eligible for retirement at any age.

The minimum retirement age (MRA) for FERS employees is broken down even further. The MRA for employees born before 1948 is 55, and the MRA for those born after 1970 is 57; the MRA inches up by one or two months for employees born between those years. More specifics for certain populations:

Employees can get immediate retirement benefits (within 30 days) if you meet MRA with 30 years of service, are age 60 with 20 years or are age 62 with five years. If you meet MRA and have between 10 and 30 years of service, prepare for your annuity to be

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reduced by 5 percent for each year you are less than 62 years old, except in special circumstances.

You can still be eligible for a deferred benefit if you leave the government's employ before you meet all age/years of service criteria. Benefits will begin at the ages/years of service listed in the "immediate" category above.

On the other end of the spectrum is early retirement, which is an option for employees whose agencies are undergoing a major restructuring or those who are involuntarily separated (not due to disciplinary action). Workers are eligible for early retirement benefits with 25 years of service or at age 50 with 30 years of service.

Retirement Timeline

The time to get serious about retirement is when you are five to seven years away—most importantly because you must have insurance for at least five years before retirement in order to keep it afterward. This period also allows you to research the requirements that apply to you specifically. Your agency is your point of contact for retirement planning, so use this time to go over your service record and determine whether you'll be eligible for Social Security as well.

Once you're within a year of retirement, you need to review your Office Personnel Folder in detail to ensure that your service has been documented correctly. If something is incorrect, you need to take steps to rectify the information or risk a reduction in your benefits. You'll also need to set an exact retirement day, alert your supervisor about your retirement date, confirm your health and life insurance coverage and investigate potentially valuable entitlements (based on years of service) that will make up your retirement income.

Picking the Right Day to Retire

When approaching retirement, most people are so caught up in the sheer joy of freedom after decades of alarm clocks that they don't stop to consider that working a few more months—or even days—can make a difference in their retirement package. Here are a few factors to consider when picking your official retirement day.

When does your leave year end? Retiring at the end of the leave year usually translates into a larger lump sum payment for accrued hours that you haven't used. This is especially true if part of your hours will be paid at a higher rate due to a scheduled employee raise. Meaning, if a pay raise kicks in April 15 and you retire April 1, your accrued hours will be paid at your regular rate for two weeks and then at the increased rate for every day you're owed after that.

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When does your pay period end? Waiting until the end of a pay period allows more leave time and sick time to pile up—the former will be paid to you in a lump sum, while the latter counts toward your service time and, hence, may increase your annuity. According to a recent press release, federal agencies will re-credit reemployed annuitants the 50 percent of sick leave that was not used in their FERS annuity computation.

When does your annuity start? FERS annuities begin the first of the month, so it makes sense for these employees to retire on the last day of the month. Retirement on March 1, for example, means that your first annuity won't be paid until May 1. You'll receive the annuity a full month earlier simply by retiring February 28 instead.

When can you claim credit for days worked? Creditable service is calculated only in whole months. So if you retire on May 24, you won't get credit for working those 24 days in May. Work one more week, and you'll add an entire month to your service record.

Rather than choosing a day at random or retiring on a celebratory day like your birthday, take the time to find out which day is most beneficial to you. Some of the tips above may contradict each other, depending on your unique situation, so run the numbers to see which suggestions pay off best for you.

Workers' Comp Reform Bill Would Hurt Injured Feds, Witnesses Say. A bill that would convert federal employees on workers' compensation to the appropriate retirement system when they reach retirement age would result in a loss of income for many of those employees, witnesses at a Senate subcommittee hearing recently said.

Under the 1916 Federal Employees' Compensation Act, employees disabled as a result of an injury on the job can receive 66 2/3 percent -- or 75 percent for those with dependents -- of their basic salary tax-free, plus medical-related expenses. The 66 2/3 percent rate is comparable to most state systems, but many federal recipients, including those past retirement age, receive the 75 percent compensation rate.

The 2011 Federal Employees' Compensation Reform Act ([S. 261](#)), introduced earlier this year by Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, would move FECA recipients into either the Civil Service Retirement System or the Federal Employees Retirement System when they become eligible, providing benefits only for employment before the worker's injury. Critics say former FECA recipients would lose money as a result of that provision and the computation would not take into account the employee's loss in higher wages and promotions due to the on-the-job injury. In addition, the legislation would apply only to CSRS and FERS employees. FECA recipients do not receive or make contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan or Social Security while they are receiving workers' comp, another complication to conversion, opponents argue.

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"While differences would depend upon circumstances, it would be plausible that a \$4,000 per month beneficiary could be converted to a \$300 per month annuitant with no health benefits," Office of Personnel Management Deputy Director Christine Griffin told the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs' Federal Workforce Subcommittee. Collins, ranking member of the full committee, has complained that the FECA program has no time limits or caps on payments, and can result in a retirement income as much as 27 percent higher than what federal workers receive under the Civil Service Retirement System. "These FECA benefits are supposed to tide over employees who are injured and make sure they receive income while they recuperate pending their return to work. It is not intended to be a secondary, and more generous, retirement system," E.R. Anderson, press secretary for committee Republicans, wrote in an email. "The question isn't who is losing money," Anderson said. "It is: Why are some getting a more generous formula when they have no intention of returning to work?"

At an April hearing, witnesses told House lawmakers that the workers' compensation program is too generous and should be reformed so that employees receive fewer benefits and return to work faster. There is no age limit to receiving FECA benefits. At the U.S. Postal Service, for instance, more than 2,000 employees currently receiving federal workers' compensation are 70 years or older.

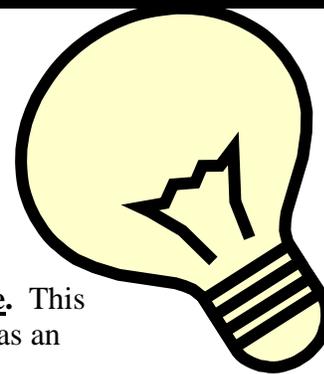
Witnesses before the Senate panel acknowledged that the program, which hasn't been updated in nearly 40 years, needs reform. The Labor Department, which administers FECA, is recommending a uniform compensation rate of 70 percent for all claimants. "A single rate would be simpler and more equitable," said Gary Steinberg, acting director of the department's Office of Workers' Compensation. Steinberg also said Labor is proposing a "conversion entitlement benefit" for FECA recipients when they reach Social Security retirement age that would reduce their wage-loss benefits to 50 percent of their gross salary at the time of injury, but keep it tax-free.

Earlier this month, Rep. John Kline, R-Minn., introduced legislation that would streamline FECA's claims process, update the benefits available to government employees and improve accountability for federal agencies. It would not address retirement issues as Collins' bill does.

Griffin also said OPM would need more staff and resources to handle the administrative changes that would result from shifting FECA recipients into CSRS and FERS. "It would create a fair amount of difficulty and a great amount of resources to implement," she said. FECA provides basic compensation and medical rehabilitation for government workers who are hurt on the job and benefits for surviving dependents in cases of work-related deaths. It covers 2.7 million federal employees and postal workers and from July 1, 2009, to June 30, 2010, paid out \$2.78 billion in benefits.

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How Congressional Budget Cuts May Cut Into Your Retirement Income. This article was written by Carol Schmidlin. Any references to “I” pertain to her as an author.

Our country’s financial system is in a dire state. Congress is looking at several proposals that would cut into federal employee benefits. If these cuts are enacted, how will they affect the average federal retiree? There are many cuts being proposed, but for the content of this article I want to focus on the ones that will have a severe impact on retirement. They are the following:

1. Increase the personal contribution to FERS pension from .8% to 5.4%. That is seven times more than the current personal contribution. So if you are under the FERS retirement system, you would be faced with a 5% reduction in take home pay.
2. Shift more health care costs to feds and retirees. The proposal would change the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program into a premium support system. Under this plan, employees would receive a fixed subsidy to cover their insurance premiums that would grow by no more than the gross domestic product, plus one percentage point, each year. Participants would cover the remaining premium cost if their plans cost more than the subsidies provide. FEHB premiums have increased an average by 7.5% since 2003. During that same period, our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has increased on average of 3.9%. Do you see a problem here?
3. Freeze federal pay until it can be reformed. How can the average family afford higher gas and oil prices, food prices, clothing prices, etc., if their income is not keeping pace with inflation?

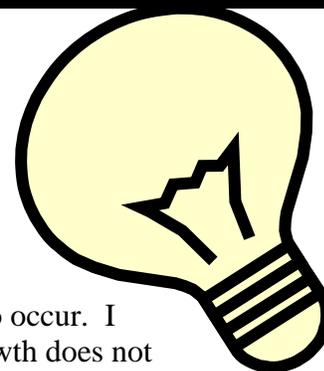
So how does this impact the average federal employees’ retirement outlook?

The majority of federal employees that I do retirement planning for, desire the same net income during their retirement years as they have while they are employed. While initially, for most retirees this looks achievable, once we calculate inflation, particularly healthcare, longevity, and the strong possibility of future tax rate increases, we often run into trouble. I am not saying that it is not possible to have a successful retirement, however more active planning, specifically for securing future income to keep pace with taxes and inflation needs to be done.

Now, let’s consider what could happen if the FERS personal contribution is increased from .8% to 5.4%. Will FERS employees be able to continue to meet their savings needs in the Thrift Savings Plan? We know that contributing to TSP and managing the TSP portfolio is a critical component to a FERS retiree. The impact of having to reduce one’s contribution by 5% could cause severe consequences to retirement.

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Healthcare costs are putting a strain on our country, and changes will need to occur. I just want to point out the consequences to a retiree if our countries GDP growth does not keep up with healthcare premiums.

It is difficult enough to plan for an average of 6% to 7% increase in healthcare premiums during your retirement years. Now, let's imagine having an additional cost if the healthcare premiums increased by more than the subsidy provided.

Note in the period from 2003 – 2010, this would have meant an additional 2.6% increase average annual increase. Now, I may be going a little overboard here, or I may not, but if FEHB premiums continue to increase by 7.5%, and the United States growth rate going forward, averages 4%, you will be looking at an average increase in FEHB premiums of 10% per year! (7.5% hypothetical FEHB increase, less the difference of GDP plus one, assuming a hypothetical average of 4% in GDP, the amount the employee would have to subsidize is 2.5%).

The impact of the pay freeze has many worrying how they are going to keep pace with the rising cost of living that we are experiencing. The impact of an additional increase in healthcare premiums and the struggle to fund one's retirement, is not only causing concern among federal employees, but it is enough to keep a federal employee retirement planner up at night. At this point, I think it best to digest some of these proposals before we consider the additional impact if retiree pensions and Social Security COLAs are the next target.

Employment-Related News

Union Launches Campaign in Defense of Feds. Several proposals aimed at reducing the nation's deficit have taken aim at the size and salaries of the federal workforce, and now federal employees are taking a formal stand against what they call "harmful attacks."

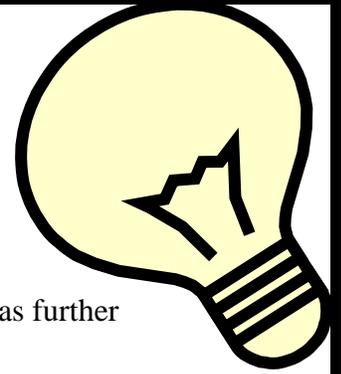
The National Treasury Employees Union launched a public service campaign July 21 to highlight the services feds carry out each day.

"From guarding our borders to safeguarding the food we eat, the air we breathe and the water we drink, to administering the school lunch program so children do not go hungry, federal employees perform so many critical tasks for our nation each and every day," said Colleen Kelley, NTEU president. "And all too often, we take this dedicated and effective service for granted."

The union's campaign will include a set of radio and television public service announcements, media events, grassroots efforts by local chapters and social media

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activities. A new website created by NTEU – www.TheyWorkForUs.org – has further information on the campaign.

Kelly said that political discourse often casts feds in an “unfavorable light,” noting the push by some members of Congress to cut the federal workforce.

Debate over the debt ceiling has been feds’ most recent cause for concern.

Earlier this week, a coalition of more than 20 federal employee and management pressed senior administration officials for answers on how the federal workforce would be affected if Congress fails to raise the nation’s debt limit by Aug. 2 deadline.

Some experts have suggested that if Congress can’t reach an agreement on the debt ceiling by the start of next month, federal employees might face furloughs or holds on their salaries.

Telework Programs Give Agencies a Competitive Edge in Attracting Top Talent, Officials Say. Telework is an important tool for attracting top talent and boosting government efficiency, federal officials have said.

During a panel discussion at the Telework Exchange Town Hall in Washington, officials agreed that agencies with strong telework programs will have a competitive advantage when it comes to recruiting and retaining employees, particularly young hires who don't want to work at the same desk every day for years on end.

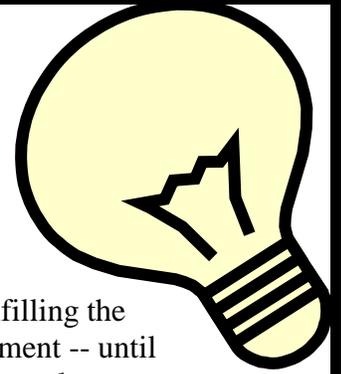
"We tend to think of ourselves as one big, happy federal family," said Justin Johnson, deputy chief of staff at the Office of Personnel Management. "This is an area where competitiveness matters. This is where we're all headed, and people who get there first are going to be more attractive employers."

Recent college graduates will enter federal service with a range of skills they'll expect to be able to use, which could increase the willingness of those around them to move forward with telework technologies, said Kevin Kampschroer, director of the Office of Federal High-Performance Green Buildings at the General Services Administration, who joined the event via teleconference. These employees also will bring new ideas for reducing overall costs while improving efficiency, he added.

According to Johnson, increasing trust between labor unions and agency managers is an important step toward getting telework up and running. The goal also requires renewing focus on performance accountability and allaying fears of managing employees who are not in sight. Program success will rise and fall on the support telework managing officers get from agency leaders, he added.

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OPM this month issued guidance spelling out agencies' responsibilities in fulfilling the 2010 Telework Enhancement Act, which gave 180 days from the law's enactment -- until June 7 -- to establish a policy on working outside the office, identify eligible employees and inform them of the option. The law also requires agencies to name an official to manage telework programs. Agencies must also incorporate the policy into plans for continuing essential services during natural disasters or other emergencies.

Integrating human resources priorities with information technology needs will allow agencies to invest in telework during tough fiscal times, said Kampschroer. In many cases agencies work with compartmentalized budgets that don't mix funds designated for IT projects with those used on personnel issues, he noted.

"The mobility already exists," he said. "It is not an increase in cost. It's a change in choice. We need to be making sure we're integrating the decisions we're making as opposed to thinking about it as a pure HR issue or a pure technology issue."

GSA is in the process of setting up teleconferencing centers in 11 cities across the country that will be available to all federal agencies by the end of June, Kampschroer said. The facilities will be free of charge for several months to encourage users to test the technology, after that, the space will be available for an hourly fee. GSA also is working with agencies to identify efficiencies, increase shared space and reduce building portfolios.

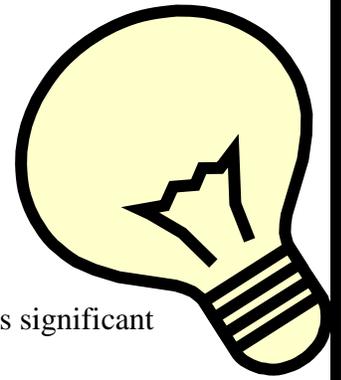
In U.S., Government Jobs Pay in Wellbeing: Federal employees, however, lag behind all workers in workplace wellbeing. Employees of federal, state, and local government agencies enjoy somewhat higher overall wellbeing than U.S. nongovernment workers. State and local government employees also have slightly higher wellbeing than federal workers.

	Federal government workers	State government workers	Local government workers	Non- government workers
Well-Being Index score	69.9	70.9	70.9	68.7

Jan. 2-Dec. 30, 2010
Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index
GALLUP

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The close nature of the overall wellbeing scores among these groups obscures significant differences within the six specific areas of wellbeing measured.

Government employees outperform nongovernment workers the most in the areas of overall life evaluation and access to basic needs such having enough money to pay for healthcare and/or medicines, provide adequate shelter or housing, and buy food; and having health insurance and a personal doctor. Federal, state, and local workers also generally exhibit better emotional health and healthier behaviors than do nongovernment workers.

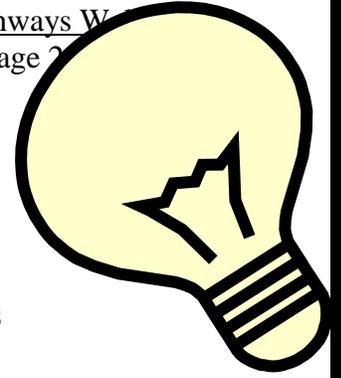
A key distinguishing factor, however, between federal employees and all other employee groups -- state, local, and nongovernment workers -- is their much lower work environment wellbeing. While state, local, and nongovernment workers had roughly the same workplace wellbeing in 2010, federal workers lagged behind with a Work Environment Index score of 42.2.

	Federal government workers	State government workers	Local government workers	Non- government workers
Life Evaluation Index	62.3	62.5	61.4	55.1
Emotional Health Index	82.1	81.7	82.7	80.8
Physical Health Index	81.2	80.7	81.1	81.3
Healthy Behaviors Index	64.7	65.6	65.5	62.7
Work Environment Index	42.2	48.6	47.8	48.7
Basic Access Index	86.7	86.4	86.8	83.6

Jan. 2-Dec. 30, 2010
Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index

GALLUP

These findings were collected throughout 2010 as a part of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index. For more information on what each sub-index comprises, see page 2.



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Federal Employees Struggle With Relationships With Their Supervisors

Federal workers' lower workplace wellbeing is primarily the result of more negative relationships with their supervisors. The Work Environment Index contains four items, one of which asks respondents if their supervisor treats them more like a boss or a partner. Among federal workers, 50.8% say their supervisor treats them more like a partner. This compares with 57.6% of nongovernment workers, which is about on par with state and local government employees.

The Work Environment Index also asks workers if they are satisfied with their jobs, if they get to use their strengths at work, and if their supervisor creates an environment that is open and trusting. All three types of government workers are somewhat less likely than their nongovernment counterparts to say their supervisor fosters an open and trusting workplace.

Additionally, federal workers are less likely than state and local government employees to report getting to use their strengths at work, though the large majority still indicate that they do.

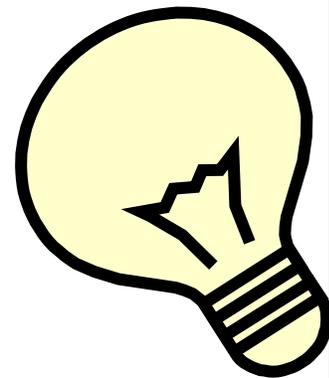
	Federal government workers	State government workers	Local government workers	Non- government workers
% who use strengths at work	82.3	86.5	87.7	84.4
% with a supervisor who treats them like a partner	50.8	58.0	56.3	57.6
% in a trusting and open work environment	75.3	76.8	75.4	79.4

Jan. 2-Dec. 30, 2010
Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index

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Bottom Line

While government employees sustain modestly better overall wellbeing relative to nongovernment U.S. workers, federal workers lag behind in workplace wellbeing. In particular, these workers are less likely to have positive relationships with their supervisors. The lower percentage of federal employee respondents who experience a partnership relationship with their supervisors indicates a more traditional, subordinating work environment for this group. For leaders of federal agencies, therefore, encouraging partnerships between managers and employees represents a key opportunity area for improving their labor force's wellbeing.

For details on Gallup's polling methodology, visit www.gallup.com.

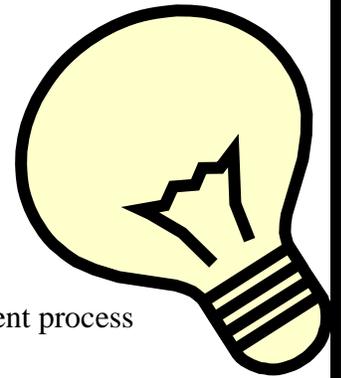
Military Spouse Employment Opportunity Briefings. Staff members of the Fort Benning Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) host informational briefings for military spouses at 1000 on the third Wednesday of each month. The next two briefings, scheduled for 17 August and 21 September will be held in building 35, Doughboy Room (2nd floor). The briefings will provide information on Executive Order 13473 which became effective September 11, 2009 and is intended to provide military spouses an opportunity to obtain employment with the Federal government. In addition, the briefing will address spouse preference, how to apply, and highlight which documents should be submitted along with the resume. There will be a Q&A session as well. All spouses interested in attending, please contact Deb Quick at 545-3517.

Spouses wishing to submit their questions in advance or who have additional questions about the briefing itself may send those inquiries to spouseinfoquery@conus.army.mil.

USA Staffing Migration and Employee Information. The Department of Army is introducing the use of USA Staffing (USAS), successor to RESUMIX, which is intended to further streamline the application process. USAS is used by HR professionals to receive resumes and assessment answers from USAJOBS and Application Manager to assist in the identification of highly qualified candidates for announced job vacancies so that they may be appropriately referred to the selecting officials. Civilian Human Resources Agency (CHRA) activities have been transitioning throughout the year and the Fort Benning Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) is scheduled to deploy in February 2012.

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The deployment of USAS will bring about the following changes to the current process of applying for vacant positions:

- All Army announcements will be available on <http://www.armycivilianservice.com> and www.usajobs.gov.
- Applicants will apply for vacancies through USA Staffing, Application Manager module.
- USA Staffing uses assessments, cooperatively chosen between HR and the hiring official, to determine the best qualified candidates.
- Applicants must answer assessment questions each time they apply against a vacancy.
- Applicants must provide supporting documentation (i.e., DD 214, SF 50, etc.), at the time of application. Normally, these documents will be uploaded and stored in the system.
- Managers will access referral lists by logging in to a module called Selection Manager.

Application Manager is a component of USAS and it is the venue through which applicants can build and store up to five distinct resumes; upload required documents such as a transcript or veterans preference documentation (i.e. DD 214); create and save job searches to receive automatic notifications; apply for jobs or save them to review later; and check their application status.

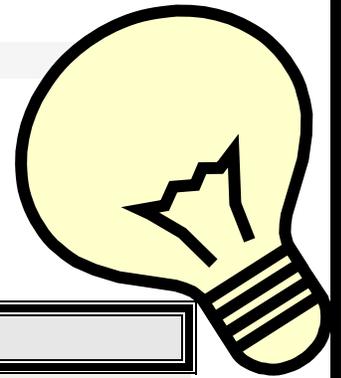
Current employees are highly encouraged to begin refining and updating their resume to support this new process. You may either create an original resume using the USAJobs template which is user friendly and includes a variety of fields that will assist the human resources specialist in evaluating your resume, or you may copy and paste your current RESUMIX resume into the USAJobs template. You also have the option of uploading a personalized resume of your choice. To post a resume in USAJOBS Resume Builder and apply for jobs users must have a USAJOBS account.

For additional guidance, excellent tutorials are available at <http://www.usajobs.gov/infocenter/>

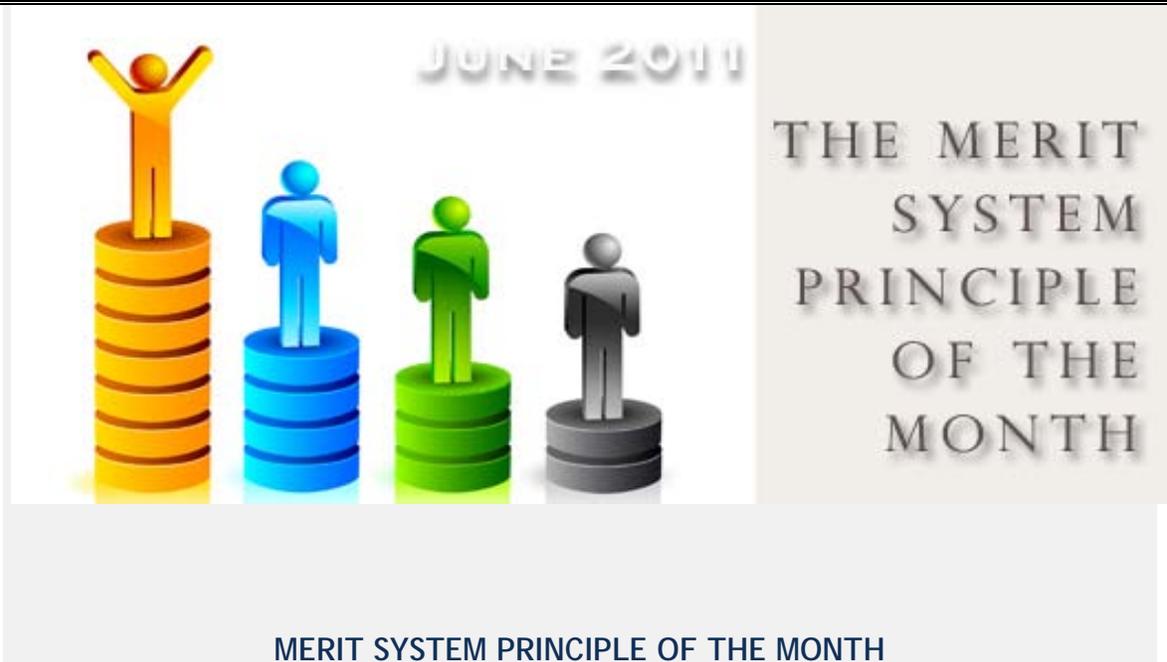
Stay tuned for informational e-mails as well as briefings and training sessions which will be conducted not less than 60 days prior to deployment.

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Merit System Principle of the Month



NUMBER 6 Performance Standards

"Employees should be retained on the basis of the adequacy of their performance, inadequate performance should be corrected, and employees should be separated who cannot or will not improve their performance to meet required standards."

What is the intent behind the sixth Merit System Principle?

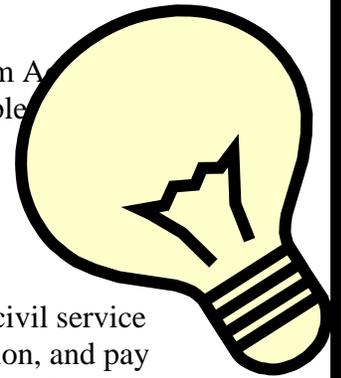
One of the problems the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (Reform Act) was designed to address was the difficulty of discharging employees for poor performance. The patchwork of statutes, regulations, rules, and judicial restrictions built up over time had conspired, in effect, to tie the hands of the personnel managers. The existing system was described as the "refuge of the incompetent employee," and when "incompetent and inefficient employees are allowed to stay on the rolls, it is the dedicated and competent employee who must increase his workload so that the public may be benefited."

Remarks of Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff, II House Committee on Post Office and Civil

Service, 95th Cong. 1st Sess., Legislative History of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 at 1607 (1979). The Reform Act codified the nine merit system principles

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including number six on performance, and made other changes, to create “a civil service that is worthy of the public and its confidence: One in which hiring, promotion, and pay are truly based on merit and one in which those who cannot or will not perform their jobs well will not perform at all for the Federal Government.” *Id.*, at 1606.

What is the Merit Systems Protection Board’s (MSPB) adjudicatory role in unacceptable performance matters?

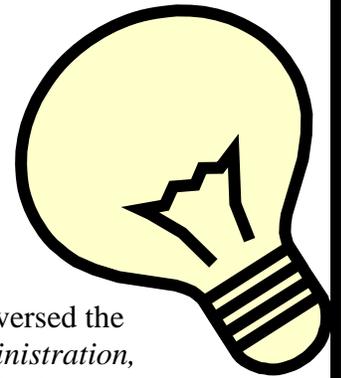
The Reform Act added a new chapter 43 to Title 5, United States Code, titled “Performance Appraisal.” New standards were authorized for evaluating performance with sanctions of removal or demotion for unacceptable performance. 5 U.S.C. Secs. 4301-4308. An agency can reduce in grade or remove an employee for receiving a rating of “unacceptable” with respect to even a single “critical element” if it has: (1) Set up an approved performance appraisal system; (2) timely communicated the written performance standards and “critical elements” of an employee’s position to the employee; (3) warned the employee of inadequacies in “critical elements” during the appraisal period; and (4) counseled the employee and afforded a reasonable opportunity for improvement after proper notice. *See Lovshin v. Department of the Navy*, 767 F.2d 826, 833 (Fed. Cir. 1985). While the authority of managers was strengthened, the Reform Act was careful to protect employees with due process procedures including notice, charges, the opportunity to respond orally and in writing, representation by counsel or other representative, and a written appealable decision. 5 U.S.C. Sec. 4303. An employee may appeal to the MSPB an agency decision to demote or remove the employee based on unacceptable performance and the decision of the agency shall be sustained if supported by substantial evidence. However, it may not be sustained if the employee shows harmful error in the application of the agency’s procedures in arriving at its decision, shows that the decision was based on a prohibited personnel practice, or establishes that it was not in accordance with law. *Id.*, at Sec. 7701. Additionally, the Board may review the denial of a within-grade increase based on a finding that an employee failed to perform at an acceptable level of competence under a Chapter 43 performance appraisal system. *See* 5 C.F.R. §§ 531.410(d), 531.409(b).

Are there recent decisions from the MSPB relating to the sixth Merit System Principle?

In order to take a removal action under Title 5, chapter 43, the agency must show Office of Personnel Management (OPM) approval of the applicable performance appraisal system, including any significant changes made to a previously approved system. In *Adamsen v. Department of Agriculture*, 2011 MSPB 49 (April 5, 2011), the Board found the agency failed to establish by substantial evidence that it obtained OPM approval for

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the significant changes it made to its performance appraisal system, and it reversed the employee's removal. In *Henderson v. National Aeronautics and Space Administration*, 116 M.S.P.R. 96, ¶ 26 (2011), the Board found the agency performance standards for the employee's position did not inform him of what he needed to do to achieve the various levels of performance under the agency's five-tier appraisal system and were therefore invalid. It affirmed the administrative judge's reversal of the employee's removal. On the other hand, where the agency has complied with the requirements of chapter 43 and proven its charges by substantial evidence, the Board has affirmed the demotion or removal of employees who perform unsatisfactorily. See *Lee v. Environmental Protection Agency*, 115 M.S.P.R. 533 (2010).

Has the MSPB studied the issue of poor performers?

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. Sec.1204(a)(3), the MSPB conducts studies relating to the civil service and reports to the President and Congress as to whether the public interest in a civil service free of prohibited personnel practices is being adequately protected. In September 2009, the MSPB issued a report titled *Addressing Poor Performance and the Law*. The report discusses the "limited ability of the law to address the underlying challenges of a performance-based action." Chapter 43 of Title 5 was intended to make it easier for agencies to demote and remove poor performers by providing a lower burden of proof - substantial evidence - than the preponderance of the evidence standard used for actions taken under chapter 75. But the intended result was not fully realized, as agencies continue to use chapter 75 in a majority of cases. However, even with both sections of the law being used, agencies still encounter difficulties taking performance-based actions because the underlying problem does not originate in the law, but in performance management. Survey respondents tell MSPB that supervisors have difficulty creating standards of performance and documenting how well employees are meeting those standards. The report contains recommendations for Congress, agencies, human resources staff, and supervisors.

Has OPM issued any guidance to help agencies comply with the sixth Merit System Principle?

The OPM maintains a Resource Center for Addressing and Resolving Poor Performance on its website. It contains sample documents and frequently asked questions. The Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004 requires agencies to establish a comprehensive management succession program that includes training to develop managers. The OPM published final regulations in 2009 that incorporate the requirements of the Act. Specifically, the regulations, found at 5 C.F.R. Part 412, require supervisory training

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within one year of a new supervisor's appointment and retraining at least once every three years on options and strategies to mentor employees, improve employees' performance and productivity, conduct performance appraisals, and identify and assist employees in addressing unacceptable performance.

Management-Employee Relations

Excessive Absences Charge. The Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) recently set a new precedent when it upheld an employee's removal based on alleged excessive absences in the case *Linda McCauley v. Department of the Interior*, 2011 MSPB 59 (June 10, 2011). The Board definitively ruled that an agency may not consider Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) absences as "a part of the equation when evaluating if an employee has taken excessive leave." The Board further held that whether the leave used to support an agency's claim of excessive absences is based on "sick leave, annual leave, LWOP, or AWOL will not be dispositive to a charge of excessive absences." To support its position, the Board claimed "the efficiency of the service may suffer in the absence of an employee's services, regardless of the type of leave used."

The decision in the McCauley case cleared up inconsistency in the Board's precedent regarding what leave can be used to support a charge of excessive leave use. Prior to its decision in the McCauley, the Board held in different decisions that an agency can and cannot discipline an individual for approved sick leave. The Board's ruling in McCauley expressly overruled all cases to the extent that they held or implied rulings contrary to the bright-line rule promulgated in McCauley.

The agency removed McCauley based on two charges: excessive absences and AWOL. The first charge alleged that McCauley was absent for 136 workdays on approved leave, including FMLA absences, but not periods of AWOL. The second charge alleged that McCauley was AWOL for 22 days. The Board held that the agency improperly supported its claim of excessive absences with McCauley's FMLA absences. The Board justified its prohibition on the use of FMLA absences to support an excessive absences charge by stating "Congress's clear intent when enacting FMLA was to provide job security for individuals who needed to be temporarily absent due to a serious medical condition (whether their own or that of a family member addressed by the FMLA legislation) and the law unambiguously promises this job security."

McCauley's removal was nonetheless upheld based solely on the agency's AWOL charge. The Board held that the excessive absences charge could not be sustained due to the agency's failure to meet its burden of proof.

* This information is provided by the attorneys at Passman & Kaplan, P.C.

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Ten Critical Mistakes Made by Supervisors Dealing with Federal Employees in Trouble at Work. This article was written by Bob Gilson. Any references to "I" pertain to him as an author. Please be advised to consult the L/MER HR staff with any issues and/or questions you may have.

In previous articles I have taken a look at employees with problems and the mistakes they sometimes make that aggravate their troubles. As a management representative and employee relations advisor, I frequently saw supervisors start out on the wrong foot dealing with the employee, the process, their advisors and their superiors. This article turns the coin to look at supervisors and the difficulties they often face coping with an employee in trouble.

Most of the supervisory mistakes I've seen result from poor training or higher level leadership issues. There are some bad apples in supervision and management but my personal experience is that the money wasn't worth the hassle and most of those who put up with the hassle did so from other worthy motives.

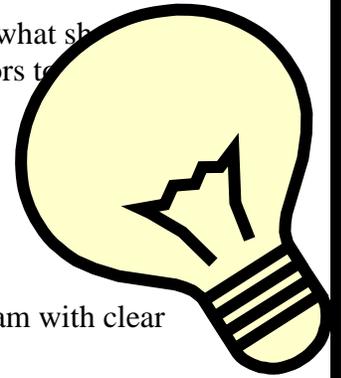
Critical Mistake #1 – Failing to Set Clear Expectations or to Regularly Reinforce Them

Smart Move #1 – Make a list of performance and behavioral expectations for your staff overall and specifically for individuals as their jobs require. The list should include such things as the way they should deal with you, customers, others in and out of the organization and each other on work related matters. High on this list will be attendance issues as these are the #1 reason for discipline in the Federal workforce. Update your list regularly as new issues emerge or the work environment changes. Scrupulously require your staff to attend mandatory training (Such matters as financial responsibility, ethics, sexual harassment, etc.). Personally meet with the entire staff to go over the staff list at least semiannually. Meet with individuals semiannually to go over the unique expectations applicable to them. Keep a record of each meeting, who attended, and if someone missed the overall staff issues, schedule a makeup meeting just for them.

Critical Mistake #2 – Letting Problems You're Aware of Fester before Addressing Them

Smart Move #2 – Do not assume people are self-correcting. I would like a small sum for each meeting I have had with a supervisor that opened with, "I'm fed up with Harry". (Here I go picking on Harry again.) Dropping something on the floor is rarely a cause for supervisory concern while throwing things at doors walls and windows always is. The

judgment it takes to distinguish what is a problem and what is not is exactly what should be screened for in supervisor selection. In addition, mentoring new supervisors to



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an organization should address such issues. No supervisory mentoring program with clear objectives? Shame on you, senior management!

Critical Mistake #3 – Failure to Communicate With People with Problems

Smart Move #3 – Fight the urge to avoid those staff members that are difficult to deal with, annoying, marginally productive or who possess similarly unpleasant attributes. I believe supervisory-employee alienation is a prime factor in a deteriorating relationship that reduces greatly a supervisor's willingness to address issues. Know what each staff member is working on. Keep up with their progress. Listen to their concerns. It is every Federal employee's responsibility to get to work, do the job as well as they are able and to follow the organizations written and unwritten rules.

Critical Mistake #4 – Failure to Recognize the Importance of Due Process

Smart Move #4 – Get training on what happens when an employee problem must be formally addressed. Supervisors are generally responsible to make sure that there exists:

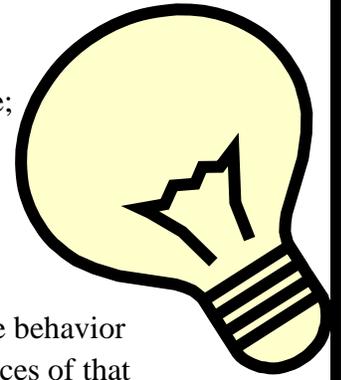
- Proof (including objective evidence) that a rule exists.
- Proof (including objective evidence) that the employee knew or should have known the rule.
- Proof (including objective evidence) that the employee violated the rule.
- Proof (including objective evidence) that a reasonably thorough inquiry took place to ascertain the facts in the matter.
- Proof (including objective evidence) that the employee involved was permitted to submit evidence and tell his side of the story.
- An initial written decision that the employee may appeal to a higher level.

Critical Mistake #5 – Taking the Matter Personally

Smart Move #5 – If there is any practice a Federal supervisor should undertake it is the cultivation of an attitude of objectivity in dealing with problematic employee behavior. I'm not talking about political correctness here. Once an employee problem is identified, it is theirs to solve. We hire no children into Federal service. Paternalism, favoritism and condescension are not only vile to observe but fly directly into the face of the concept of individual dignity and self worth that this country is suppose to exemplify.

A supervisor owes an employee the opportunity:

- To hear what management believes is unacceptable behavior directly;
- To get guidance on the way the Agency wants the individual to behave;



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- To be offered (in most cases) an opportunity to demonstrate acceptable behavior
- To decide for him or herself how to proceed and to face the consequences of that decision.

Over and over again, I have seen supervisors personalize a matter and become upset, angry, disappointed, etc. with a person. While it's human to feel that way sometimes, it's important to remember that dignity requires that we honor a person's choices. We help where appropriate to do so but to take responsibility for a subordinate's misconduct is just plain wrong.

NOTE: If there is a number one rule for dealing with employee problems it should address the expression of frustration on the part of supervisors faced with an issue. The rule should be that if you are FEELING something, don't evidence that feeling in casual, unconsidered, impromptu, or unplanned writing, email or conversations. First, the Privacy Act limits our ability to discuss matters personal to an issue outside those with a need to know. Second, these expressed feelings invariably surface as evidence of your bias (for whatever reason) against the person. Much, if not all of your emails and writings may be disclosed to the person or their lawyer in the course of an action now or in the future. So, watch your mouth, pen AND keyboard when working the process of addressing employee problems.

Critical Mistake #6 – Moving Too Quickly to Formal Action

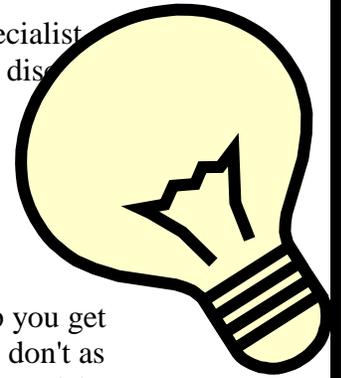
Smart Move # 6 – Work a problem informally whenever possible. The above discussion of due process strongly suggests we communicate rules, instructions and expectations to employees. It often takes time and dedication to help a person to work through problems. If we see in the person an apparently sincere desire to improve then use informal, non-disciplinary approaches whenever possible.

Critical Mistake #7 – Playing "GOTCHA" With Troublesome or Difficult People

Smart Move #7 – Treat everyone equitably and fairly. Let the appropriate processes work. Some supervisors see a serious employee mistake as an opportunity to rid themselves of a "problem employee" rather than the opportunity to help an individual work out their "employment problems". Get over it. If you're too eager to drop the blade, you'll be the one making the serious mistake.

Critical Mistake #8 – Waiting Too Long to Get Professional Help

Smart Move #8 – Make sure you know your servicing employee relations specialist or human resources advisor. If you see a problem developing, do not hesitate to discuss it



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with that person. These specialists see many problems and their job is to help you get through them. They also know specific employment rules and rights that you don't as well as options you probably don't know exist. Pick up the phone and call or go visit them. Another reason to include a professional is objectivity. A friend and mentor in the employee relations business, now deceased, told the story of his childhood trips from the family farm in East Carolina to town on Saturdays. He said his "daddy" would give him a nickel to buy 5 penny candies. He said he ate three that day and one the next day. But since it was a long time from Monday to Saturday for a little boy, he saved one. On Tuesday, he took it out of his pocket, unwrapped it and licked it. But it was still a long, long wait to Saturday. By Thursday, he was overwhelmed. But upon taking it out of his pocket, he discovered it was all covered by lint and fuzz. The storyteller, one James P. Early, had much experience with Federal employee problems long before MSPB or even EEOC existed.

He taught all of us that worked for him that cases were like the candy. At first they were straight and clean but as they aged, they got all covered with lint and fuzz. He also believed that managers should not only be apprised of the lint and fuzz, but advised of the effect such matter might have on how to proceed and likely outcomes. Get the help you need.

Critical Mistake #9 – Unwillingness to See a Problem Through to a Resolution

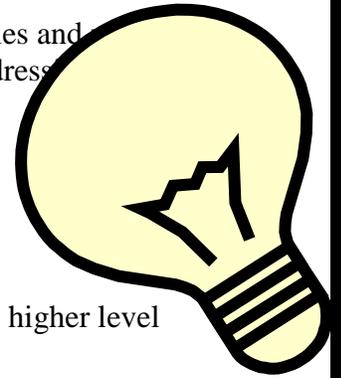
Smart Move #9 - Generally discipline is required to be progressive. Employee problem solving is a process. When you're in the middle of it, it is often hard to recognize that Federal employees have substantial rights for substantial reasons. Supervisors facing problems will either take a longer view or repeat the initial steps in the process over and over again if they drop the ball or procrastinate when it's important to be persistent.

Critical Mistake #10 – Worrying Too Much About Over-Touted Disincentives to Taking Action

Smart Move #10 – Do the right thing. Don't hesitate to proceed with dealing with misconduct if what you're worried about includes:

- What if they file a discrimination claim?
- What do I do if they get hostile and aggressive?
- Don't I have to treat each employee exactly the same?
- What if they go to the union?

All of these may be addressed by taking proper action in line with agency rules and careful consideration of the advice of professionals. If the problem needs address



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to work on it and, Oh Yeah, make sure your boss is on the program. Keeping higher level management aware of what's going on is high on your To Do list.

There may be other critical mistakes a manager could make. I'm sure there are. So please send in your "critical mistake" to fill in the blanks.

Good Advisors will run supervisors through a checklist of questions before providing advice. You may the templates below helpful in getting the action right from the beginning.

Link to papers and worksheet

- the *Discipline/Adverse Action Worksheet Template*,
- the *Chronology of Events Template*, and the
 - *Witness Affidavit Template*.

(These items are in MS Word.)

These are essential working papers that build a case. They are meant to be used together to give the managers who propose or decide discipline what they need to make an informed decision. They should form the building blocks of a case file.

The Discipline/Adverse Action Worksheet Template

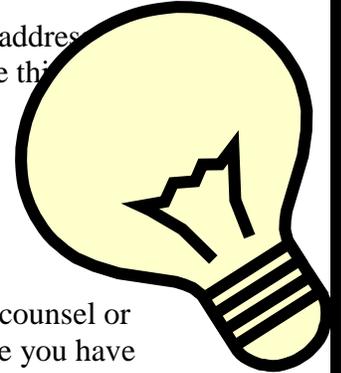
This is the principal working paper. If you use it or make your own version, the information obtained will lead you through the conceptual framework surrounding discipline in the Federal sector. It may be that in pursuing the facts, it becomes clear that insufficient evidence exists to support an action; a more or less severe action is considered or a different act or acts of misconduct are found that initially considered.

The Chronology of Events Template

A chronology of events is an extraordinary tool. If you are scrupulous in developing it, you'll find the gaps in evidence that need to be filled. It will lead you to other witnesses and evidence. It will point out inconsistencies in witness statements. Frequently, the charges and specifications of an action will write themselves.

The Witness Affidavit Template

This is the Cadillac version of a witness statement. It seeks to anticipate and address a variety of problems that may arise in dealing with witnesses. Please don't use this



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any statements from employees without seeking guidance from your agency counsel or an experienced employee relations practitioner. Please keep in mind that once you have taken the employee's affidavit, you can ask further questions. While I am an advocate of not asking a witness to change a statement once written, requiring clarification or specific answers to specific questions after the statement is provided is the way to go in most cases.

While these working papers are quite straight forward, you will notice that their use requires knowledge of substantial employee relations concepts including, *Douglas* factors, and efficiency of the service and witness rights.

If you use these materials without discussing their application with agency officials responsible for advising on employee relations, shame on you. Also, if you like, customize them for your agency's peccadilloes. Not everyone is covered by all of the same rules any more.

Please contact the Fort Benning CPAC L/MER Staff for additional information .

Training, Self-Development, and Personal Improvement

Employee Engagement: It's an Inside Job. This article is written by Susan Crampton Davis. Any references to "I" pertain to her as an author.

We've all heard the staggering statistics regarding employee engagement – less than 25 percent of our workforce shows up on Monday morning excited about work. By the way, those statistics represent the optimistic viewpoint. Some say employee engagement could be as low as 19 to 11 percent.(1) Regardless of what number you land on, it means too many people are physically showing up for work, but leaving their best self at home.

There are two major casualties of this unfortunate phenomenon; the companies who are weathering the loss of productivity, innovation and profits, and the employees who are missing the opportunity to bring their passion to work. Regardless of which side of the equation you might sit on – I hope you leave this article thinking differently about what gets folks excited about work. Unfortunately, the market has taken a very top-down approach, so many engagement strategies don't adequately address how to elicit employees to be part of the solution. It's a shame really, because employers and employees both want the same thing. Employers want employees to care so they'll do

their best work. Employees want to do their best work, because they care. Again, we want the same thing but we're not aligned in our efforts to create the circumstances and results we both desire.



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What We Really Want from Work

Employees want three critical things from work: to feel satisfaction on a reoccurring basis, to have an emotional connection to the work, and to see the impact of their contribution. Getting all three components right creates the motivation any person needs to re-energize themselves, or their workforce for that matter.

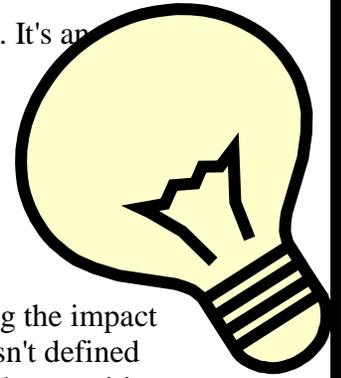
Let's start with satisfaction. We know that satisfaction in the workplace can be derived from one's manager, an employer's practices or policies, the working conditions, salary, and perks like free sodas, on-site gyms and subsidized lunches. And, if these things are working to an employee's liking and moments of happiness occur, that's great. But here's the secret. When they're working perfect, it only creates contentment or satisfaction. For example, when an employee doesn't like their manager, it has the potential to create an unhappy employee, right? That's why, I suspect, many employee engagement strategies are so heavily focused on leadership development. But, even at its best – a good manager can only provide a state of satisfaction. Nothing more. It certainly doesn't equal engagement. So, by focusing on the things mentioned above - we only keep folks from the brink of dissatisfaction.

To make this even clearer, I want to point out a very interesting fact about human behavior and why satisfaction alone is not enough. We are first and foremost motivated by our unmet needs and wants, and this is no different in the workplace. When our unmet needs are satisfied, we relish fleeting moments of enjoyment but it doesn't create sustained moments of motivation. It's certainly not enough to energize us long-term to do our best work. If you give me free soda or even a pay raise, it's nothing more than a blip on the screen. Often, the elation is gone before the money hits the bank.

It's an Inside Job

So, if the more popular strategies aren't enough – then what? This is where an emotional connection and seeing the impact of my contribution becomes vital. First, having employees feel emotionally connected to their work is the most important piece. It's derived from four key things in today's self-managed workforce: meaningfulness, choice, progress and feeling competent. (2) In other words, they need to see a through-line from what's most important to them when it comes to their career and tether their vision of success to the needs of the organization. This isn't about goal setting – it's bigger than that. People want to know they are moving toward something with significance to them, in a way that honors what's most important, while enjoying the ride. You see, the motivation to get folks excited about work can only be spurred by understanding and

meeting the unique elements that intrinsically move an individual into action. It's an inside job.



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When people don't know what they want from their career, seeing and feeling the impact of their contribution is a nebulous concept. To what end? If the employee hasn't defined their vision of career success, it's almost impossible to offer them the external recognition that has meaning to them. So, the final component of employee engagement is hitched directly to the wagon of emotional connection. What they want from their employer is a place where they get closer to their long-term goals - measured by the achievements, recognition, growth opportunities, and knowing how the work itself moves them in the right direction.(3) Without this knowledge, organizations and managers are left with hollow attempts at motivating their employees. Think about it...have you ever promoted someone, only to have them unhappy months later? It's because they hadn't defined a clear path to success and taken the time to figure out if it aligns with their strengths, interests, values, or priorities in life. The bulls-eye sits in a different place for every employee.

For some this is a paradigm shift. There's an industry built on expensive top-down engagement strategies, while inexpensive and high-impact employee-driven approaches are waiting in the wings to ignite today's workforce. I'm not suggesting we throw away our current practices, but instead, think about ways to empower our employees to share the responsibility to create greater connections between their hopes and dreams and the companies they work for, so they can wake up on Monday morning excited about work again.

(1) Gallup and Blessingwhite estimate a 29 to 25 percent engagement level, respectfully. Others, such as Towers Perrin, the Corporate Executive board and DDI estimate lower levels ranging from 19 to 11 percent.

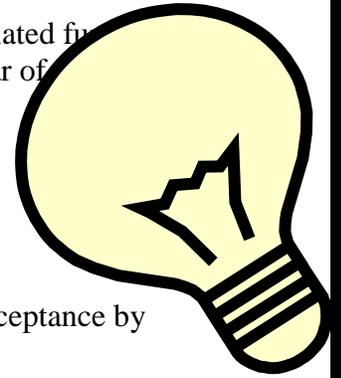
(2) Based on research by Kenneth W. Thomas, PhD.

(3) Based on research by Frederick Herzberg (Hygiene Factor).

Last Course Offerings: Human Resources (HR) for Supervisors. Effective 30 Sep 11, the HR for Supervisors Course will cease to exist. Its successor, the online Supervisory Development Course (SDC), a component of the Civilian Education System (CES), will become available for registration and completion beginning 1 Oct 11. In order to accommodate managers, supervisors, and commanders who wish to take the 5-day on-site classroom version of this training, several, additional iterations have been scheduled. Those dates are highlighted below.

To obtain a space in this course, applicants must register thru the Civilian Human Resources Training Application System (CHRTAS) at <https://www.atrrs.army.mil/channels/chrtas/default.asp>. Both civilian and military

supervisors are eligible for the course if they supervise at least three appropriated full-time civilian employees; however, priority will be given to new (less than one year of supervisory experience) supervisors.



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Class size is limited to 30. Registrants will be notified of acceptance/non-acceptance by e-mail message.

Next course offerings:

1 – 5 Aug 11
29 Aug – 2 Sep
12 – 16 Sep
26 – 30 Sep

10 Ways to Screw up a Job Interview. Many books have been written on the interview process and the things that you need to do to in order to succeed in interviewing. When you have read one of these books, your head may be swimming with numerous hints and tips that you will try to execute in your next interview.

All that advice is well and good, but the thing all job seekers should strive for is simply not to screw up their job interview. If you manage to come through a job interview without messing up and damaging your chances you are going to be ahead of most of your competition. This article was originally written for private sector job seekers, so some of the ten items may not apply to federal interviews. Here are ten sure-fire ways to mess up in an interview.

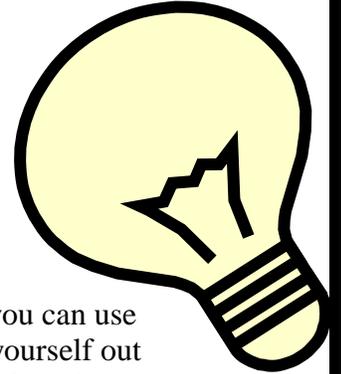
1. Arrive late for the interview. The last thing you want to do is to show up late. An employer expects you to arrive timely for work; so showing up late for an interview really gets you off on the wrong foot. Some ways to avoid tardiness are:

- Getting complete instructions from the interviewer or the HR department. If possible ask them approximately how long it will take to drive (or take public transportation) to the interview site from where you will be coming. If it is a large company or plant, ask which building the interview is in and ask where you should park.
- If possible do a dry run, go to the interview site at the approximate time of day for which your interview is scheduled. This will give you a good idea of how long it will take.
- Give yourself at least a 15-minute cushion. It is far better to arrive early, than to arrive after your scheduled time.

- If all else fails (traffic jam, Presidential motorcade, act of God) call the interviewer to inform him or her that you will be late and the reasons for your lateness. Ask if they can still fit you in, or if you should reschedule.

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2. Forget to perform a "Jam Check." If you have arrived with time to spare, you can use that time to double check your grooming. Head for the rest room and check yourself out in the mirror. Make sure your clothes are as they should be and check your hair and your teeth. Very few things will turn off an interviewer like spinach caught between your teeth.

3. Dress inappropriately. Regardless of the level of job for which you are interviewing, you should be dressed neatly and cleanly. For professional jobs, men should wear suits and women should wear professional office attire. For other jobs, neat business casual clothes will suffice. Flamboyant clothing or jewelry is a no-no. You do not want anything to distract attention from you and your qualifications for the job.

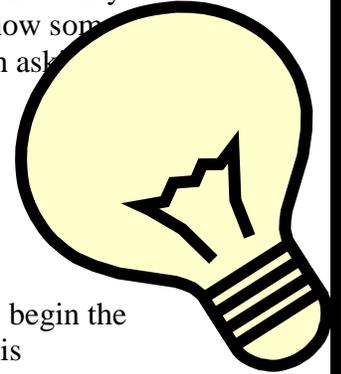
4. Don't participate in small talk. Many interviews begin with a little bit of small talk to set both you and the interviewer at ease. At all costs, avoid religion and politics as topics. Safe topics for small talk are the weather, sports (How 'bout those Cubbies!) and whether you had any difficulty finding the location of the interview. Commenting on pictures or other items in the office is often very effective. However, make sure you are in the interviewer's office, rather than in one that was borrowed for the interview, before you comment on office accoutrements.

5. Be unable to talk about your work experience as listed on your resume. Many interviewers are not experienced and even some of the more experienced ones will use your resume as a guide for the interview. Be prepared to speak in depth about everything you have on your resume. If you can, practice interviewing with a friend or career counselor. Practice may not make perfect, but it will sure help you polish your interview skills and will put you towards the front of the pack.

6. Be unfamiliar with the job. The more you know about the job and the company (or agency), the better you will be able to present yourself as the solution to the employer's needs. If you are in a serious job search, you might have done a lot of company research before you got the interview. If you haven't done such research, do what you can before the interview. Sources for information can be:

- The Internet. Either the company's web site or sites dealing with the occupation or industry.

- The library. Trade periodicals or books such as the Occupational Outlook Handbook are helpful.
- Networking. Talk to people who are familiar with the job or company. Even if you don't know anyone with the knowledge you require, you very likely know someone who knows someone who has that knowledge. Networking begins with asking questions, so don't be afraid to ask others for information.



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7. Fail to listen for clues about the needs of the employer. Many interviewers begin the interview by giving you a background of the company and its needs. Treat this information as a gift. Once you have this information, you can tailor your responses to how you can help them fulfill those needs. The employer is looking for someone to solve their problems and, if you can convince them that you have the ability to do so, you will be far ahead of your competition.

8. You don't know when to stop. If you have practiced you will be able to clearly and concisely respond to their questions and let them know of your accomplishments. Avoid rambling responses that get off the topic of the interview. Do not be afraid of silence and do not attempt to fill in all "dead air." If you are unsure as to whether the interviewer has gotten enough information from your response, ask him or her if your response was satisfactory.

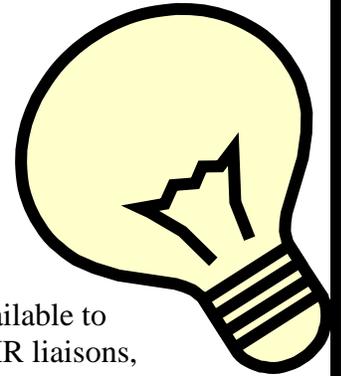
9. Fail to ask insightful questions. Generally, at the end of the interview, you will be asked if you have any questions. Do not use this time to ask about benefits or when you can take your first vacation. The questions you ask should show your interest in the position. You might want to ask questions such as:

- What are the long term plans for this organization? For this position?
- What do you think are the most important skills for this job?
- How would my progress be evaluated?
- Do you have any questions I could answer before I leave?

10. Fail to send a thank-you or follow-up letter. A thank you letter has several good points.

- It will remind the interviewer of you and your qualifications. Few individuals actually send such letters and sending one should make you stand out.
- It can be used to expand on answers you gave during the interview.
- You can beef up areas where you felt you didn't do well in the interview.
- You can add additional information – the things you "wish you would have said" during the interview.

Throughout the interview process, keep in mind that the process is a competition. You do not have to be perfect, just better than your competitors. By avoiding these ten ways to screw up an interview, you will have a good chance of winning the competition.



The Illuminator

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RPA and ART Workshop. The Fort Benning CPAC HR specialists are available to conduct RPA and ART desk-side walkthroughs and/or workshops to assist HR liaisons, managers/supervisors, and new DCPDS account holders with accessing and using DCPDS, ART, initiating RPAs, forwarding and tracking RPAs, generating reports and printing SF 50s. Training can be accomplished via individualized sessions or activity specific workshops upon request. If you desire training of this nature, please contact your servicing HR specialist to arrange for scheduling.

Job Aids Available on the Web. Lotus ScreenCams (how-to-movies) are available to assist DCPDS users with DCPDS, Army Regional Tools (ART), Oracle 11i and other automation tools. ScreenCam movies ART Logon, Ghostview, Gatekeeper, Inbox Default, Initiating an RPA, Logging On, Navigator, RPA Overview and RPA Routing are available on the web at: <http://www.chra.army.mil/>. Click on HR Toolkit and then click on the name of the movie to download or play it. Managers/supervisors and administrative personnel responsible for initiating RPAs are encouraged to review this site and check out these new tools. ART Users Guide has been updated and provides descriptions of and instructions for using tools available in ART, including such tools as Employee Data, Inbox Statistics (timeliness and status information about personnel actions), Organization Structure (information about positions in various organizational elements), and many more tools. It is intended for use by managers, resource management officials, administrative officers, and commanders as well as CPAC and CPOC staff members. There is both an on-line and downloadable Word version (suitable for printing).

In addition, to the ART Users Guide, there is a Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) Desk Guide which provides how-to information about tasks and functions that end users might need to perform in DCPDS, such as initiating a Request for Personnel Action (RPA) and creating a Gatekeeper Checklist. The ART Users Guide and the Desk Guide can be accessed from the CHRA web page at: <http://www.chra.army.mil/>, by clicking on HR Toolkit. In addition to these tools the Fort Benning CPAC staff is available to assist you in accessing DCPDS, ART, initiating RPAs, creating a Gatekeeper Checklist, forwarding and tracking RPAs, generating reports and printing a Notification of Personnel Action (i.e. SF 50). If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact your servicing HR specialist to arrange a time so we can come to your office to help you.

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