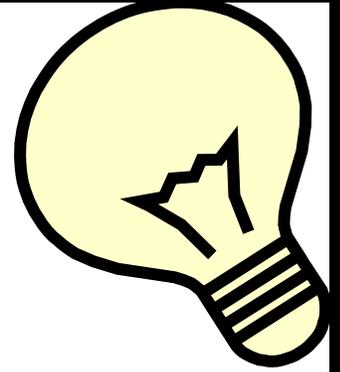


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Shedding Light on the HR World

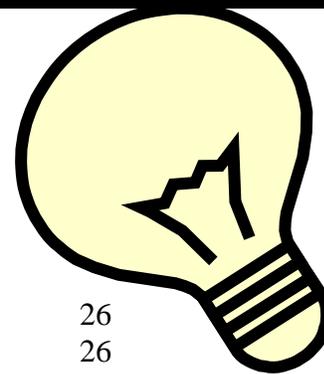
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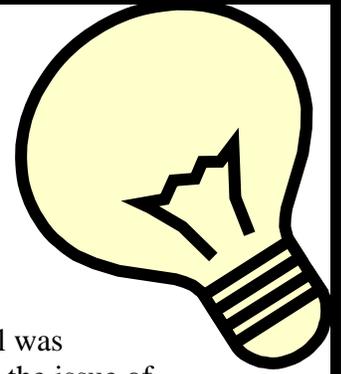
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This publication is issued to ensure the Fort Benning commanders, managers, supervisors, and employees are kept informed of employment and staffing issues. Monthly issuances will contain updated information on specific employment topics (i.e., compensation,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

This newsletter is an apercu of articles written by CPAC staff [members] as well as information excerpted from various sources which include, but is not limited to, the Government Executive Newsletter, FedWEEK, the Federal Manager's Daily Report, and the ABC-C Newsletter.

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Paid Parental Leave Debated. The short-term disability insurance proposal was released just as the House federal workforce subcommittee held a hearing on the issue of whether federal employees should be made eligible for paid parental leave time.

Under current policy, employees are eligible for unpaid leave of up to 12 weeks under the Family and Medical Leave Act for childbirth or adoption.

A bill (HR-3977) offered by Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., would grant paid leave for eight of the weeks under that act. An OPM official noted at the hearing that federal employees may use a variety of types of leave in addition to sick leave, including annual leave and shared leave, for parental purposes and said that few employers allow unlimited accumulation of sick leave, as the federal government does. However, supporters argue that many employees have only limited sick leave available due to short tenure or other reasons, that employees often can't afford to take unpaid leave, and that paid parental leave would be a valuable recruiting and retention tool.

A report by the congressional Joint Economic Committee said that about three-fourths of the largest 100 private sector firms offer paid parental leave to mothers, typically of six to eight weeks, and about a third offer it to fathers, typically two weeks. Paid parental leave also is common in other major industrial nations, it said. Only 8 percent of private sector firms in total offer paid parental leave, it said, but federal employee benefits policies typically are compared with those of larger employers such as the Fortune 100.

Extended FEHB Coverage Proposed. Subcommittee chairman Rep. Danny Davis, D-Ill., recently said he will ask GAO for a report on creating a short-term disability benefit that would pay for time off for caring for a parent, child or spouse with a serious health condition or for the employees' own serious health conditions that they are unable to perform their jobs. The study will also analyze disability benefits offered by state and local governments and the private sector.

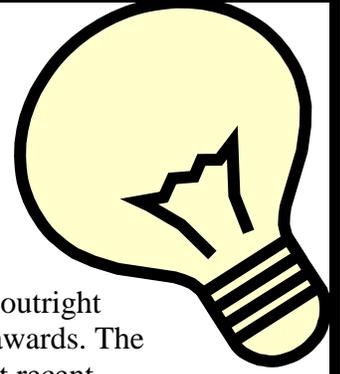
Meanwhile, Davis has offered HR-5550, to allow employees to continue covering their children under FEHB family health insurance until age 25.

Under current policy, coverage cuts off at age 22, meaning that in some cases insurance coverage is lost while the dependent is still in college.

Davis said that in addition, young working adults often take jobs that do not provide health insurance, or that they can't afford to buy coverage that is offered.

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Help Wanted. When students are going to college, the best kind of aid is an outright grant or scholarship. However, parents shouldn't count too heavily on those awards. The average amount received by a student was only \$5,600, according to the most recent National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, and that won't cover the costs of most colleges.

Beyond grants, aid may come in the form of loans.

Subsidized Stafford loans. They're attractive because the federal government makes the interest payments while the student is in school. Interest rates on these loans are 6.8 percent, scheduled to drop to 6 percent in July. Although these loans are based on need, nearly 10 percent of subsidized Stafford loans are made to students with family incomes over \$100,000.

Perkins loans. They offer lower interest rates and better prepayment terms than subsidized Stafford loans. However, Perkins loans are awarded only to students with exceptional financial need.

Unsubsidized Stafford loans. Even if no need-based aid is awarded, students can get an unsubsidized Stafford loan by filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The interest rate is fixed at 6.8 percent and payments can be deferred while the student is in school. Deferred interest is added to the loan balance.

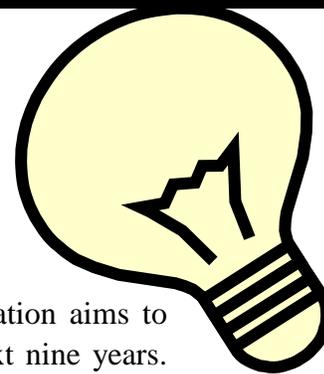
Beneficiary Checklist. You need to name beneficiaries for your IRAs, life insurance policies, annuities, trusts, etc. Here's how to do it.

- * Think before naming beneficiaries. Check the tax angles with a professional.
- * Name "contingent" (backup) beneficiaries, too. This prevents the assets being included in your taxable estate if your primary beneficiary dies before you. If you name more than one beneficiary, spell out the percentage of the assets each one will receive. There's no rule that each beneficiary must get an equal share.
- * Determine whether your beneficiaries can manage the asset. If not, you may need to create a trust to hold the asset after your death.
- * Review your beneficiary designations periodically. You may need to change them in case of births, deaths, divorce, remarriage, incapacity, etc.

Please see Tips and Tidbits issue 2-2006 for additional information on designation of a beneficiary.

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FAA Embarks on Hiring Marathon. The Federal Aviation Administration aims to grow the size of its air traffic controller staff by about 1,600 over the next nine years. That won't be easy given that about 12,300 air traffic controllers are expected to leave the agency during that period, mostly because of retirements.

So the agency is embarking on a nine-year hiring marathon in which it plans to hire roughly 1,400 to 1,800 new controllers a year.

To do that, it has streamlined the way it recruits and hires new controllers. In 2006, the agency standardized the way its nine regional offices recruited and hired air traffic controllers. Before that, each region went about hiring in its own way.

And this year, the agency began holding hiring fairs around the country in which the agency subjects promising job candidates to a barrage of interviews, paperwork, tests, medical screenings and other steps — all in a single day.

This has dramatically shortened the time it takes job candidates to be hired and sent to the FAA Academy in Oklahoma City for training. Before, it took six to nine months for a candidate to apply for a job and start training; now it takes two or three months.

Air traffic controller candidates “are ready to work, and we want to get them processed and in training as soon as possible,” acting FAA Administrator Bobby Sturgell said in a Feb. 15 statement.

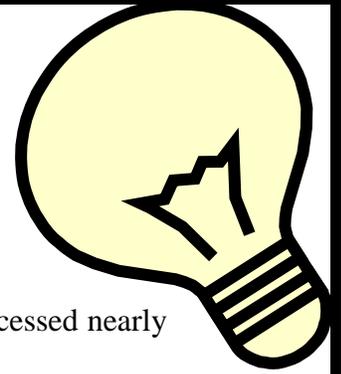
The key to speeding up the time to get new controllers in place is the agency's new hiring centers —temporary centers that rotate among FAA sites around the country.

In the past, FAA expected job candidates to arrange tests and screenings and fill out required paperwork on their own. Candidates would have to make multiple appointments for examinations at different locations.

“Before, they were on their own,” said Jim Trinko, FAA's director of technical training and development. “Now we're holding them by the hand and treating them well along the way, and that's giving them a positive view of the agency. It's intensive, but those 20 people [processed each day in the center] finish in six hours what used to take four to six months.”

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The first hiring center was in Jamaica, N.Y., on Jan. 13 and that week it processed nearly 100 candidates that it invited from 200 miles around.

“Within two weeks, we had [hired] 21 people,” Trinkka said. “And another week after that, they were in their academy training classes.”

Word of the hiring centers is spreading. FAA was surprised the week of Feb. 11 when a job candidate from Chicago flew to Jacksonville, Fla., for the second hiring center.

Staffing the centers are about 50 FAA managers, medical personnel and human resources officers. They screen about 20 people a day for a week, then shut down and relocate elsewhere.

FAA officials also escort job candidates from test to test, which gives the potential new hires more chances to ask questions about the job and the agency.

“They were able to tell me what I should expect over the next few weeks, and that made me more comfortable,” said Ranika Harris, who was hired after attending the Jamaica center and is now at the FAA Academy.

FAA plans to set up a weeklong center each month for the rest of the year.

If demand grows the agency may hold events more frequently next year. Bringing the 50 staffers to each hiring center costs about \$50,000. But that is money well spent considering how quickly new controllers are hired, Trinkka said.

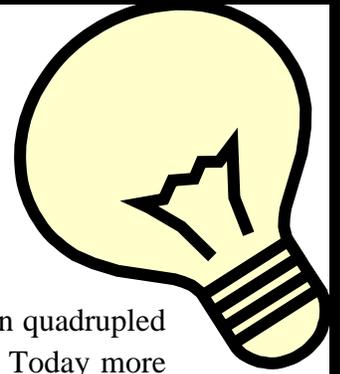
Finding suitable spaces for the centers can sometimes be a challenge, said Pat Spatarella, the team leader in charge of FAA’s pre-employment processing centers. For example, the Jacksonville hiring center only had one soundproof room to conduct hearing tests, which wasn’t enough and caused some backups in the process.

Similarly, medical personnel need private rooms to conduct physical exams, and managers need space to conduct job interviews.

Another step FAA took to improve hiring is it consolidated the task of posting job vacancies. Before, FAA’s nine regions posted their own announcements, and those typically got little exposure beyond the region. FAA expanded the audience for its job postings by distributing them in fewer but larger regions.

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The agency also empowered and trained more managers to hire. It more than quadrupled the number of managers qualified to interview job candidates, Trinkka said. Today more than 400 managers are qualified to interview.

This isn't the first time FAA has experimented with intensive hiring processes, Trinkka said. It set up similar hiring centers after Sept. 11 to quickly stand up the Federal Air Marshal Service, and in 1981 after President Reagan fired more than 11,000 air traffic controllers.

FAA employs 14,745 air traffic controllers.

FPS Looks to Beef up Ranks of Inspectors. The Federal Protective Service is seeking to hire 150 new inspectors by the end of September to meet congressional staffing targets and accelerate the phase-out of patrolling police officers.

The agency posted a job notice last week for what it calls physical security specialists, who are law enforcement officers whose primary role is to assess building security threats and determine appropriate countermeasures. FPS intends ultimately to shift its entire law enforcement force to inspectors and phase out police officers, who patrol and respond to crimes within the 8,800 federal buildings under the agency's jurisdiction.

As of last month, the agency had 1,062 employees, of whom 741 are law enforcement officers. About a fourth of those are police officers. Under the fiscal 2008 appropriation passed by Congress, FPS is required to have 1,200 employees on board by the end of July, with 900 employed in law enforcement positions.

The job notice, posted at www.USAJOBS.gov, will be open for the next six months so FPS can fill both current and future vacancies throughout the country. The first cutoff for receiving applications was March 14, with interviews for eligible applicants taking place the first two weeks of April. Subsequent cutoffs will occur every 30 days.

Unions Torpedo Bill to Rehire Retirees. Drowning under a growing case backlog in 2001, the Social Security Administration rehired 152 of its retired claims representatives, office attorneys, administrative law judges and other employees on a part-time basis. By 2006, 392 retirees were on board.

SSA got special waivers from the Office of Personnel Management to pay those retired employees their full pensions and part-time salaries. Without the waivers, retirees

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returning to SSA would have had their pensions docked by the amount of their salaries. In effect, they would have been working for free.

OPM and some leading lawmakers are pushing legislation to expand those waivers — available now to only a few agencies — to all agencies.

But the government’s two biggest unions, the American Federation of Government Employees and the National Treasury Employees Union, oppose the measures, which have gone nowhere.

Without the waivers, retirees would be “working for nothing, and I think that is outrageous,” OPM Director Linda Springer said at a Feb. 29 news conference.

Now, with the Bush administration in its final year, Springer appears pessimistic about the chances of getting the bills passed.

“It will probably be the greatest frustration I have” this year, she said.

Federal personnel managers argue they can stem critical staffing shortages and the loss of in-house expertise by temporarily rehiring long-time employees who’ve retired.

But because most retirees typically lose all or most of their annuity if they return to work, they either come back as expensive contractors or don’t come back at all.

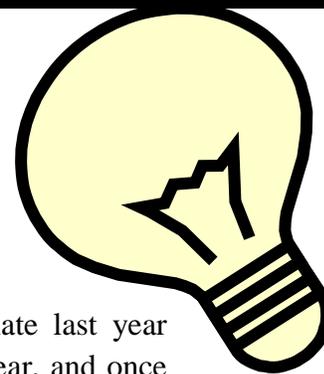
The two largest federal unions oppose eliminating the waiver requirement because they fear agencies will rely on their retired work force and neglect training, promotions and hiring of the next generation of federal employees.

And they say that waivers OPM hands out today should be enough to meet agencies’ needs.

“There is no need for this governmentwide change,” NTEU president Colleen Kelley said in a statement to *Federal Times*. “Just because employees are eligible to retire does not mean they are going to retire. Agencies should be offering incentives to keep good people and hiring the full-time employees needed to run the agencies.”

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Some federal managers disagree. Bills introduced in the House and Senate last year would allow rehired annuitants to work only up to six months out of the year, and once they've worked the equivalent of three years, they would no longer be eligible for dual compensation.

Springer hopes to write a three-year sunset provision into the House and Senate bills — S 2003 and HR 3579 — that would allow Congress to test the concept.

And managers say rehiring annuitants doesn't mean they are neglecting their future work forces. The reality is just the opposite, they say — retired employees are able to teach younger employees crucial skills.

The intelligence community has had broad authorities to bring back old employees since 2006, said chief human capital officer Ron Sanders, and has used them to teach young intelligence employees the finer points of the trade.

“We're bringing back former senior analysts, case officers, [people with expertise in intelligence] collection,” Sanders said. “Their expertise is priceless. These are skills they've acquired over the course of decades.”

Reginald Wells, deputy commissioner for human resources at SSA, agrees that the retirees returning to an agency can pass on a lot of expertise to younger employees.

“Even with good-work force planning, you still run into a significant brain drain with baby boomers retiring,” Wells said. “It takes time for people to come in and be proficient.”

Rehired retirees particularly came in handy when SSA dealt with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Wells said.

The agency brought back 63 people to help process the claims of hundreds of thousands of displaced storm victims. “It really helped to have seasoned people coming back on board,” Wells said. “There was a tremendous amount of chaos, and it was a high-stress situation.”

Sanders said he doubts any agency would abuse its authority to rehire annuitants and neglect hiring and training new employees, as the unions claim.

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“If a chief human capital officer put all his hiring eggs in the re-employed annuitant basket, they would be in hot water,” Sanders said. “It’s implausible to think that an agency would mortgage their future” that way.

But other agencies aren’t as lucky as the intelligence community.

Lindy Ritz, director of the Federal Aviation Administration’s Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center in Oklahoma City, doesn’t know of any instances when her agency has received permission to rehire an annuitant at full pension.

As a result, the Monroney Center has to rely on contract employees to work on its information technology systems or complete major projects.

Sometimes those contractors are former FAA employees, Ritz said.

Springer said agencies often resort to rehiring retired employees as contractors at a grossly inflated cost. Sanders said the average contract employee costs the federal government \$250,000 a year to oversee the contract and pay the vendor — nearly twice the annual \$135,000 price tag that comes with the average civil servant’s salary and benefits.

Although the bills appear stalled now, Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., a chief sponsor of the House bill, still hopes to get them passed.

Davis spokesman Brian McNicoll said the House Oversight and Government Reform subcommittee on the federal work force might hold a hearing in May in hopes of advancing the measure. But there are no plans now to mark up the bill, he said.

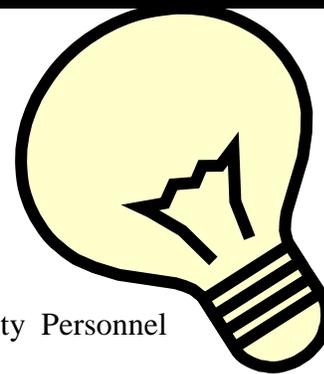
“There are still talks going on with the unions,” McNicoll said. “We hope they can be convinced, and see the wisdom of this approach.”

DoD Goal: Begin Performance Pay for Union Employees in Fall ’09. The Defense Department expects to start bringing its first bargaining-unit employees under its performance-pay system by fall 2009, the program’s executive officer recently said.

Mary Lacey said that Defense expects to outline rules for how it will bargain with unions over pay-for-performance this fall, and then start negotiating with national unions shortly

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thereafter to bring bargaining-unit employees under the National Security Personnel System (NSPS).

A series of lawsuits and legislation has delayed the inclusion of bargaining-unit employees in NSPS, which will cover about 181,000 nonbargaining-unit employees by the end of this spring. Unions maintained that NSPS unfairly infringed on their collective bargaining rights, and they unsuccessfully sued for stronger rights. But in December, Congress stepped in and passed a Defense authorization bill that protected employees' bargaining rights. The bill also specified that Defense would negotiate with unions at the national level, and not locally, which Lacey said would have been far too complicated.

"I would not hold your breath, that we're going to see large numbers of locals that want to come under NSPS immediately, although we have had some approach us that want in now that they've seen what's been going on," Lacey said. "It's probably, at best, next spring before you see some organizations ready to be brought in. But I am more realistically thinking it will be fall of '09."

Lacey made her comments before a forum of the Federal Managers Association

Using the Probationary Period Effectively. This article was written by Phil Varnak and posted in FEDSMith. The author has provided express written permission for reproduction at Fort Benning. This article is from a chapter in the book, *Employee Relations for Supervisors and Managers*, by Phil Varnak.

Phil Varnak operates his own consultant business, Phil Varnak Associates, which specializes in working with and training management and union representatives to resolve employee issues at all levels. Mr. Varnak is a retired Federal HR Director who specializes in Labor and Employee Relations and Dispute Resolution

During my years of performing Human Resources advisory work for the Federal government, I have continually experienced situations where managers were not using the Probationary Period effectively. The probationary period is provided to managers as an extension of the examining process, a time when the manager can assess if the employee has the personal characteristics and skills to succeed in the position to which appointed.

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An employee's first appointment to a federal position is usually accompanied by a one-year probationary or trial period. If used properly, this period provides the manager with an effective tool to make the new employee productive or to separate the employee without appeal rights if the employee is unable to successfully adjust to the needs of the organization.

Many managers do not effectively use this period to develop the new employee and end up with an employee unsuited for federal employment or even worse, separate an employee

who had potential which was undeveloped because of the shortcomings of the manager. If the manager did not properly coach the employee and then separated him/her before the conclusion of the probationary period, the employee has a federal employment record which permanently shows the removal action and often stigmatizes the employee early in a career. This is unfortunate since it is something that could have been avoided by an effective manager.

Too often, a manager enters the human resources office during month 11 of the employee's probationary period and requests assistance in firing the employee before the completion of the probationary period. If the employee is not covered by a union contract that requires certain actions during that probationary period by the manager, the employee often is fired without having the benefit of receiving effective guidance and training that could have assisted the employee in adjusting to the needs of the position. This removal is generally caused by a shortcoming of the manager, not the employee, since the manager failed in accomplishing his/her responsibilities to develop and train the employee.

A proactive manager could have prevented this removal and the continuing negative effect the removal will have during the working career of the employee. The remainder of this chapter deals with the activities you should follow to assure your probationary employees have a fair chance to succeed.

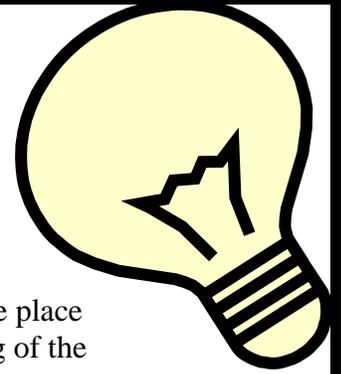
Proactive Management

Proactive Management is dealing with issues as they arise, before they become problems. If you supervise employees, you will encounter employee relations issues.

A proactive manager has a plan to develop the new employee. On the employee's first day of employment, the employee should be introduced to everyone in the work unit, taken on a tour of the facility, and introduced to the other managers who will also be

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evaluating the work of the employee. This helps the employee understand the place he/she holds in the organization and provides a more complete understanding of the entire organization.

Each new employee should receive an orientation to the organizational policies and procedures in the HR office and if this is not happening, it is your responsibility as the immediate supervisor, to assure the employee receives this information. Many organizations do a formal orientation for the employee on a prearranged schedule that delays the employee's timely receipt of this essential information. These orientation meetings are sometimes monthly or quarterly, a schedule that can be untimely. The information the employee needs to adjust to the federal employment situation must be provided in the first week of employment when the employee is most impressionable. By waiting until the employee has been exposed to the lunchroom or water cooler discussions, you risk the employee being exposed to bad information that can adversely affect the employee's performance or conduct.

Following this tour, introductions and the above cited orientation, the manager should meet with the employee to cover the requirements of the position. As the employee's manager, you must assure the employee receives timely information about the position, including a position description and written performance requirements on the first day of employment. Just presenting these documents to the employee is not enough. You must take time to discuss the documents with the employee and assure there is mutual understanding of your expectations on the duties the employee will perform, how the employee will affect the overall work of the organization, and the manner in which you expect the employee to perform the duties of the position.

Use of a Mentor

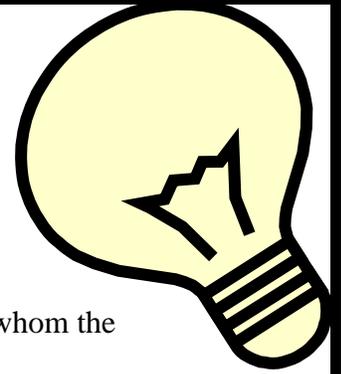
Many managers are actively involved in activities outside their organization that require a great deal of time away from the organization. If this is your situation, consider the use of a Mentor to provide continuing assistance to the employee. A mentor should be from the immediate work unit of the employee — a coworker who is familiar with the work of the new employee's position who is capable of providing guidance to the employee in your absence. If you use a mentor, you should spend time with the mentor outlining the activities you want performed. The mentor will then guide the employee in your absence and make sure the employee is aware of activities that will help the employee feel accepted in the organization.

Some of the activities of a mentor include:

- Taking the employee to lunch and breaks;

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- Providing introductions of the employee to other organizations with whom the employee will interact;
- Answering work-related questions of the employee when you are not available; and
- Serving as a "go-to" for the employee in your absence.

A mentor does not replace you as the supervisor of the employee but only provides information and assistance in your absence.

On-Going Meetings

You should schedule a meeting with the employee at the end of the each week during the first month of employment to obtain feedback from the employee and answer any questions about the job being performed. The meeting should provide adequate time for you to answer employee questions and review any concerns you may have with the employee's performance or work habits to date.

Additional meetings should be held on work-related issues as they arise. Any time the performance or conduct becomes a concern, have another meeting with the employee. Remember the principle of *shared concern*. If the matter becomes a concern to you, share it with the person who caused the concern. It will never be resolved if you keep it to yourself -- confront it as soon as it arises.

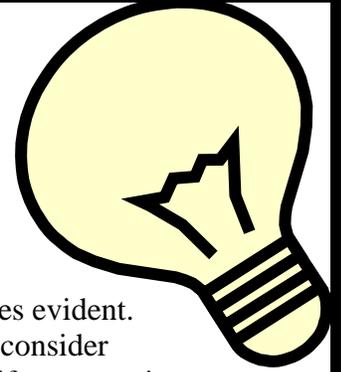
Many managers assume the employee will learn the position through the guidance of co-workers, but this does not always occur. In addition, you can learn a great deal about what is happening in your organization and sometimes discover other issues needing correction by having ongoing meetings with new employees.

After the first month of meetings with the employee, a pro-active manager schedules regular meetings with the employee at the end of each of the next two months of employment and quarterly thereafter. During these meetings, you should discuss the performance standards, the employee's actual performance, and any problems the employee is experiencing with accomplishing the duties of the position. If the employee knows you have these meetings scheduled, he/she will be more concerned with work accomplishment and assuring compliance with the performance standards. These meetings assure the employee is provided every opportunity to succeed during the probationary period.

If a conduct issue arises with the probationary employee, immediately deal with the situation. Repeated violation of conduct requirements is grounds for immediate separation. If an employee cannot conform to the conduct requirements of the

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organization, cut your losses and separate him/her as soon as this fact becomes evident. Counseling is recommended for the first offense. If a second offense occurs, consider separation at this time. Often this is a harbinger of what you will experience if you permit the employee to complete the probationary period.

Summary

You have the responsibility to properly plan and help your new employees become successful in all phases of their federal employment. If you plan to make them successful, you will succeed at least 95 percent of the time if you properly execute the plan. Accept

the fact that you will not succeed in all cases and that removal from employment during probation will be necessary in some situations. Action to fire the unacceptable employee is your managerial responsibility, a responsibility that is as important as your responsibility to train and develop the employee. If you perform your responsibility to train and develop the employee and the employee fails, you have acted as a proactive manager and the removal of the employee from federal employment is in the best interest of the organization.

Goals, Objectives, and the Everyday Employee. This article is written by Robbie Kunreuther and was posted in FEDSmith. The article is copyrighted; however, permission was granted to use in its entirety. Further use must be properly obtained.

I am one of those Feds who has always had a problem with missions, visions, objectives and goals. During my 13+ years as a Federal worker, I liked my jobs, cared about what I did, and worked pretty hard to get things done right. I figure that the incoming Assistant Secretary of this or that department may not know the details of what we do and still need to chart a course for that agency's future. But those who perform civil service year in and year out do not need to have their evaluations tied to that strategic planning process.

Who's buying this stuff?

As an example, consider the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA). I know that lots of different things go on inside a VA Medical Center, and that much of their work is done outside the confines of the hospital complex. Does each VAMC employee need to be evaluated in ways that tie them to some mission statement, and its attendant goals and objectives?

Who actually believes this will help nurses, dieticians, and medical records clerks understand what they do for a living? Who thinks they'll do a better job if their work is tallied and counted to see if their individual shares of these goals are being met? To me, most of this rhetoric and effort seems unnecessary and ill-invested.

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When a shift nurse has a floor of full rooms and ailing patients with endless needs – do goals and objectives matter? Through the night he will answer calls, update charts, dispense medications, etc, etc. Some nurses are faster, some are more agreeable, some are more knowledgeable, and some are more dedicated. But will the goals and objectives make any difference tonight... or tomorrow... or is this just some theory that's being sold by a consultant who is more versed in theory than nursing?

Recycling old theories

I'm not saying there aren't better and worse Federal employees, nor do I think we should do away with appraisals. Having been a "C" student in school, I can attest to the value of honest feedback. It motivated me to not fail and to open my books now and then. I just think that having my personal workplace bean count go forward so it can support my boss's metrics is silly. And don't forget, his objectives must support the next level up, and so on up to some cabinet secretary. Is this important or is it a big waste of time?

We've returned to an era where missions and goals and objectives are not only consuming the attention of agency management (which may well be for the best) but are being foisted on day-to-day employees by strategic planners and human capitalists. Federal executives seem to have in-baskets full of "balanced scorecards", "strategic objectives", "performance measures", and so on and so forth. While they may be important to those charting an agency's course, do those following the course need to obsess over how they're contributing?

Consultants are making plenty of money showing us how we can understand what we're doing. Then, once upper management can find some agreement as to what we're doing (and we were doing it before they started this, and we'll be doing it when the next group of consultants is hired) everyone must then be "tied" to the "strategic plan". It didn't work in the 1970's when Peter Drucker (the brilliant management guru of his time) called the same process "Management by Objectives" (MBO) and it's failing again in this first decade of the 21st century.

Cascading the bean count

For example, I read that the Department of Veterans Affairs is struggling to serve the medical and financial needs of new and longer-term vets. It stands to reason. The goalposts keep moving and resources are often stretched and/or inadequate. It must be an awesome management challenge for DVA and I imagine many senior leaders (both political and career) are working long and tireless hours to maximize efficiencies. Their strategic plans are important and often need to be quantified and measured.

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What I question is the requirement to translate the goals and objectives of such leaders down to Audiologists and Food Service Workers. To apply the hospital's changing and demanding metrics to their jobs seems more vain than necessary. Who has time to design systems for counting the number of blood test results submitted late or the number of food trays that are accurately assembled? I'm not saying these things aren't important. We all know they are. My concern is why are supervisors and managers being encouraged to maintain "bean counts" (objective measures) in individual employees' performance standards?

Dancing to the rhythms of GPRA

Human resources folks know this is nonsense. How is a Staffing Specialist supposed to demonstrate commitment to the Air Force's goals and objectives? Hers is a day-in/day-out job. There are vacancies, announcements, applications, selections, etc. If she's been working in HR for 15 years, don't you think she already understands how her job is connected to your agency's mission?

Give her metrics if you want. Tie her tightly to the [Government Performance and Results Act \(GPRA\)](#). Enroll her in your latest pay-for-performance system. Be sure to burden her supervisor (and her – don't forget "self-evaluations"!) to keep counts and scorecards. In the end, however, if she's like most of you reading this article (from the lowest to the loftiest) she'll do her job as best she knows how.

As "that total quality management guy", W. Edwards Deming, advised us in the 1970's - 80's individual metrics don't teach us how to do our jobs better. They teach us how to keep up with a bean count. If management is really going to promote, compute raises, or fire people on that count, our individual metrics may actually serve to undermine the very mission they were devised to support. People will compete for themselves and forget teamwork and overall mission in the bargain. ...and these theories were the ones that superseded Drucker's.

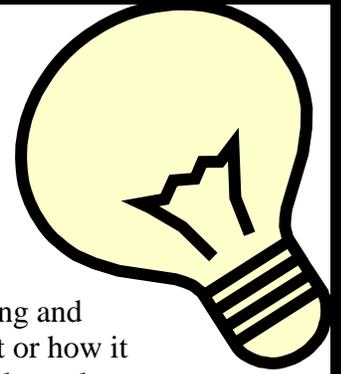
Metrics and motivation

Executives perform the difficult task of gathering and analyzing data. Those metrics help them understand where their organization has been... and where it's likely to go. They are (hopefully) trained and skilled at using the data to allocate and reallocate human and other resources most effectively. It's a very demanding job. Unfortunately, it won't be made any easier believing that promulgating such data will motivate an attorney or electrician or engineer.

Consider a Federal attorney who spends most of her time analyzing contracts. The contracts will support mission accomplishment – otherwise why were they let out for

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bid? How about the electrician who maintains, repairs, and reconfigures wiring and power distribution on your military base. Are we unclear as to why he does it or how it contributes? Is the engineer who is planning and designing roadways that will stand up to both traffic and environmental demands in need of perspective as to why that matters?

No doubt about it, the Government's landscape is broad and complex. Exploring it, I have learned that civil servants are clear as to where they fit. How are senior management's metrics helping them? Do the folks in OPM and the Office of Management and Budget actually believe that, if left without objective measures, these folks will not be motivated to do their jobs next week?

What really makes us go?

I never worked in what bureaucrats often refer to as the "Head Shed" or "Puzzle Palace". My brief Federal career was spent "in the field" rather than "the big house". Furthermore, I am unable to analyze data as quickly and thoroughly as analysts and executives. I do, however, have a clue regarding what motivates the people with whom I worked. It seems most often to be a reflection of their commitment to their jobs and the public that benefits from them doing those jobs; coupled with a desire to support their coworkers and their leadership. GPRA goals aren't even on the horizon.

The conscientious Claims Representative will go "the extra mile". She'll take the time to explain something clearly to a member of the public who has difficulty understanding, she'll help out a coworker who's overburdened, and she'll volunteer for that "special project" that no one else has time to do. In the bargain, she may earn fewer tally strokes relating to her performance appraisal.

From her vantage point, the mission walks through the door and calls on the phone every day. Moreover, it may not serve your agency's mission or the public to judge her by metrics intended to connect that job to the agency's GPRA goals. I've found that government's current efforts to recycle Management by Objectives serves more to obscure than illuminate – contrary to what the books and consultants assure us is true.

A counter-productive plan

The Offices of Management and Budget and, by extension, the Office of Personnel Management are encouraging agencies to have a "Results-Oriented Performance Culture System". Yet supervisory time is often wasted developing "elements", "standards", "objectives", and "indicators" intended to measure those results at the individual level. If all those metrics were actually counted and logged (and many of them are not), even more time is invested.

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That management time might be better spent watching Federal employees do their jobs – commending those devoted to the mission. When was the last time your boss thanked you for your efforts? In other cases, it would be well-used documenting failings so corrective action can be taken and justified.

Many Federal agencies are insisting that individual appraisal be tied to GPRA strategic plans. This may read and diagram well as metrics cascade downward from the top of an agency to the bottom. In fact, the realities of leaders and led are very different. HR's attempts to translate those goals and objectives into individual performance standards may prove counterproductive.

17 Years Later – Former Fed Learns Expensive Lesson. This article was written by Susan Smith and posted in FEDSmith. Permission was sought and granted to use this article in its entirety. When you resign from a federal job, get a lump sum payment for your retirement contributions, and later try to file for an annuity, you will most likely be out of luck. A recent appeals court case, [Vidal v. Office Personnel Management](#), C.A.F.C. No. 2007-3315 (nonprecedential), 2/25/08, graphically illustrates the point.

Mr. Vidal had over 18 years of active military service, and then worked for the Department of Navy for almost 17 more years. He resigned from his civil service position and applied for a refund of his CSRS contributions. The form he filled out warned him that he would be giving up rights to receive an annuity if he accepted the refund. Nevertheless, he pursued the refund and got a check for \$19,281.23. (Opinion p. 2)

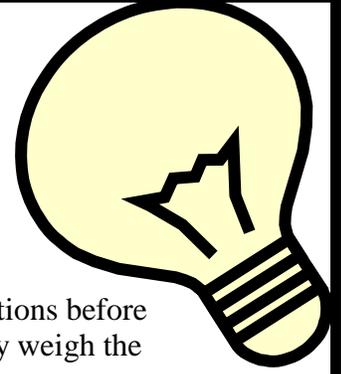
You guessed it. More than 17 years later Mr. Vidal filed for a CSRS annuity and the Office of Personnel Management denied his application. OPM pointed out that the contribution refund barred him from receiving an annuity. Further, he could not redeposit the funds in exchange for an annuity, which is permitted only when an applicant is working for the civil service. The Merit Systems Protection Board affirmed OPM's decision, so Vidal decided to take his case to court. (p. 2)

In its decision affirming the OPM and the MSPB, the appeals court points out that Vidal would have been entitled to a deferred annuity if he had not obtained a refund of his contributions. However, because he got the refund, he is out of luck. (p. 3)

For those of you wondering why Mr. Vidal gave up his right to a CSRS annuity in the first place, he argued that he had to leave his civil service job due to illness aggravated by his working conditions and that therefore OPM should let him have a deferred annuity. While there may have been other avenues available to him at the time (Federal Employees Compensation Act, disability retirement are two that come to mind), he apparently did not pursue them.

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The lesson is to make sure you fully understand the consequences of your actions before trading a deferred annuity for a lump sum payment—and make sure you fully weigh the trade off.

Temporary or Permanent: What's in a Name? An Air Force temporary employee who tried to parlay her temporary status into permanent career status when she was erroneously selected for a permanent Army position ends up out of a job all together now that the appeals court has ruled against her. (*Robinson v. Department of the Army*, C.A.F.C. No. 2007-3231 (not with precedence), 2/25/08) The facts are taken from the court's decision.

For about 3 years Robinson served in various temporary appointment positions with the Air Force, each less than one year. When the Army announced a permanent contract specialist job, Robinson applied for it even though she was not eligible—the announcement specifically stated that it was not open to temporary employees.

Robinson's application originally left blank whether her current position was temporary or permanent. When Army asked about her status, Robinson checked both the "temporary" and "career" boxes on the form. Apparently overlooking the ambiguity, the agency selected Robinson and she reported for duty. Two days later the agency discovered the error and told Robinson that her appointment would be converted to a 30-day emergency appointment while the agency re-advertised the job. The agency also offered to give Robinson the opportunity to apply for the job if she took and passed the civil service exam. However, Robinson walked off the job after telling her supervisor that she wanted a permanent job, not a temporary one. The agency treated this as a resignation. (pp. 2-3)

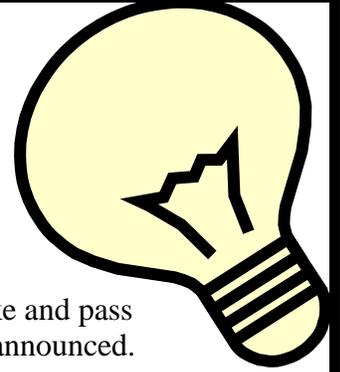
Robinson appealed to the Merit Systems Protection Board arguing she had been improperly terminated from her permanent position. The Board concluded it did not have jurisdiction over her appeal since as a temporary she did not meet the definition of an employee for the purpose of filing an appeal. Robinson took her case to the Federal Circuit. (p. 3)

She argued to the court that her appointment to the Army's permanent position—even though in error—gave her status as an employee for appeal purposes. (p. 4)

Not so, ruled the Federal Circuit in affirming the Board's decision. The court concluded that her various temporary appointments with Air Force did not give Robinson employee status. As for her erroneous appointment to the permanent position, at best Robinson was serving the required one-year probationary period, was in the job for only 2 days, and therefore still would not have employee status for purposes of being able to file an appeal with MSPB. (pp. 5-6)

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Maybe it would have been a good idea to take the Army up on its offer to take and pass the civil service exam so she could be eligible to apply when the job was re-announced.

Federal Legal Corner: Withdrawing a Commitment to Retire. In *Douglas v. Department of Defense*, 2008 MSPB 48 (3/5/08), the Merit Systems Protection Board (Board) held in a split decision that: 1) if an employee requests to withdraw a commitment to retire, and the agency improperly denies the request, the employee's separation is involuntary and an appealable removal; and 2) when an employee withdraws a commitment to retire, even if previously agreed to through a Voluntary Separation incentive Program (VSIP) agreement, the burden is on the agency to demonstrate a valid reason for refusing to permit the withdrawal.

The appellant was employed at a Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) facility in Norfolk, Virginia, which was scheduled for closure. The agency informed employees who were eligible for retirement that they could retire with a buyout under the terms of the VSIP. The agency required those who chose the VSIP to sign a VSIP agreement no later than September 15, 2006. The appellant elected to retire and signed the VSIP agreement on August 31, 2006. Then, on September 18, 2006, only three days after the closure of eligibility for the VSIP, the agency announced that it would retain 15 positions.

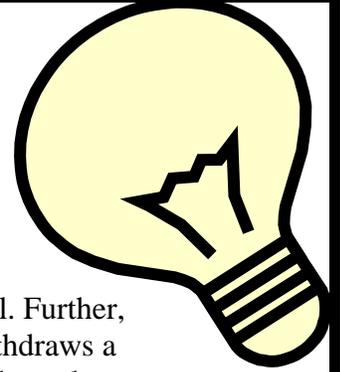
The appellant attempted to withdraw her agreement to retire and instead compete for a remaining position, but the agency refused. The appellant then filed an appeal with the Board after she was separated, claiming her retirement was involuntary. The appellant contended that had she been aware that 15 positions would be retained at Norfolk DFAS through the RIF process, "she would not have elected to retire and she would have had sufficient seniority to have obtained a position through the RIF." The appellant claimed that "[i]nducing a retirement based on incomplete or inaccurate information makes [her] retirement decision involuntary."

The administrative judge (AJ) ordered appellant to submit evidence that her appeal is within the Board's jurisdiction because the Board generally lacks jurisdiction over employee-initiated actions such as a voluntary retirement. The AJ determined that the appellant failed to make a non-frivolous allegation that her retirement was involuntary and dismissed the appeal. Upon the appellant's petition for review, the Board reversed the AJ's decision and remanded the case for a hearing.

The Federal Circuit previously held that if an employee requests to withdraw a commitment to retire, and the agency improperly denies the request, the employee's separation is involuntary. See *Green v. General Services Administration*, 220 F.3d 1313, 1316 (Fed.Cir.2000). The Board, therefore, found that given the circumstances of this case, the appellant made a non-frivolous allegation that a reasonable person would have

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been misled by the agency and that the Board has jurisdiction over her appeal. Further, the Board pointed out that it has consistently held that when an employee withdraws a commitment to retire prior to its effective date, even if previously agreed to through a valid VSIP agreement, the burden is on the agency to demonstrate a valid reason for refusing to permit the withdrawal. See, e.g., Perrine, 81 M.S.P.R. 155, ¶ 11 (1999). Absent such a valid reason, the employee's separation is deemed involuntary.

Board Chairman Neil A.G. McPhie dissented on grounds that the majority ignored another part of the Federal Circuit's holding in Green, i.e., that a formal agreement to separate from the government on a specified date, supported by consideration, is a valid reason for an agency to deny an employee's request to withdraw his resignation. McPhie found in this case that because she had voluntarily entered into a written agreement with the agency to separate on a date certain in exchange for a lump sum payment, the agency's denial of her request to withdraw her commitment to retire was valid.

This information is provided by the attorneys at Passman & Kaplan, P.C., a law firm dedicated to the representation of federal employees worldwide.

Divorce Decisions Include Nest Egg. Splitting from a spouse? It may be painful, but don't forget the long-term view.

Getting your retirement nest egg through a divorce takes more time, patience and short-term cash than many people can muster during such a traumatic period.

Often, this leaves them vulnerable to problems down the road, said financial planners who cater to divorcing couples. And when the split happens near retirement, it can be particularly painful.

"A lot of people [at or near retirement] just stay in unhappy marriages because the economics are more than they can contemplate. They look at what they've built, which often isn't as much as they'd hoped, and then divide that by two, and it isn't enough," said Jamie Lapin, a [Rockville](#) planner with Risk Management Group Inc.

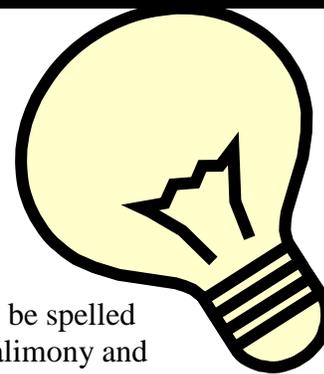
Take care of the here and now through alimony and child support, but value your marital assets smartly so you can salvage, not sabotage, your golden years, experts said.

A few tips:

- Learn the lingo.

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How you and your spouse divide the workplace retirement accounts needs to be spelled out in a qualified domestic-relations order, which documents who is paying alimony and child support and how much, as well as how marital property will be divided. But the rules surrounding these orders can vary, depending on how the plan is organized.

- Know your benefits.

Some company retirement plans are structured in a way that prevents anyone from withdrawing funds until a certain age, despite what a divorce decree says, Lapin said.

- Focus on values.

Amicable splits usually cost less, but there are times when just dividing up assets yourselves isn't wise and it's best to hire an actuary to put a present value on your nest egg. A simple evaluation might cost about \$500, but more complex cases could be several times higher, said Mark Altschuler, president of Pension Analysis Consultants in Elkins Park, Pa.

You probably can skip this step if you have relatively low-balance, defined-contribution plans that were earned entirely during the marriage, he said, and not too much time has passed since you technically split into two households. The value of marital property can fluctuate greatly if the process spans several years, and state law varies as to when the marital property period ends.

If necessary, ask your attorney or financial planner to recommend an actuary.

- When your ex is a federal government employee.

Be sure your attorney uses the language for divorce decrees that conforms to the standards of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, said Tammy Flanagan, senior benefits director for the National Institute of Transition Planning Inc., a private company that works with government employees on retirement issues.

- Remember your health.

Within government plans, an ex-spouse who takes other assets in a settlement and gives up access to the retirement plan also loses access to the health plan, Flanagan said. Private employer rules on health plans vary, so it pays to check early.

- Don't forget Social Security.

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Many couples are unaware that former spouses typically are eligible for Social Security spousal benefits if the marriage lasted at least 10 years, even if the higher earner remarries, said Stacy Francis, co-founder of the New York chapter of the Association of Divorce Financial Planners Inc.

"I've had people call me who've been married nine years, and [once they hear this] they decide to wait a little longer" to divorce, said Francis, also president of Francis Financial Inc.

"Divorce planning is very much a dance between long-term assets and liquid accounts, and when people are in survival mode, the long-term perspective can get lost."

Questions and Answers:

Penalties for early retirement

Question: In an 18 Feb Federal Times article it states " if you retire under the MRA-plus-10 provision with 20 to 29 years of service, penalties apply for every year you are under age 60. A person 56 with 25 years of service would face a 20 percent penalty, 5 percent for every year under the age of 60." I am 57 with 28 years of service. I contacted the U.S. Postal Service human resource office for an annuity estimate. According to you, I should only be penalized 15 percent: three years of penalty. Their calculation went to the age of 62, which is a 25 percent hit for five years of penalties. Who's right? Can you point me in the right direction because the agency is going to penalize me 25 percent to the age of 62?

Answer: What I wrote was incorrect; what you heard from your human resources people was right. Look at the civil services rules contained in 5 CFR 842.404 and take note of (b)(1). It states that to avoid the age penalty you must have 20 years of service and be at least 60 years old.

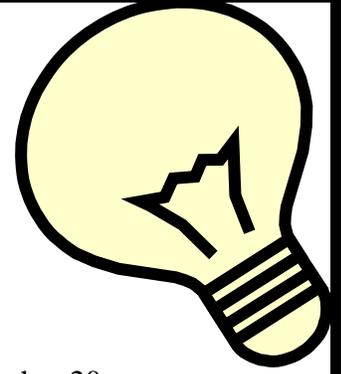
Retirement reduction

Question: I'm a 59 years old Federal Employees Retirement System employee with 26 years of service. If I retire now, will my annuity reduction be 5 percent for every year I'm under age 62 or age 60?

Answer: Age 60.

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Special retirement supplement

Question: I retired after 20 years in the Air Force and subsequently spent another 20 years working as a civil service employee. I retired under Federal Employees Retirement System on Sept. 1, 2006. Prior to retirement I made the required military deposit (\$15,000) in order to receive a combined total service credit of 40 years civil service. The Office of Personnel Management has determined that my Social Security supplemental annuity is only calculated at 20 years which entitles me to only half of the supplement. Upon review of Title 5 USC I found: — Paragraph 8421a, b, and e, “Reductions on Account of Earning for Work Performed While Entitled to an Annuity Supplement,” I reviewed Title 5 USC 8421(b)(4)(C), which does indeed state “the term service does not include military service.” After reading beyond that point, in Chapter 84, (under the subparagraphs that address the annuity supplement) I found references to “civil service” credit when a military deposit has been fully paid. There was no distinction (once the employee met the requirement for the credit) as to whether that credit would only be applied to Total Active Civil Service for FERS retirement calculation or disallowed for Total Active Civil Service for Annuity Supplement calculation. The information I am referring to is contained in: Paragraph 8411, “Creditable Service” and; Paragraph 8421a, b and e, “Reductions on Account of Earning for Work Performed While Entitled to an Annuity Supplement,” I believe the spirit and intent of Title 5 USC is to allow for parity between an employee who served 40 years within civil service and an employee who has a combined total of 40 years when military and civil service is totaled and the military deposit was fully paid. My understanding is the three elements of FERS retirement is: CSRS, Social Security annuity supplement and 401(k). Can you clear this up?

Answer: The special retirement supplement is based entirely on the actual pay you received while employed under FERS. That’s the amount from which retirement deductions were taken. It does not include any other service, even if a deposit has been made to get credit for it in determining length of service and in computing an annuity.

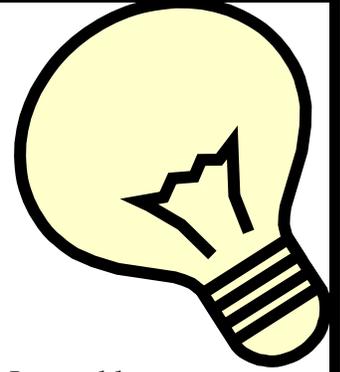
High-three basis

Question: I am a federal law enforcement officer covered under 6(c) retirement. Before I retire, I will meet the yearly salary cap, currently \$148,491. My question is will my high-three be calculated on the salary cap, or what I should have made? For example, as a GS-14-10 with 25 percent leap pay I should be making \$167,868; however, I receive the annual cap of \$148,491. Will my retirement be calculated on the \$167,868 or the \$148,491?

Answer: Your high-three will be based on the salary you received, not the salary you would have received but for the cap. Out another way, the only income that counts in determining a high-three is that from which retirement deductions are taken.

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Life insurance rules

Question: Am I correct in assuming that if I retire in less than five years but, I was able to increase my Option B multiples of my Federal Employees Group Life Insurance during an open season, I can then carry those same number of multiples into retirement, even if less than five years of service?

Answer: The five-year requirement must be met for each type of insurance, Basic, Option A, Option B, and Option C. However, that rule doesn't apply when you change the level of such coverage. For example, if you had one multiple of Part B coverage for five years and then increased the amount to two multiples in the year before you retired, you could carry both multiples into retirement.

Life insurance open season

Question: Am I eligible to increase my Federal Employees Group Life Insurance multiples at anytime without an open season? I have basic coverage of only one multiple with the family option-C, and I need to know if I can increase my multiples for me and wife. Are there any plans by FEGLI to have an open season in 2008?

Answer: FEGLI open seasons are rare events, and none are planned for 2008. However, there are two other ways in which you might qualify to increase Option C coverage. First, if you experienced a life event, for example, the birth or adoption of a child. If that were the case, you'd need to fill out a copy of Standard Form 2817, Life Insurance Election, and take it to your personnel office. If that doesn't apply in your case, you may still increase your coverage by using Standard Form 2822, Request for Life Insurance Coverage, which would have to be filled out by you and your agency. You'd take that to your physician and, at your own expense, have a medical examination. Your doctor would complete the form and send it to the Office of Federal Employee's Group Life Insurance. If OFEGLI approved your request, you'd have 31 days from the date of that approval to complete and submit a copy of SF 2817 (mentioned above) and take it to your personnel office. Both forms are available at www.opm.gov. Just click on Forms.

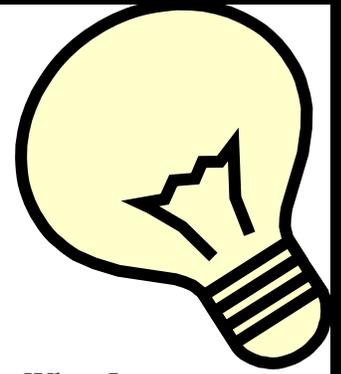
Working in retirement

Question: I'm retired under Civil Service Retirement System and want to work part time. Is there a limit on the amount of money I can make and not affect my retirement check?

Answer: As long as your earnings are from non-federal employment, you can make as much as you want without it affecting your CSRS annuity. In most cases, working for the federal government would result in the salary of your new job being offset by the amount of your annuity.

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Health insurance

Question: I work for the Justice Department at the Federal Bureau of Prisons. When I retire, will my employer continue to pay the same portion of my health insurance of the standard option for myself and my wife as they are doing now under the enrollment code 105? Also, will I be able to continue with my present insurance company of Blue Cross/Blue Shield?

Answer: Yes on both counts. The premiums for employees and retirees are identical for all but those who retire from the U.S. Postal Service. And not only can you stay in the same plan you were in as an employee but you will be able to change to another plan, if you want to, during each annual open season.

To Get the Right Applicant, Advertise Carefully. This article is written by Lily Whiteman. It was posted in Federal Times. Any references to “I” or “my” pertain to her as an author. Studies show that hiring the wrong person can cost an office up to three times the employee’s salary — not including the incalculable amounts of management time and aggravation squandered by the problem. As federal hiring increases to backfill for the ongoing retirement wave, it is more important than ever for managers to attract and hire the best people.

The more care and thought you devote to your office’s selection processes, the more likely you will be to hire the right stuff. Two simple ways to help draw top professionals to your openings:

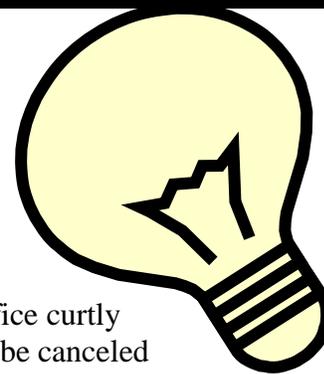
- Only advertise openings that are really open. A canceled vacancy announcement wastes the time of agency staffers who contribute to the selection process. It also generates a lot of bad blood from job seekers toward the federal government in general and toward the offending, bait-and-switch agency in particular. Why? Because the typical federal job application — which requires a resume, many essays and other time-consuming components — frequently takes applicants several days or more to complete. Moreover, most applicants must sacrifice income or vacation time to appear for interviews during business hours. Naturally, when an applicant discovers through a cancellation notice that he did all that for nothing, he’s angry.

Federal agencies cancel large proportions of their openings. I know this from my own job searches, as well as from the many complaints about cancellations I have received from my clients and from *Federal Times* readers.

One of my clients was delighted recently to be invited to interview for a GS-15 public affairs job at the Environmental Protection Agency. But two hours before her scheduled interview, she was called by the hiring office to reschedule “because her interviewer was

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on travel.” Then, a few hours before the rescheduled interview, the hiring office curtly canceled again — this time for good because, as she was told, the job would be canceled altogether.

My client later learned through the grapevine that her target job was canceled because it was converted to a political position. After experiencing this exercise in futility, my client understandably swore off of EPA openings altogether, much to the agency’s detriment because she would have made an excellent employee.

- Write appealing job descriptions. Many vacancy announcements are written by recycling old, outdated announcements or carelessly stringing together semi-relevant, redundant buzzwords.

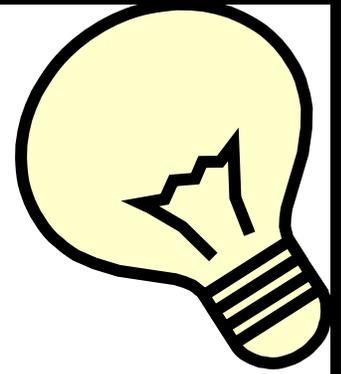
Some of the typically unfortunate results of such approaches are reflected in the following sentence from an announcement for a communications specialist: “The incumbent must have knowledge of the principles, concepts, strategies and methods associated with public affairs.” I can’t tell the difference in a “principle,” “concept,” “strategy” or “method,” and I doubt the writer of that sentence could either. Such carelessly crafted job descriptions invariably sound boring and bureaucratic, and — even worse — usually fail to accurately convey the job’s challenges and career-boosting opportunities. A compelling job description is one that can answer this question in the affirmative: Would you want to spend most of your waking hours doing this job?

By contrast, provided below is a uniquely alluring, energetic and reader-friendly job description for a Health and Human Services Department communications opening that was recently advertised on an electronic list service for federal communicators: “The HHS Web Team is hiring! We’re looking for people who understand communicating via the Web. Big thinkers with good plain-language writing skills, the ability to grasp, organize and convey large and complex topics, the personality and confidence to consult and teach program offices, and a curiosity that wants to play in the Web 2.0 sandbox, create an avatar and explore tag clouds. We’re a fast-paced skunk works team that just happens to work directly in the Secretary’s Office. Assume authority and proceed until apprehended!”

*Please see Tips and Tidbits 1-2008 for more information on how an outdated position description can affect the quality of applicants on a referral list.

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The NAF Corner:

Business Based Actions Procedures. Business Based Actions (BBAs), non-disciplinary, management-initiated actions that must sometime be taken to adjust personnel resources with a minimum of disruption to operations, are applicable to regular full-time (RFT), regular part-time (RPT) employees, and flexible employees who have been employed by a NAF activity for three continuous years. Since careful planning is essential to prepare affect employees, lessen the impact, decrease adverse effects in terms of the effectiveness of the activity involved, and avoid administrative problems caused by rushed actions, management should carefully consider the type of BBA that may be most effective given the circumstance. The various types of BBAs include (1) reduction in pay rate (applicable only to NF employees); (2) change in employment category; (3) furlough of a regular full-time and part-time employee for eight calendar days or more; and, (4) separation.

When planning to reduce or realign an activity, the determination of positions to be affected and the type of personnel actions to be taken with respect to employees shall be made by the head of the activity. However, in those cases in which more than one employee in the same employment category is performing identical duties to be impacted, determination of specific employees to be affected will be based on factors such as employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities as demonstrated through performance. Under such circumstances employees must be ranked to determine the order in which they will be affected. The ranking process must include performance and seniority.

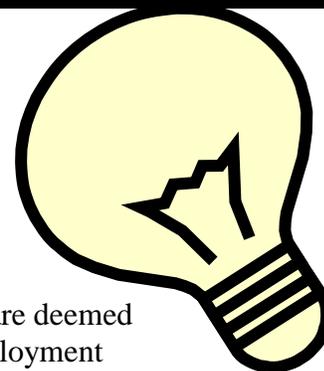
In instances where bargaining unit employees are affected, labor organizations that have exclusive recognition must be informed regarding reductions prior to the initial announcement to employees. The information furnished to the labor organization should include the number of employees anticipated to be affected as well as the basis used for determining the positions to be impacted. In instances where reductions and realignment actions will result in the reduction or relocation of 50 or more RFT or RPT employees, written notification must be furnished through command channels to HQDA (DAPE-CP-NAF) not less than 30 days prior to implementation.

Once the labor organization has been notified, all employees within the activity subject to the BBA will be provided information simultaneously. This may be accomplished in writing; however, group meetings, where management, a labor representative and an HR Specialist are present, are normally preferred as this facilitates an environment in which employees may ask questions and receive answers. If written notification is desired however, notification will be provided to as outlined Army Regulation 215-3, chapter 10, paragraph 10-9.

When BBAs are affected, the servicing CPAC NAF HR Office will make noncompetitive placement attempts for all affected employees. Placement will be attempted at the same

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or lower grade/level for all vacant positions against which those employees are deemed qualified. The names of these employees will also be retained on the Reemployment Priority List until the employees are re-employed or for not longer than one year from the date of separation, whichever occurs first.

US. Army NAF 401(k) Savings Plan. The U.S. Army NAF 401(k) Savings Plan was established in January 1992 in conjunction with a Trust to receive funds from, invest funds for, and disburse funds to eligible employees. Categories of employees eligible to participate in the plan are all regular full-time, regular part-time, and employees who work at least 20 hours per week.

The NAF 401(k) Plan is an attractive, convenient, tax deferred way for employees to save additional money for retirement. There is no waiting period or open season enrollment requirement. Deductions begin at the beginning of pay periods, and employees determine how much their contributions will be.

If an employee contributes	The employer contributes
1%	1%
2%	2%
3%	2.5 %
4-100%	3%

In the event an employee leaves NAF employment, the following conditions apply: (1) if the employee is vested in addition to his/her personal contributions, he/she becomes entitled to 100% of the contributions made by employer*. (An employee is considered vested after three years in a regular status position); (2) if the employee is not vested, he/she is only entitled to their personal contributions; or (3) if the employee leaves for APF employment, he/she has an irrevocable decision to either retain the NAF 401(k) Plan or elect FERS and the Thrift Savings under portability of benefits.

* This also applies in instances where a RFT or RFT employee's employment category is changed to flexible through a BBA or voluntary if the employee was employed with NAF three years prior to the change in employment category.

For more information about the US NAF Employee 401(k) Savings Plan, please contact your servicing NAF Human Resources Office at (706) 545-1610.

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Human Resources (HR) for Supervisors Course Offerings. The HR for Supervisors Course is highly recommended for all Department of Army civilian (DAC) and military supervisors of appropriated fund (APF) civilian employees who supervise at least 3 appropriated fund DAC employees. The course is 40 hours long and is intended to help the supervisor in performing his/her HR management duties. In addition to teaching the participants about HR regulations and processes, the course introduces them to the automated HR tools. Completion of this course can enhance the supervisor's confidence and performance. The course includes the following modules:

- Overview of army CHR (includes coverage of Merit System Principles and Prohibited Personnel Practices)
 - Staffing
 - Position Classification (includes an introduction to CHR automated tools such as CPOL, ART, Gatekeeper and FASCLASS)
 - Human Resource Development
 - Management Employee Relations
 - Labor Relations
 - Equal Employment Opportunity

The course includes lectures, class discussion and exercises. Additionally, there is a pre and post test administered at the beginning and end of the course. The course does not address supervision of non-appropriated fund (NAF) or contract employees. The course dates for FY 08 are highlighted below. Course registration information will be disseminated not less than 3 weeks from course start date.

DATE

2 – 6 June 2008

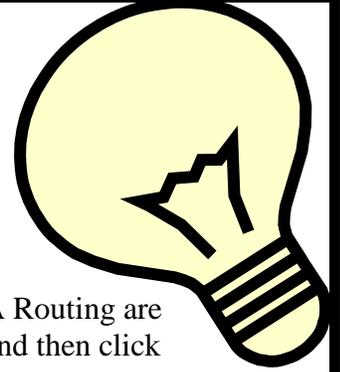
15 – 19 September 2008

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 managers/supervisors and new DCPDS account holders with accessing and using DCPDS, ART, initiating RPAs, creating Gatekeeper Checklists, 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

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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).

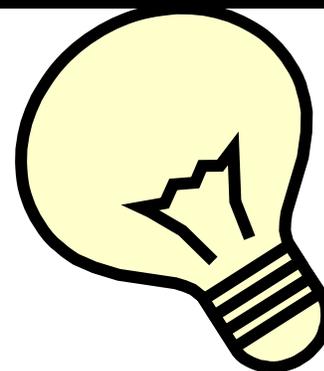
In addition, to the ART Users Guide, there is a Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) Desk Guide which provides how-to information about tasks and functions that end users might need to perform in DCPDS, such as initiating a Request for Personnel Action (RPA) and creating a Gatekeeper Checklist. 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 an 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.

Emergency Contact (Next of Kin) Database. Information on the Emergency Contact Database is located on the Civilian Personnel on Line (CPOL) website <http://www.cpol.army.mil/>. It can be accessed from the CPOL homepage by clicking on the link for “Emergency Guidance and Resources,” and then clicking on “Emergency Contact Database” Managers need to keep reminding their civilian employees of the need to have their current emergency contact information on file in the Emergency Contact Data Base. In addition, supervisors and managers are required to conduct periodic validations with employees to ensure the accuracy of their data. If assistance is needed, please contact project e-mail account at echelp@asamra.hoffman.army.mil.

Fort Benning CPAC Homepage. Please log on to our website at <https://www.benning.army.mil/Cpac/Index.htm>. If you have suggestions on ways to improve this publication or recommendations for information to add, please contact the undersigned.

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Just Before Press:

Report Faults Pentagon's Reliance on Contractors. Government auditors said yesterday (27 Mar 08) that the Pentagon relies too much on contractors who often work alongside their government counterparts, cost more and sometimes take on responsibilities they are not supposed to.

The Government Accountability Office said that as the government's workforce has shrunk, its demand for services has mushroomed and procurement deals have become more complex and hard to manage. That has forced agencies to hire more contractors. Last year, the Defense Department spent \$158.3 billion on services -- a 76 percent increase over the past decade, and more than what it spends on supplies, equipment and major weapons systems, according to the report.

The GAO looked at the Army Contracting Agency's Contracting Center of Excellence, which does procurement for 125 divisions at the Pentagon, as a case study of how the Defense Department handles and oversees its procurement operations. In fiscal 2007, the CCE spent nearly \$2 billion, a small fraction of the Army's nearly \$100 billion worth of purchases.

The GAO found that 42 percent of the Army's CCE procurement specialists are contractors, up from 24 percent in fiscal 2005. The report said relying so much on contractors creates "the risk of loss of government control over and accountability" for government programs.

Nearly all of the contracting specialists, who often perform some of the same functions as their government counterparts, work for CACI International of Arlington

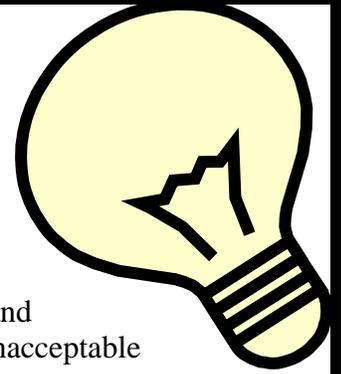
The company -- which develops technology systems for the Pentagon, intelligence and civilian agencies -- did \$1.3 billion worth of business with the government in fiscal 2007, according to Eagle Eye, a research group that tracks government contacts. CACI ranks among the top 50 largest contractors in the country.

"We found the line separating government from contractor personnel to be blurry," the GAO report said. "There is no physical separation; the two work side by side in identical office space, and contractor employees are not identified as such on their cubicles. The only apparent distinction is their different badge color."

The watchdog agency also looked at 42 randomly selected contracts from fiscal years 2006 and 2007 and found that contractors had prepared contract documents, made requests for legal reviews, recommended who to pick, assisted in negotiating the deals and administered the contracts.

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Joseph I. Lieberman (I-Conn.), chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, said the issues the GAO points out are "unacceptable and must be rooted out."

"We must be assured that contract dollars are awarded so that taxpayers get the best value for their money and not to increase the fortunes of a contractor or its employees," he said in a statement.

CACI said in a statement that it supported "any effort by the government to effectively acquire and use contractor resources to fill workforce or expertise shortages wherever needed. CACI has consistently provided our armed forces with good value."

The report also said that some contractors are paid \$74.99 per hour -- 27 percent more than government employees who are doing the same work -- and that they had, on average, 18 years of contracting-related experience, compared with government workers' average of 12 years. Army contracting officials said they "face chronic difficulties in recruiting and retaining contract specialists" because of competition from other agencies and the private sector.

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