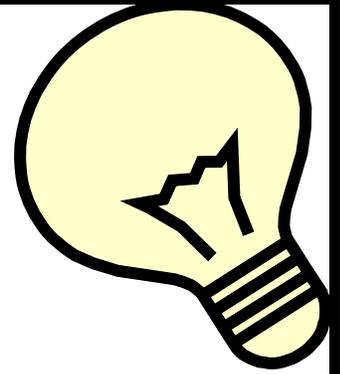


The

Illuminator

Shedding Light on the HR World

9-2008



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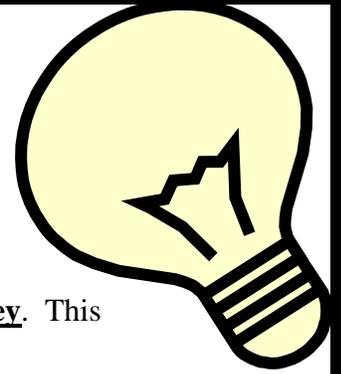
This publication is issued to ensure the Fort Benning commanders, managers, supervisors, and employees are kept informed of employment and staffing issues. Monthly issuances will contain updated information on specific employment topics (i.e., compensation, recruiting procedures, travel entitlements, 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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Money, Congress and Your TSP: Watch Out for Your Retirement Money. This article was written by Ralph Smith and posted in FEDSmith.

Federal employees operate in a political environment. It is easy to lose sight of this when going into work every day and working on projects or subjects that seem far removed from politics.

Even the most politically averse federal employees probably realize the political environment that is an inherent part of the job when, each year, Congress and the administration in power wrangle over the annual federal pay increase for months on end. Politics also comes into play in deciding your agency's budget and whether specific projects get funds to continue operating for another year.

But here is another angle. Most federal employees participate in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Especially for those employees under the FERS system, the TSP is critical to your retirement future. The TSP makes it easy to invest in the basic funds or in lifecycle funds that allocate your investments throughout the basic funds depending on your retirement horizon.

The TSP funds are essentially index funds. There is not a fund manager deciding whether your investment money should go into financial stocks or whether to invest millions of dollars on the fortunes of a specific company. An index fund spreads the risk over hundreds of companies that fall into the broad fund category.

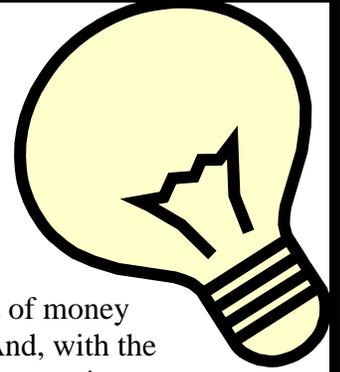
The theory behind an index fund isn't new. It was first introduced by John Bogle of the Vanguard Group In 1975. His idea was to create a very low-cost mutual fund that would not try to beat the returns of the stock market as measured by Standard & Poor's 500 index. An index fund reflects the index by buying each of the index's 500 stocks in amounts equal to the weightings within the index itself.

The TSP C fund uses the S&P 500 index in much the same way as the original concept for the Vanguard index funds although the fees and expenses for TSP shareholders are much lower than any other index fund. In effect, TSP investors have the advantage of very low fees and relatively low risk investing through the use of index funds. As all investors who pay any attention know, there is risk in buying stock as the funds go up and down based on broad economic trends that affect stock prices.

Your TSP funds are invested in a way that is generally immune from the political pressure cooker inhabited by our elected representatives. But that does not mean that the TSP funds will remain immune from politics in the future.

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The TSP funds are now investing many billions of dollars. That is a huge pot of money that lobbyists, industry groups, financial advisors, etc. would love to share. And, with the large amount of money flowing into the campaign coffers of our elected representatives, some of these Congressmen are going to try and serve the interests of their donors by occasionally advocating changes to the TSP.

That is not to say there should not be changes to the TSP. The TSP management has been diligent in representing the broad interests of investors and to resisting political pressure to add new funds that may not always be in the best interests of investors.

Here is a new twist though. [Congressman Danny Davis \(D-IL\)](#) is concerned about the role of women and minorities and your TSP money. According to a [report](#) in *Government Executive*, the Congressman is bothered that the indexing approach used by the TSP may exclude financial firms run by women and minorities from getting a bigger piece of the billions of dollars in the TSP pool and wants to consider using actively managed funds instead of index funds. The concerned Congressman stated: "The executive director of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board revealed that there are minority firms with talent in long-term financial management. However, most of those firms gravitate toward the active fund management business, which is not an investment strategy of the TSP. Research by the TSP indicates that there may be only one minority-owned firm that deals with passive management of index funds."

DC Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton is also jumping on this bandwagon as it gets ready to roll. The elected representatives are professing concern for the overall return of TSP investors, of course, but this is national politics at its best. Achieving a goal of putting more money into the pockets of financial investment firms may best be accomplished with a diversionary tactic--in this case, using the front of enhancing the role of women and minorities to introduce the concept of paying private investment companies to start actively managing TSP funds.

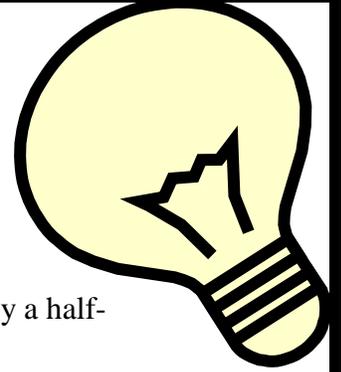
In reality, there have already been plenty of studies comparing the returns of actively managed funds to the returns provided by index funds.

In a nutshell, there is a recent quote from a *Wall Street Journal*: "**If this is supposed to be a stock picker's market, the stock pickers need to start picking better stocks. Bearish periods are touted as stock picker's markets because money managers are supposed to deftly hand-select winning companies rather than rack up losses along with broad benchmarks that are tracked by popular index funds. Money managers, who charge far higher fees than index funds, have happily promoted this idea.**"

Here are the most recent results of what investors who are paying much higher fees have gotten for their money. in 2008, they have fallen behind the indexes in six of nine major

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categories of U.S. stock funds. In the three areas where they are ahead, it is by a half-percentage point or less.

The stock pickers' record during the six bear markets from 1973 to 2007 is three for six, according to research by Vanguard (the Vanguard Group also runs a number of actively managed funds). Beating the market half the time does not make much of a case for having an actively managed stock fund as the higher fees will cost investors more money.

And it isn't just the *Wall Street Journal* with this view. As [noted](#) by a columnist from *Money* magazine: "Index funds' consistency makes them ideal building blocks for creating a diversified portfolio that contains all sizes of stocks, styles of investing and different types of bonds as well. As if that's not enough, index funds tend to be tax-efficient, which is a fancy way of saying they generally give up less of their gains to taxes."

Or consider a [similar quote](#) from Bankrate.com: "Actively managed funds are an entirely different story. With these, a mutual fund manager or team of managers buys and sells a variety of holdings in an attempt to beat their respective index. Therefore, portfolio turnover is generally higher, the funds are less tax-efficient and they require more hands-on management. In the end, all that activity often doesn't guarantee top returns."

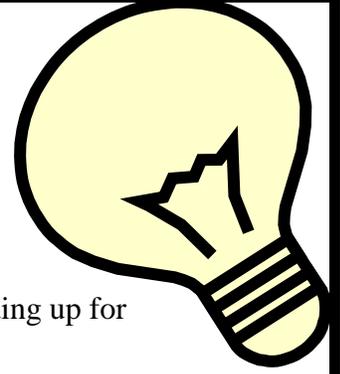
Many investors also read columns by Scott Burns on a regular basis. Here is his [observation](#) on the topic of actively managed funds vs. indexed funds: "I've heard brokers say that 'expenses don't matter if the return is there' for more than 40 years. It's absolutely true, except for one problem. Expenses are constant. Performance is uncertain. Invariably, today's top manager outruns his selection luck and performance deteriorates. Long-term, odds are that managed fund performance will be well below the performance of an index fund."

For the most cynical observers of our political process, there is a certain irony in this [quote](#) from a financial advisor who wants to start getting a piece of the investment fees from the TSP: "[C]oncerns about political manipulation were overblown and might prevent fiduciaries from considering viable investment offerings. 'I hear this concern about political manipulation, but I'm not sure what that manipulation might be....' "

Perhaps it is just too obvious. To many observers with money at stake in the TSP, the political manipulation that the financial advisor cannot see includes changing the TSP's investment strategy from relying on index funds to actively managed funds--with higher fees going to the fortunate fund managers selected to receive the funds and choose the stocks for TSP investors. Of course, this would not be done for any financial advantages

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for our elected representatives--it would be for the more noble cause of standing up for the rights and financial advantages of women and minorities.

The scenario that is playing out in Congress is actually humorous as the real motivation of those with the noble comments seem so apparent. The humor may not be so obvious though if you happen to have much of your retirement future riding on the outcome of the political process.

TSP investors may want to point out to the Congressional representatives crying out for more research into this issue that the research has already been done and the results are pretty conclusive for those who choose to take a look at them.

How to Develop References That Get You the Job. Your résumé is stellar. You used your network wisely. You landed the interview for your dream job and you nailed it. So why didn't you get the offer? It may be that your references were an afterthought, rather than part of your plan.

In today's competitive market, you need to be as meticulous in choosing your references as you are in every other part of your career, says Tony Jenkins, vice president of cultural competence and diversity systems for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, No. 15 on [The 2008 DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity® list](#). "Make it a part of your broader message in looking for opportunities either within the same company or moving from another organization. Build your references into your entire branding of yourself and what you want to achieve out of your career."

Choose "somebody that's going to know not only your level of skill and competency but can also speak to your ability to think on the fly, to be able to adjust to various circumstances and can speak about your skills and ability to learn," says Daniel Guerrero, client manager for INROADS South Central Region. "It really is a matter of relationship development and a level of understanding."

Here are seven tips on how to develop references that will enhance your brand and get you the job:

1. Make sure your reference knows you and your work well enough to recommend you.

A well-known executive in your field can be an attractive addition to your reference list. But if that person can only talk about you in general terms, the reference could do you more harm than good. "You can certainly know of someone that has an enticing title or is influential," says Guerrero. "But if they don't have a clear understanding of you, the reference is more like name dropping."

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A strong reference will be able to talk about the value you will bring to the job. "If I'm an employer and I'm going to get a reference from someone, I'm going to ask that individual about this person's ability to deliver results," says Jenkins. "People need to be very comfortable with reaching out to individuals that they have had working relationships with that have seen them deliver outstanding results or they have seen them or observe them accomplishing a great deal," even if that person is a peer rather than a boss.

Make sure your reference list is tailored to the job you are pursuing.

References are not a "one-size-fits-all."

"There are some references, depending on your job search or what you're pursuing, that are going to be a better fit for a reference check," says Guerrero. "You'll want to pick and choose who you want on there so that it is relevant to the career field that you're pursuing and it will have some legitimacy to what you're trying to pursue as well."

Choose a reference who can demonstrate that you are a good fit for the job or the company. "It's good to realize that the person is going to be able to speak to your competencies but at the same time be able to reflect those in a means that's going to demonstrate your ability to work in a particular environment or work with a particular group of people," says Guerrero.

Be specific and professional in your request for a reference.

The more information you give to a reference about the job or career path you are pursuing, the more specific your reference can be about you. If you are too general in your request, you may not get the results you want. Be specific about "what you are trying to achieve as an individual, be it your career goals, or 'I'm going to be looking at another opportunity with another organization,'" says Jenkins.

"Sometimes people [make the request] too informally and therefore may not take it as serious," states Jenkins. "I would rather someone call me and [say], 'In an effort to get an interview with this organization, I've always admired your feedback and your support in my career and would really like your support.' To me, that's a formal ask rather than just calling up or sending an e-mail saying 'Give me a reference.'"

Make sure all information about your reference is current and correct.

Even worse than a blah reference is giving out the wrong title or the wrong number for a reference. Double check your work to make sure that there are no overlooked mistakes that could easily cost you the job. "Make sure that you get their correct contact

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information, which includes address, phone number, [and an] e-mail that they're willing to give to you," adds Guerrero.

Don't assume that the number or e-mail you have for a reference is the one that person wants you to use. A reference may not want a cell-phone number given out or may have concerns about being contacted at work.

"Confirm that that's going to be information that they will allow you to disclose to a potential employer," says Guerrero.

Consider references other than previous employers.

While getting references from past employers may seem like the obvious route to take, references from professional organizations you belong to or volunteer work you've done can also make you stand out.

"If your résumé indicates that you have had a leadership role in a particular organization or that you're heavily involved in a particular organization, you're certainly going to want to include some type of reference on [your résumé] from that organization just to illustrate the level of network that you've established within that organization," advises Guerrero.

Make sure, however, that the reference can talk about your skills that make you right for the job.

"As far as groups you've made charitable contributions to, I'm not certain to how relevant that is going to be unless it's heavily reflective in your leadership roles or organizational participation on your résumé," says Guerrero.

Keep your reference list up-to-date.

Don't assume your reference list from two years ago will work. Your last boss may have changed jobs or moved to a new state since you made that list. Worse, your reference may not remember enough about your work to talk about you specifically to your prospective employer.

"If somebody is reaching out to [a reference] you knew 15 years ago and they receive that phone call and don't remember you, that's going to be a poor reflection on you," explains Guerrero.

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It's a good idea to update your reference list as often as you update your résumé. And make sure you contact your references before you give out their names each time you plan on using them. That way you'll be sure the person will be prepared for the call and ready to present you in the best light.

7. Follow-up is a must!

Saying thank you and letting your reference know what happened is a good way to make sure that reference remains an important part of your network.

"That's one thing that I typically encourage my students to do," says Guerrero. "Once they've made the request [and] received the OK, at some point [take the] opportunity to follow up with that reference and just let them know, 'Hey, this is what happened, I appreciate your help.' Follow-up is always good."

You Didn't get the Promotion: Now What?: How an executive responds to disappointment is as important to his or her upward mobility as is technical expertise and networking know-how. An executive who pouts and frets after not getting a promotion is more likely to create a negative image than an executive who can take disappointment in stride and further develop.

Responding well to disappointment sometimes says more to senior leaders than how you respond to success. Consider these two examples:

Scott Murphy, vice president of human resources at Turner Broadcasting System (No. 23 on [The DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity® list](#)), remembers working with a woman who was vying for a vice-president post. She thought the position was the next step in her career, and she shared her plan with others.

"Before she interviewed for the job, she told a lot of people that she thought she was perfect," says Murphy. "She set herself up for embarrassment and exposure."

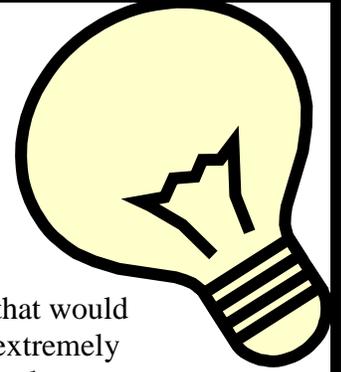
The woman didn't get the promotion and was devastated. "She talked to as much as 10 executives about it in an angry way," remembers Murphy. "She was seen as someone who couldn't rebound, see opportunity and focus on how to improve. She could only focus on that she didn't get the job."

In the end, the woman chose to work elsewhere.

Another example comes from Virginia S. Mackin, executive vice president and director of corporate communications at Wachovia (No. 14 in the Top 50).

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A woman in the marketing division applied for a position on Mackin's team that would report directly to Mackin. The woman had an excellent interview--she was "extremely prepared" and had "done her research" into the position and the division. "But there were skills and experiences she didn't yet have," says Mackin. "The feedback she got was, 'You got the right stuff, but you need to work on some things.'"

The woman asked for feedback from Mackin, who suggested she seek a mentor who could help her develop. "About a year later, she went for another promotion and received it," says Mackin. "I so admire her for her courage and for being positive. The fact that she moved through that process with such grace makes me think about how much I want her on my team in the future."

Says Murphy: "If someone doesn't get a promotion, all eyes are on that person from an organizational perspective. How someone reacts is key in terms of how they'll be considered in the future."

Reacting in a positive way can mean the difference between a future promotion or a pink slip. Here are five things you can do to turn that lost promotion into an opportunity for growth:

Develop your network

The decision to give you a promotion or not is not based solely on your performance in the interview. From the moment you start with a new company, you are being evaluated for your potential to move up the ladder. So let people get to know you and develop your network.

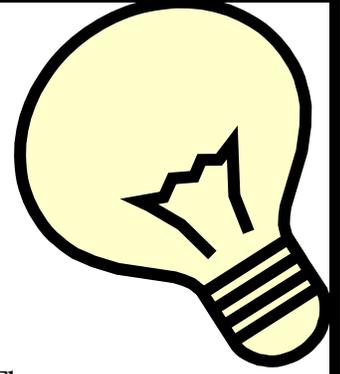
If you are Black, Latino, Asian, female, gay or lesbian, or have a disability, your network should include white males and other leaders who are different from you. To develop those cross-cultural connections, share information about yourself and look for common bonds. "When you share yourself with others in a company, what you also will find is that you have enlisted others in your success," says Mackin.

The woman who did not get her first promotion but took Mackin's advice later informed Mackin of her progress. As a result, she unwittingly enlisted Mackin as an ally.

"I became committed to her success and became an informal adviser," says Mackin. "I coach individuals to seek out a small number of trusted individuals who have a sincere interest; they will be enlisted in your success."

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Be positive

Who wants to toil day in and day out with a pessimist? Most people do not. The person who is positive is usually the person who finds solutions or builds camaraderie or team spirit. Finding the positive in a negative situation demonstrates vision beyond the immediate.

"And that's a challenge because every 'no' or 'sorry' can feel shattering, but what it really does is create enormous opportunity," says Mackin. "If you're able to see it positively, you can take steps to create a far better situation than you might expect."

Don't be a victim; ask for feedback

Never let fear get in the way of learning more about your weaknesses; otherwise improving and developing skills will take a longer time.

"I would also steer a person to begin to have some purposeful discussions with stakeholders who might have decided not to give them the promotion. Ask how people see you and what you need to develop," says Murphy.

"Consider not getting the promotion a learning experience," says Ginny Gong, national president of the Organization for Chinese Americans. "Follow up with the interviewer to ask for feedback. Feedback will enable you to consider how you came across and ensure you do a better job next time around. Every interview is a learning experience."

Gong says receiving feedback is extremely important for immigrant executives. For many recent immigrants, cultural nuances can cause confusion. If an immigrant is from a country where self-promotion is not as welcomed as it is in the United States, that person might not be as quick to detail his or her accomplishments in an interview.

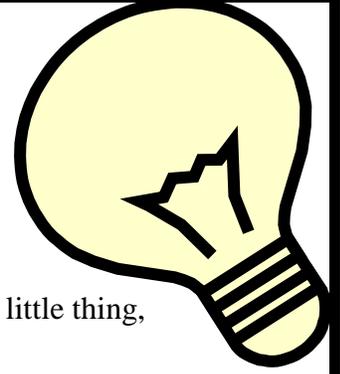
"I find that, often, immigrant minorities need to improve their interview skills," says Gong. She remembers interviewing a person who had recently immigrated to the United States. The applicant always responded to questions with one-sentence answers.

"That didn't mean they couldn't do the job. That meant they didn't realize elaboration was welcomed," says Gong. "When I'm hiring, I'm considering, 'Does a person take initiative? Does a person have commitment to learning, multitasking and technical skills?' Those skills may not be what other countries are looking for. So [recent immigrant] applicants need practice and to learn."

That may also mean learning about norms of dress. Gong once had to tell a young woman who was a recent immigrant from China that wearing knee-high stockings was not proper

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business attire. "In China, they wear stockings that are knee-highs. It's a silly little thing, but the little things turn people off," says Gong.

Find a mentor

Murphy suggests seeking out mentors and coworkers you trust to ask them for honest feedback on how you need to develop. Some questions to ask include:

What opportunities does this create?

Should you explore further education, approach the job differently, or expand your network?

"Sometimes it takes a disappointment to get someone to build those networks, to push someone to take career-pathing in their own hands," says Murphy. "It's an interesting exercise to have someone ask the question of 'In what role do you see me succeeding in this company?' It's really about being open to different opportunities."

Murphy adds that it can be challenging for executives from traditionally underrepresented groups to approach senior leaders who are different from them to ask if they'll be a mentor. He suggests seeking out employee-resource groups and development programs that pair senior leaders with mentees. If your company doesn't have a formal mentoring program or resource group, you might want to seek a mentor at an outside professional organization.

Consider a lateral move or involving yourself in projects outside your area

Executives who look to grow will take on extra responsibility, such as being a mentor, or will involve themselves in different projects. Also, don't be afraid of a lateral move that will further develop skills.

"Another way to grow and develop is by a less-linear move, by taking a lateral move," says Murphy. "Take on things that will exercise different muscles."

Gong says that taking on different responsibilities demonstrates an ability to drop the ego and learn. "I would rather hire a person who is intelligent, has commitment to learning and goes the extra mile and bring them in and teach them," says Gong.

Preventing Sick Leave Problems – Steps an Agency Can Take to Reduce Problems.

This article was written by Bob Gilson and posted in FEDSmith. Any references to "I" or "me" pertain to him as the author.

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The number one cause for employee discipline in the Federal sector results from problems related to leave. Arguably, the number one leave problem is sick leave abuse. This series of articles addresses issues managers and supervisors face in confronting sick leave problems in the workforce. In this part, we will look at some of the attitudes that may cause sick leave problems and some prevention strategies.

While the jury is still out on whether FERS will work as a viable retirement system for the Federal workforce, one aspect of FERS has had an unforeseen and many believe a major negative effect on management in agencies. The grinch on the Hill who developed FERS rejected CSRS' provisions encouraging the preservation of sick leave to enhance retirement benefits.

This decision has had a profound effect on the use and abuse of sick leave by Federal employees. In fact, the [Bureau of Prisons in a 2005 study](#) found substantial differences in sick leave use between these two categories of employees for no other identifiable reason. As a person recently promoted to senior citizen status (I now get cheap movie tickets), I would expect younger workers to have less sick leave use on average (excluding maternity leave reasons, of course).

It has become clear that most FERS employees (hired after December 31, 1983) consider sick leave as a use or lose proposition. They may be justified in doing so as while they may amass a bank of sick leave, they lose it upon leaving Federal service or retiring. These employees also look at their private sector counterparts who get a benefit often called "personal days" and rightly ask the question, "What's the Diff?"

The Diff

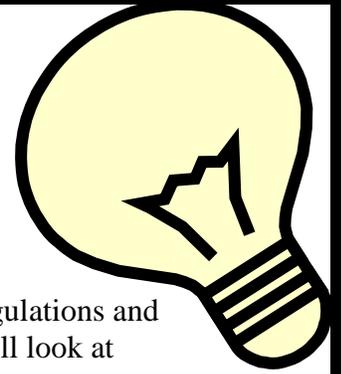
The law and regulations on sick leave are actually pretty clear, simple and readable. The U.S. House of Representatives tracks [Sick Leave Law](#) and GPO Access will give you [OPM's Regulations](#).

The law mostly leaves to OPM the determination of government-wide policy on granting sick leave and OPM is pretty strict about it. Primarily, sick leave is authorized for use by employees for their own medical appointments and for treatment and recovery from a non-job related illness or injury. The law and regulations allow limited sick leave use to care for family members, for adoption and to deal with a death in the family.

That's pretty much it. In addition, Agencies may require the justification of sick leave use by medical or otherwise administratively acceptable evidence. So the "Diff" is that

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unauthorized or improper use of sick leave may violate government-wide regulations and result in administrative or disciplinary action. In Part Two of this article, we'll look at identifying sick leave abuse. In the meantime, let's look at preventing problems.

Preventing Sick Leave Problems – Agency Steps

The importance of taking preventative action in reducing the potential for employee misconduct cannot be stressed enough but supervisors need help to prevent sick leave problems. The key ingredients are:

- Supportive management above them including the intestinal fortitude (frequently lacking) to back up necessary actions.
- Good employee relations advisors that can draft good quality suggested counseling memos, restrictions and discipline, if necessary.
- Sound agency policies that are readable, communicated to employees and consistently applied. Readable and useful are key words. Executives, take a look at your leave rules, I'll bet most of you can't make heads or tails out of them but even if you're a hardened Reg reader, most of you would agree they could be much more user (supervisor and employee) friendly.
- Creating, publicizing and supporting effective Employee Assistance Programs.
- Building effective internal public relations tools that gets out information on issues like the ones discussed here. Most agencies do good external PR but frankly lousy internal PR.
- Agency education and training programs that help supervisors identify and deal with these issues.

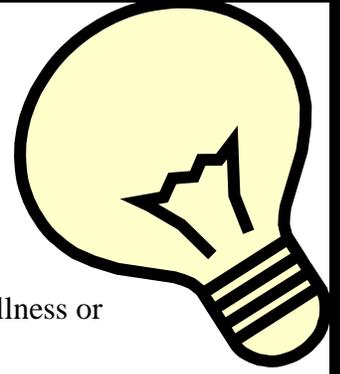
Preventing Sick Leave Problems – Supervisor Steps

Once the above are in place, supervisors can reduce or eliminate the potential for employee sick leave abuse on the front end with a few fairly simple actions. Take these steps and the likelihood of problems is small. In addition, these steps serve to lay the foundation for a sound case should corrective or adverse action become necessary:

Make sure you have a new employee checklist (not just for new hires but for anyone new to your unit) and make sure employees get a copy. The checklist should include clear

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procedures for employees to follow when they are absent from work due to illness or injury including:

Exactly how to report a necessary absence from work due to illness or injury. A requirement that the employee personally speak to the immediate supervisor or other designated and authorized individual within the first hour of their work shift or before if at all possible.

Exactly what to do if the supervisor is unavailable at the time the employee reports the inability to report to work including leaving a telephone number where they can be reached when the supervisor becomes available.

That the supervisor will monitor sick leave usage for each employee on a monthly or quarterly basis, and bring instances of above average or development of potential patterns of sick leave abuse to the attention of the employee(s).

When addressing attendance issues with an employee, emphasize the importance of the employee's work to the overall success of the organization and therefore, importance of the employee being at work.

Identify situations that will require medical documentation such as:

Absences over three days

Scheduled medical procedures, treatments or requirements that will require substantial use of sick leave (E.G., surgery, pregnancy, chemotherapy, radiation treatments, etc.) These situations are easily documented and should never be allowed to become problems.

Suspected sick leave abuse

That requests for approval to use sick leave for absences due to medical appointments or treatments must be requested and approved in advance.

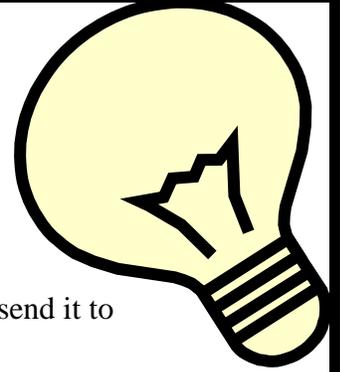
That you, the supervisor, will personally follow up with the employee by phone, letter, or personal visit in cases of extended, or inadequately or unexplained absences.

That employees experiencing medical problems should discuss them with you, the supervisor, but always with the Employee Assistance Program. Stress the employee's entitlement to privacy regarding any medical problem.

That you, the supervisor, will work with the employee to get through any medical problems they may encounter. But to do so, the rules must be followed.

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Go over the checklist personally with each new employee. A good idea is to send it to them by an email that schedules a discussion and invites questions.

Take a minute at staff meetings to stress any general concerns you may have but *privately* address individual issues *as they arise*. Go back and read this again!

Keep communication lines open. I believe alienation (supervisor from employee) is the most common reason managers give up on employees. Once you give up, their days as an employee working for you are numbered.

Make sure sick leave policies are administered and applied on a fair and consistent basis. Do not make exceptions! Making unnecessary exceptions undermines efforts to establish and maintain good attendance among employees and often results in a negative work environment.

Take the time to learn about the causes of employee absenteeism. Read up on substance abuse and remember that prescription drugs are a much bigger problem in the Federal workforce than illegal drug use.

Federal employees are, on the whole, the most solid of citizens. The vast majority wouldn't consider illegal drug use but that may not prevent them from falling victim to dependency on prescription medication. Also learn about depression and other illnesses that may be difficult to diagnose but cause real problems in the workplace.

In Part Two, we'll look at what is and isn't sick leave abuse including the identification of underlying causes of attendance problems that have a medical basis and in Part Three, some strategies to deal with this most complex of issues.

As always, any opinion expressed is mine and mine alone.

General advice on handling personnel problems may not be applicable to specific situations. Be sure to check with your servicing HR Specialist for guidance on your particular situation.

Buy and Hold: Does it Really Work? Should I Stick With it? Conventional wisdom says that the over the "long-term", stocks (TSP; C, S & I fund) outperforms alternative investment options such as bonds, certificates of deposit, real estate and gold. This is true not only in nominal terms, but also in "real" terms, or after inflation. Since 1926 the S&P 500 (TSP; C fund) has averaged approximately 10.40% annually in nominal terms and 7% in real terms. The key question is what exactly defines "long-term"? In the context above, long-term is measured by 82 years of market data, not the 20-30 years that most

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Federal Government employees will spend in retirement. The distinction is an important one, as we will see.

During the 20th century, the stock market experienced six distinct long-term or secular cycles. Three of them were bullish: 1920-1929, 1950-1966, 1982-2000 and three of them were bearish: 1901-1920, 1929-1949 and 1966-1982. With the exception of the 1920-1929 bull market, each cycle lasted between 16-20 years. The factors that caused long periods of below-average returns vary, but the common thread is that periods of excessive stock market gains were inevitably followed by long periods of below-average returns.

In a secular bull market (1982-2000) where stocks rise continuously, the “buy & hold” approach will yield superior returns. In fact, from 1982-2000, the stock market (TSP; C fund) gained over 16% annually, or 60% than the long-term average.

But how well does the “buy & hold” approach work in a secular bear market? During the last secular bear market from 1966-1982, the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost an average of 1.5% per year over 16 years in nominal terms. In “real” terms however, the cost of housing, food, clothing, transportation etc increased by a factor of eight during the inflation ravaged era of the 70s. In real-terms, a dollar put into the stock market in 1966 would only purchase 12 ½ cents worth of goods by the time it came out in 1982. This means the 1.5% annual nominal loss was really an annual loss of 12% in inflation-adjusted terms. Clearly, those kinds of losses would be devastating to anyone depending on their TSP for income in retirement.

The pressing question for today’s investor, especially today’s pre-retiree is “are we presently in a secular bear market”?

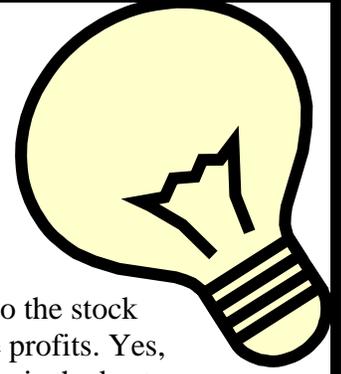
I’ll offer one more piece of evidence to help you reach your own conclusion and then I’ll suggest how you might manage your portfolio differently, so that the impact a secular bear market on your portfolio might be minimized.

Roughly speaking, the S&P 500 peaked at 1550 in March 2000, declined to the 800 level in March 2003 (a 48% decline) and then rallied to 1565 in October of 2007, before declining to its current level of 1250. Over the last 8 years the S&P 500 has declined over 300 points or about 20%. To repeat, had you bought and held the C fund in the TSP over the last 8 years, you would have lost 20% of your hard earned money, and that’s before accounting for inflation. This is compelling evidence that a long-term bear market began in 2000.

You must decide for yourself if 2000 marked the start of a long-term bear market but if you think there’s a reasonable chance, then you should have a plan for navigating this type of market going forward.

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The first thing to remember is that it might be time to reduce your exposure to the stock market especially in the face of a slowing economy and decreasing corporate profits. Yes, it's hard to determine if things will end up as badly as some suggest and when is the best time to sell (i.e. timing the market). However, "preservation" of capital in certain environments is may be more important to you than capital appreciation.

The solution to the problem is not as a complicated as you might think, as many of the basic tenants of investing still apply. Notably, during secular bear markets investors must do three things: diversify, rebalance regularly and practice proactive management.

The first step is to diversify your portfolio across multiple asset classes. In today's investment world though, diversification means much more than investing your assets in stocks (TSP; C, S & I fund), bonds, (TSP; F fund) and cash (TSP; G fund), it means looking to so-called "alternative" asset classes such as commodities, currencies, energy and real estate. Without examining the short-term merits of each asset class, we can confidently say that these asset classes have historically exhibited low correlation to the stock market. This means that as an asset class, alternative investments tend to "zig" when the market "zags" and vice-versa. As such, they help accomplish a very important goal – reduce risk and increase returns. Not year-in and year-out mind you, but certainly over time. Note: Given their propensity toward volatility, these alternatives should be limited to 20% of your portfolio.

Rebalancing is another critical element of weathering secular bear markets. Rebalancing is nothing more than systematically buying low, selling highin reverse! Investors should rebalance their portfolios annually on their anniversary, birthday or anytime of the year, as long as it's on a regular basis. The date isn't nearly as important as the process of selling one asset class that has appreciated to invest in a different asset class that has dropped in value. (Buy low, sell high). Some studies show that more frequent rebalancing doesn't add value after accounting for trading costs and taxes. So please keep this mind when managing non-TSP assets.

Lastly let's consider the art of "proactive management". Here the advice is a bit more subjective but the idea is to acknowledge that the buy and hold approach won't work if we are in a secular bear market. Therefore you must manage your TSP and other investment portfolios accordingly.

Proactively but not reactively changing your asset allocation is by no means "market timing". The "buy & hold" approach considers the nature of investor psychology and realizes that investors tend to sell when they should be buying and buy when they should be selling. One way to avoid the problem of poor market timing is to replace market timing with time in the market.

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Now the right way to proactively manage your TSP etc is to set parameters for your asset weightings. You should think of the parameters as ranges with minimums and maximums for each asset class (C, S, I, F, G). For example, if one were bullish on the economy and the stock market, they might opt to dedicate 80% of their TSP to the C, S & I fund and 20% to the G&F fund. This would be referred to as an "80/20" allocation. Alternatively, if one we're bearish on the economy and the stock market, they might opt to dedicate 50% of their TSP to the C, S & I fund and 50% to the G&F fund. This would be referred to as a "50/50" allocation.

Defining parameters in advance of reallocation choices, means you are making a conscience decision about the attractiveness of a particular asset class. Moreover, it helps you manage your emotions and provides a process for proactively reducing risk, when risk factors are high. Conversely, parameters give you the ability to think clearly and take advantage of opportunities when risk factors are low.

Don't forget that over the long-haul stocks have been a great asset class to own, providing excellent inflation adjusted returns along the way. At the same time, there have been relatively long periods where they have delivered sub-par returns. Having some sense of what type of long-term environment we're currently in should dictate whether "buy & hold" is the way to go or if you should consider a more proactive approach to managing your portfolio.

In the end, if we are in a secular bear market, those who diversify rebalance regularly, and practice proactive management will likely earn better returns than those who simply "buy & hold" and hope the market recovers before it's too late.

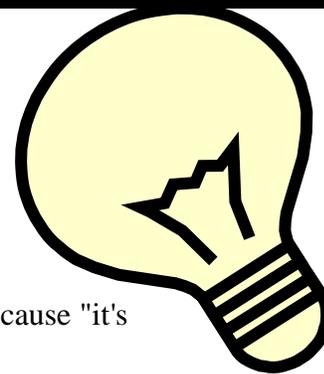
The New Open Door Policy. "My door is always open," managers often say to their employees. "Come to me with any problems."

Such a policy is well-intentioned, meant to convey the message that whatever is going on in the workplace, employees can talk to their bosses. There's nothing inherently wrong with that, but it's not enough. A common practice of good managers - in the private and public sectors - is to have another kind of open-door policy as well. They get up from behind their desks and walk out of their offices to see for themselves what's going on in the workplace.

Rather than simply expecting employees to inform them of situations, good managers observe their workplaces in action or check in with their employees. They walk around at least once a day to make themselves available to workers or to spot potential problems. Some don't seem worth an employee's while to bother a boss about with a visit, but those same problems are worth mentioning if a boss happens by. A manager might even see

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something that could be corrected easily but that employees just deal with because "it's always been that way."

Getting out in the workplace is especially important for managers who oversee operations that deal directly with citizens or clients, customers or taxpayers. You can't know what their experiences are like unless you see them for yourself. If their visits to your agency involve waiting, what are the waits like? How long do people have to sit there? What can they do while they're waiting? How do your employees treat them from start to finish? Do people leave your workplace smiling or fuming?

The small things matter both to employees and clients. But most people don't bother complaining about the small things. The work flow might be in-efficient because of some practice that's developed over time that you wouldn't know about unless you saw it happening. An area in the workplace may be perennially dirty, but would get cleaned if a manager made sure it did. A sour employee who's supposed to greet citizens might cheer up if he's told what a bad first impression he makes.

A store I go to frequently has a little café that I sit in while my wife shops. Overall, the store is fine. But the café is another story. Its workers are indifferent. It's usually out of at least one thing on the menu. Worst of all, it's always filthy. Last time we went, as with every time, there wasn't a manager in sight. There were, however, a host of flies. As I swatted them away, I was tempted to ask what the deal was, since they seemed to be the ones running the place.

Managers have two main jobs: Make sure employees have what they need to get the work done well and make sure the work gets done well. The former begets the latter. Encouraging subordinates to inform you of things they need to do a better job is a good idea. Asking them to report on their results also is a good idea. But finding out for yourself whether things could be improved is an even better one.

Confessions of a Federal Retiree. This article is written by Steve Oppermann. It was posted in FEDSmith.

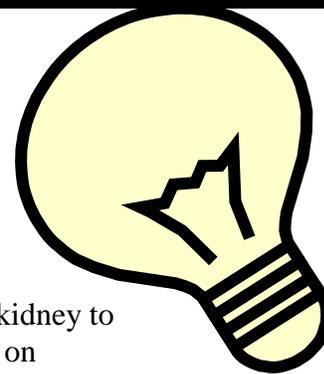
There are a few phrases that are likely to send cold shivers up one's spine, including "You're fired!," "The Internal Revenue Service will be auditing your last three tax returns," or "You have a nine centimeter tumor in your left kidney."

I was presented with the latter scenario by my physician in February, after undergoing multiple tests to determine the source of internal bleeding.

I promptly went to the Mayo Clinic website to see what I could find out. The good news was that living with one kidney was virtually identical to living with two kidneys unless

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the tumor has spread to other organs, nodes, etc. Due to the potential for the kidney to burst, which we quickly learned would not be a good thing, my wife insisted on scheduling the operation as soon as possible, which happened to be Valentine's Day. It wasn't Cupid's Arrow that pierced my chest but a scalpel wielded by a skilled surgeon. I recently read that, in the case of kidney transplants, when the donor's kidney is removed via laparoscopy, the procedure used in my case, the average time between surgery and return to work is 51 days, so I felt pretty good about the fact that I was able to go to work in an office less than six days after the surgery; I might have spent a few more days at home watching "Days of Our Lives" but I had a contract to fulfill and time was running out. I think being in good physical shape going into the operation was a major factor in how quickly I was able to bounce back.

I inflicted on readers in my last "retirement" article the details of my car accident on April Fools' Day 2007. I had noted in a previous article that in the 10 years since I had taken early retirement from the Federal government I had not been sick for as much as a single day. The 10 years ended on March 31, 2007, and I must have lost my "karma" by bragging about my virtually perfect health during that period, because the very next morning a driver ran a red light and nailed my car at a high rate of speed as I was entering the intersection, leaving me with a concussion and assorted other injuries.

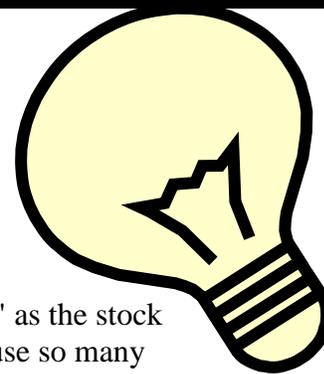
I had made significant progress in recovering from my injuries by the time I got the news about the kidney tumor, but the one-two punch served as an emphatic reminder that good health is not guaranteed to anyone. I had already watched in sorrow as family and friends had their lives changes by strokes, heart attacks, major illnesses and freak accidents, but I never really believed it could happen to me. Count that as another illusion shattered. I can't think of anything which would have more of a dampening effect on a happy retirement than being in poor health. Based on my experiences, I would reiterate my earlier advice to fellow retirees to get regular medical check-ups, to seek competent medical advice at the first sign of trouble (and to ask questions of your medical provider), to exercise regularly and to eat right (said the guy who consumes dark chocolate, and other junk food, at a Guinness Book of World Records pace).

As for health insurance, in addition to maintaining my Federal health insurance, I have taken advantage of the vision and dental insurance coverage which OPM finally started offering in 2007.

That brings me to the issue of finances, since running out of money would also rank high on my list of potential disasters associated with retirement. I mentioned in my earlier articles that *I had closed my thrift savings plan (TSP) in late 1999 and invested the money in a wide variety of dot.com companies, few of which exist today except in memory and in class-action lawsuits.* In doing so, I ignored the sage advice of the "Oracle of Omaha," Warren Buffet, to invest in what you know. Even today, I couldn't tell you what Cisco

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does, for example, but I bought it, and kept on seizing "buying opportunities" as the stock price fell, not because I had done my own "due diligence" research but because so many financial analysts (i.e., on CNBC) were recommending it.

Based on my own mistakes, I strongly recommend that readers keep a close eye on their

own financial situations. After I lost enough money in the stock market to keep me working for many more years, we turned over everything we had left to a certified financial planner/retirement expert. Given the underwhelming performance of the market over the last two years, we have continued to lose money hand over fist, only now a percentage of our retirement investments goes to the financial planners. If we win, they win, and if we lose, they win; I've got to find a job like that. We still have a nest egg, but now it looks like the egg was laid by a hummingbird.

With regard to financial advice that is specifically aimed at current and former Federal employees, I strongly recommend reading the GovExec.com columns written by regular contributor Tammy Flanagan. She is the senior benefits director for the National Institute of Transition Planning Inc., which conducts federal retirement planning workshops and seminars. The author's blurb says that Ms. Flanagan has spent 25 years helping Federal employees take charge of their retirement by understanding their benefits, and I think that experience, and her expertise, is obvious in all of her articles.

In my previous retirement articles, I also extolled the virtues of travel, and of doing it sooner rather than later, although I certainly recognize that there are differences in what people can afford to spend on vacations and a variety of other factors. Given my health setbacks in the last year and a half, I feel even more strongly about doing it now. I have actually followed my own advice with regard to travel. For example, in the fall of 2007, we and two other couples from Denver spent three weeks visiting Rome, Venice and the Greek Isles.

Rome was breathtaking! We were only there long enough to scratch the surface, but our itinerary included the Trevi Fountain, the Spanish Steps, and the Colosseum. We spent more than half a day on a guided tour of the Vatican by a former Boston College professor who had quit her tenured position to move to the Eternal City, and knew absolutely everything about St. Peter's Basilica, the Sistine Chapel, etc. The only problem: She was so tiny that if we lost sight of her for a minute we had trouble finding her again, even when she was waving her sign as far as possible above her head. Greece was another marvel, from the lovely, bone-dry islands of Mykonos and Santorini, with their rolling hills and distinctive white-washed buildings with blue trim, to the remarkable ruins of the Parthenon in Athens, and the island of Katakalon, site of the original Olympics, which barely escaped the wildfires that were scorching much of the

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country at that time. Yes, I did have to sprint a few yards for the photographic record. Then we got to tour the magnificent Olympia Archaeological Museum.

Perhaps most remarkable of all was the city of Venice. We were told that no ship larger than the Emerald Princess had ever sailed into Venice, and Venetians lined the bridges and walkways to greet us, smiling and waving. It is truly like no other place in the world, with its romantic gondolas navigating the canals, along with water taxis and water buses; the Bridge of Sighs and the Rialto Bridge; and the city's hub, Saint Mark's Square, featuring the Doge's Palace, the stunningly beautiful Saint Mark's Basilica, and virtually every pigeon not living in New York City. All of that and gelato, too!

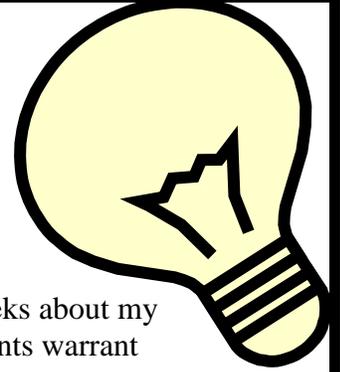
While the Euro was not our friend this time around, the trip, which combined history lesson after history lesson with magnificent scenery, was certainly worthwhile. I had also mentioned in previous articles how important I think it is for retirees to be engaged in activities about which they are enthusiastic. It may involve paid or unpaid work (i.e., there are always charitable organizations looking for volunteers), hobbies, or some combination thereof.

I had spent virtually my whole Federal career in human resources (HR) management, and enjoyed most aspects of that career field, from seemingly being in the middle of everything to having the chance to help managers, supervisors and employees. But during my Congressional Fellowship, and for the next nine years after that, I was heavily involved in the National Park Service's natural resources program. It was such a perfect fit for me that I could not wait to get up each morning and start working with my colleagues and with park managers and staff on issues related to identifying and preserving natural sounds. At the end of each day I felt that I had made a positive contribution to the national parks, and I felt very good about that.

I was fortunate enough to continue doing that work until roughly the end of 2003, when the program was reorganized, some key people retired or moved to other offices, and a conscious, and perfectly logical, decision was made to spend the program's very limited funds on force account employees rather than contractors. I have been working primarily as an HR consultant and trainer since then, with occasional opportunities to do natural resources assignments. I will continue to do the HR work, but now it appears I'll get the chance to do volunteer work with the park service's natural resources program, and I have resumed active involvement with the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees; the mission of the Coalition is to support the National Park System and the employees who carry it out.

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Since I have been contacted by so many FedSmith.com readers in recent weeks about my retirement articles that I've decided to write additional updates as developments warrant or as ideas that seem worth sharing occur to me.

Defer And Conquer. Married couples--especially remarried couples--might consider a qualified terminable interest property (QTIP) trust in their estate planning.

Suppose, for example, Walt Benson has a \$6 million estate. He might leave \$3.5 million to his children from a first marriage. The federal estate tax exemption is scheduled to reach \$3.5 million in 2009, so this bequest should avoid estate tax.

Walt might leave his remaining \$2.5 million to a QTIP trust for his second wife Ann, who will be entitled to all of the income from this trust, as long as she lives. Walt can give the trustee discretion to distribute other trust assets to Ann, for unexpected expenses. No one else can receive distributions from this trust during Ann's lifetime.

At Ann's death, the assets in the QTIP trust will go to beneficiaries named by Walt, so he can name his children. With this plan, the \$2.5 million that Walt leaves to the QTIP trust won't be subject to estate tax at his death.

Any assets remaining in the QTIP trust may be subject to estate tax at Ann's death, along with Ann's other assets. Thus, a QTIP trust can offer estate tax deferral as well as the ability to divide an inheritance between your spouse and other heirs.

For questions contact your personal financial advisor, an attorney, or an investment counselor. While we strive to provide the latest information, the expertise of the HR staff does not extend to financial planning.

Back Your Beneficiaries. Many estate plans include trusts that take effect after death. With any type of trust, it's up to the trustee to make decisions on distributions to the trust beneficiaries--the loved ones you want to provide for.

However, some trust beneficiaries will quarrel with their trustees. Often, the problems result from poor chemistry between the trustee and the beneficiary.

If you don't want your trust beneficiaries to be locked in to a trustee, you can specifically give them replacement powers when you create a trust. These replacement provisions may contain certain requirements. They might state, for example, that the replacement trustee must be a bank with so many million dollars of capital and surplus, or a corporate trustee in a certain state.

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Without such a power, your loved ones might be locked in to a situation you did not intend. With some removal powers, your beneficiary may receive more attentive service from a trustee, who'll know that a replacement is possible.

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Mix and Match. As divorces and remarriages increase, many American families include stepsons and stepdaughters along with children from second as well as first marriages. What tools are helpful in planning for yours-mine-and-ours families?

* QTIP trusts. Qualified terminable interest property (QTIP) trusts can provide lifetime income and access to principal exclusively to the surviving spouse, in return for estate tax deferral. When your surviving spouse dies, the trust assets go to the beneficiaries you have named--presumably your children rather than your spouse's.

* Prenuptial agreements. A prenuptial agreement can spell out which assets you're bringing into a marriage and which ones you want to keep as yours, free to pass on to other heirs. For a prenu to work, it must be valid. Both parties must have their own counsel and there must be full disclosure of assets on either side.

* Life insurance. If you've remarried and your new spouse is much younger than you are, she might outlive you for many years, during which time your other heirs (your children) may get relatively little, if you've set up a QTIP trust for most of your assets. Some of the shortfall may be offset by life insurance, so your kids will get an inheritance at your death.

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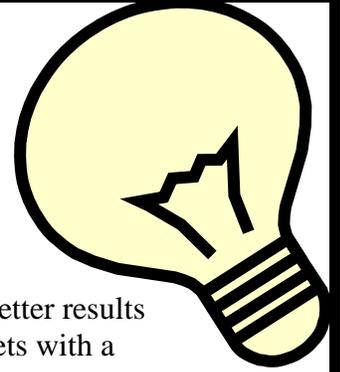
Charitable Thoughts. If your estate plan calls for making contributions to charity, some techniques for making such donations work better than others.

* Avoid giving cash gifts. Instead, make bequests from your IRA. If an IRA is included in your estate, all of the deferred income tax must be paid by your heirs, as money is withdrawn.

However, if you give away money in your IRA, you're giving away the tax obligation as well. You might, for example, make a \$10,000 charitable contribution with IRA money that's worth only \$6,000 or \$7,000 to your family, after-tax.

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* Most important, don't donate appreciated assets at your death. You'll get better results if you leave appreciated assets to your loved ones, who will inherit those assets with a step-up in basis.

Subsequently, if your heirs decide to sell those assets, they won't owe any capital gains tax on the appreciation that took place during your lifetime.

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Employee Engagement Prolongs Careers. Engaging retirement-eligible employees could help keep some retirement eligible employees on the job longer, the Merit Systems Protection Board has said.

It said that with one-third of the federal workforce estimated to retire in the next five to 10 years, agencies may want to consider augmenting recruitment efforts by working to improve or sustain the connections older employees have with their organizations, colleagues, or supervisors and managers.

MSPB is studying the relationship between engagement and employees' intention to leave agencies in a 12 month-window and it said retirement-eligible employees who are engaged have less intention to leave their agencies.

For example, over half of the retirement-eligible employees who said they were very unlikely to leave their agency reported being engaged, according to MSPB.

On the other hand, it said that less than one-third of retirement-eligible employees who said they were very likely to leave their agency reported being engaged.

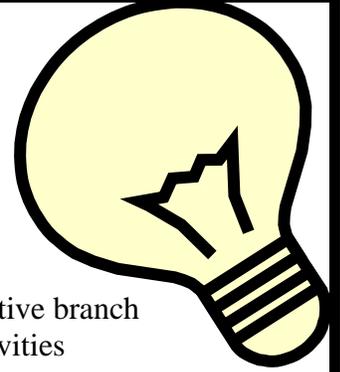
MSPB recommends maintaining a focus on the fit between a person and a job, effectively managing employee performance, embracing a competency-based approach to managing employees, and selecting first-level supervisors based on their supervisory-related abilities or potential.

More Performance Measures Do Not Translate to Greater Use. Despite an increase in performance measures since 1997 for federal programs, the use of those measures as reported by federal managers in decision making has not changed significantly over the past 10 years, GAO told the Senate federal financial management subcommittee recently.

The subcommittee held a hearing to glean lessons-learned for the next administration on using performance information to improve results.

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According to GAO's testimony, over the past 15 years, legislative and executive branch reform efforts have attempted to shift the focus of management from the activities themselves to actual results.

That caused a transformation in the capacity of the federal government to manage for results, including an infrastructure of outcome-oriented strategic plans, performance measures, and accountability reporting that provides a solid foundation for improving the performance of federal programs, GAO said.

However, agencies have made less progress in getting their managers to use performance information in their decision-making, GAO said.

For the collection of performance information to be considered more than meaningless paperwork exercises, it must be useful to and used by federal decision makers at all levels--including Congress, according to GAO-08-1026T.

It said that in order to get there, the next administration should promote three key practices: demonstrate leadership commitment to results-oriented management; develop a clear "line of sight" linking individual performance with organizational results; and, build agency capacity to collect and use performance information.

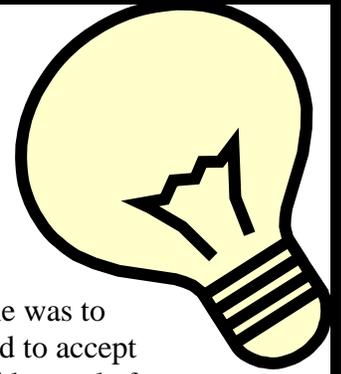
The next administration should also adopt a more strategic and crosscutting approach to overseeing government-wide performance; improve the relevance of performance information to Congress; and build agency confidence in assessments for use in decision making, GAO said.

Sleep Impairment a Disability Under Rehabilitation Act. On 1 July 2008, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit issued its decision in *Desmond v. Mukasey*, Case No. 07-5139. Reversing a decision on summary judgment by the district court, the D.C. Circuit held the claim that sleep disruption constitutes a disability under the Rehabilitation Act sufficiently meritorious as to survive summary judgment.

Desmond, the appellant, was an Ohio native who applied for the position of FBI Special Agent in December 1996. Desmond took a clerical job in the FBI's Cleveland office while his Special Agent application went through processing. In December 1997, Desmond was held at gunpoint in his home for an hour by the so-called "Tommy Hilfiger rapist," who robbed the house and repeatedly threatened to murder Desmond and rape Desmond's mother. Desmond escaped and ultimately helped the police catch the perpetrator. However, from this incident, Desmond developed symptoms of what would eventually be diagnosed as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which limited Desmond to only 3-5 hours of sleep per night, as well as irrational anxiety for his mother's wellbeing.

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The FBI offered Desmond an appointment to a Special Agent position, and he was to enter training in February 2000. As part of the appointment, Desmond agreed to accept assignment to any FBI field office and acknowledged that no transfers would be made for personal reasons. During training, Desmond pursued all permitted avenues to ensure that he would be assigned to the Cleveland field office, ultimately to no avail--he was assigned to the Chicago field office two months prior to graduation. After receiving his orders, Desmond's sleeplessness increased, such that he was only sleeping 2-4 hours per night, primarily based on anxiety related to impending separation from his mother.

The day before graduation, FBI managers decided not to permit Desmond to graduate pending a "suitability investigation" to be conducted by his training officer who had compiled a dossier denigrating Desmond's ability to perform. At the same time, the chief employee assistance program psychologist examined Desmond, finding that Desmond's PTSD was treatable and that Desmond would be able to perform. The psychologist's report was removed from the package of materials forwarded on to senior management in deciding the fate of Desmond. Although management initially decided to dismiss Desmond, they ultimately opted instead to deny Desmond a Special Agent position and to offer him a return to his old clerical post in Cleveland. Desmond resigned instead.

After exhausting administrative remedies, Desmond filed suit in federal district court, claiming disability discrimination under the Rehabilitation Act. Desmond alleged that he was "disabled" within the meaning of the Rehabilitation Act because PTSD interfered with his ability to sleep, which he contended constituted a "major life activity." Desmond argued in the alternative that FBI managers regarded him as disabled, and separately claimed reprisal for protected EEO activity. The District Court granted summary judgment on Desmond's discrimination claim; the retaliation claim went to the jury who found in favor of the FBI.

On appeal, the D.C. Circuit reversed as to the "actual disability" discrimination claim, but affirmed the decisions below as to retaliation and as to "regarded as disabled" discrimination. The D.C. Circuit held that "sleep" is a major life activity, and its impairment potentially constituting a "disability" under the Rehabilitation Act. The D.C. Circuit reversed the district court's holding that limitation to 2-4 hours of sleep per night could not constitute a "substantial limitation" on sleep, finding the level of impairment sufficient to constitute a question of fact for the jury. The D.C. Circuit rejected the argument that a "substantial limitation" in sleep was only limited to circumstances where lack of sleep affected waking life and waking work performance, noting that the limitation to sleep itself was sufficient in the context of "actual disability" discrimination (as opposed to a reasonable accommodation situation). The D.C. Circuit also held that

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Desmond's limitation was not limited to a specific geographic location (and thus not "substantial"), noting that sleeplessness persisted even when Desmond returned to Ohio while on leave.

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

Will You Still Need Me When I'm 64?: Designing the Age-Friendly Workforce.

This article was written by Michael Silverstein, M.D., MPH. and posted in the Occupational Hazards Newsletter.

Every year, more wrinkles are showing up at work as the 80 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964 are entering their 60s with many potentially productive years still ahead.

Whether we call it the baby boom, the Age Wave¹ or the Generational Storm², there are growing numbers of seniors at work. The trend toward earlier and earlier retirement seems to have ended, with more workers intending to stay employed, either full or part time, past traditional retirement age and well into their 60s and 70s.

As a result, the number and percentage of older workers will increase for the next 20 years. The median age of the civilian labor force is expected to rise from 35 in 1984 to 41.6 by 2014. The number of those in the workforce who are 55 and older will increase by 49 percent from 2004 to 2014. And their proportion will grow from 11.9 percent in 1994 to 21.2 percent by 2014.³

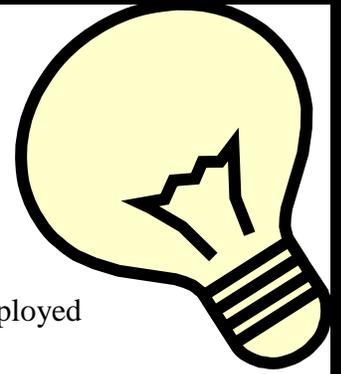
In some ways, senior workers will be our most skilled and productive employees, but in others, the most vulnerable. Employers who take steps to support the capabilities of older employees and to minimize their vulnerabilities will be rewarded by gains that include, but go well beyond, a positive impact on workplace injuries and illnesses. Returns on investments will show up as improvements in work ability, productivity, health care costs, competitiveness and sustainable business practices.

Getting Older and Working Longer

It is easy to understand why more workers are choosing to stay on the job longer. Sixty-five-year-old workers now expect to live another 20 years. For many, this is simply too long a period of reduced income and unstructured free time. Moreover, exorbitant health care costs make retirement prior to Medicare age a risky proposition. Even with Medicare, out-of-pocket costs can be extreme. In addition, private pension plans seem less secure than ever, and the age for full Social Security benefits is creeping up. The shift from defined benefit to defined contribution plans has reduced confidence about post-retirement income. Recent changes in social security and tax laws allowing more

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penalty-free post-retirement income provide additional incentives to stay employed longer.

The trend should be good news. After all, consider the alternative if more boomers were to retire early. Our “pay as you go” Social Security and private pension funds were designed with two critical assumptions. The first is that the contributions of a large, young workforce would support the needs of a smaller group of older retirees. The second is that retirees would be collecting their pensions for only a few years of remaining life. In 2005, every person 65 and older was supported by the contributions of five younger ones. By 2080, there will be only 2.5 younger people for every senior. And these older people may need income for 20 or more years of life after retirement. Along with this financing crisis is a tightening labor and skills market. The baby boom was followed by a smaller “baby bust” generation. From 2004-2014, the 55-and-older group will be growing at an annual rate of 4.1 percent while the annual growth rate of our 25-to-54-year olds will be 0.3 percent and the growth of 16-to-24-year-olds will be essentially flat. We face the possible loss of 60 percent of our skilled utility workers and 70 percent of our hospital caregivers, with inadequate numbers of young replacement workers available to fill in.

While the trend toward later retirement should be welcomed as partial relief from the financing and labor market squeezes, not all employers see it that way. Older workers, after all, are different from their younger counterparts. They consume relatively high wages and benefits. Their health care utilization for chronic disease management is high. And their reduced muscle strength, endurance, hearing, memory and reflexes might adversely affect their safety, health and performance. Fortunately, evidence shows that if employers anticipate their needs and provide a supportive working environment, the strengths and capabilities of older workers are likely to outweigh these potential problems.

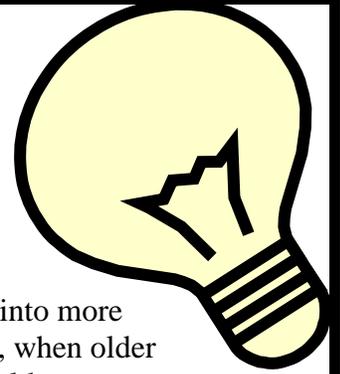
Older Workers are Different – Good or Bad?

None of us escapes the physical decline of aging. We all lose muscle strength, endurance, vision and hearing. Chronic illnesses like diabetes or high blood pressure become more likely with age. Certain mental functions decline, particularly for complex problem solving and multi-tasking. You don’t have to be very old to know the frustrating inability to remember names or difficulty in keeping multiple things in your mind at once. Just try to keep up with the automated customer service line that starts telling you “Press one for technical support, two for account balance, three for ...”

We might predict, and many employers believe, that these losses in physical and mental capacity make employees prone to costly error and injury as they age. However, this is not the case. Older workers have lower injury rates on the job than younger ones. Skills,

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experience and mature judgment have a lot to do with this, although moving into more desirable, safer jobs as workers gain seniority also may play a role. However, when older workers become injured, they lose more work time and experience higher health care costs than younger workers. Fortunately, there is much that employers can do to control these costs by creating and maintaining age friendly workplaces as described below. Older workers typically perform their jobs well. Except for certain jobs with unusually high mental demands like air traffic controllers, job performance does not decline with age. This may be partially due to senior workers selecting into work that matches their capabilities, but it also is true that older individuals often compensate for age-related losses with relatively age-stable skills related to experience and expertise. For example, older typists often can outperform younger ones despite their reduced reaction time and tapping speed because they have learned to scan ahead to anticipate the next words to type.

Senior workers tend to be especially motivated and reliable, with low absenteeism and presenteeism. These positive attributes easily can make the expense of relatively high wages and benefits worthwhile, especially when replacement costs are considered. An AARP/Towers Perrin 2005 study concluded “At the end of the day, the cost differential for leveraging 50+ talent can be overcome by the advantages of added experience, knowledge, skills and engagement ... 50+ may also contribute to higher productivity among other workers by transferring the knowledge gained over their careers and by mentoring new employees. The modest differences in annual compensation costs could easily be dwarfed by considerations such as these.” (See http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/econ/workers_fifty_plus.pdf.)

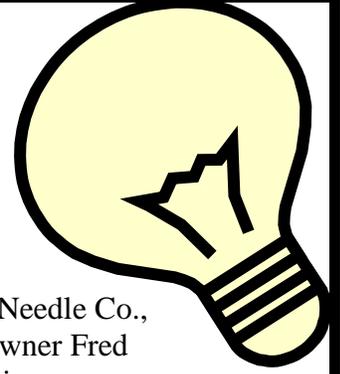
Programs That Work

While older workers can be as safe and productive as younger ones, this will not happen automatically. Employers can ensure it through supportive programs that take advantage of the strengths and capacities of age while compensating for its vulnerabilities and limitations.

However, most American employers have not yet chosen to do this. A 1998 AARP survey of 400 employers asked about several approaches for utilizing older workers (tailored benefits, part-time arrangements, educating managers about aging and skill training). Some 55 to 68 percent of employers recognized the value of these actions, but only 18 to 44 percent actually were implementing them. A follow-up survey in 2006 concluded “most business executives are generally aware that the U.S. workforce is aging and that many firms face the risk of talent shortages and significant knowledge loss ... However, few of these corporate leaders report that their own organization has taken steps to prepare for such a demographic shift ...”

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Companies that have taken steps have become ardent advocates. At the Vita Needle Co., a manufacturer of steel tubes and needles, the average employee age is 74. Owner Fred Harman said, “We continue to hire senior citizens because it makes good business sense. We’re not a charity. Our older workers have helped us build a strong company. It really works.”

Employers on AARP’s annual Best Employers for Workers Over 50 list are described as “Enlightened employers ... making strategic business decisions in addressing the needs of an aging workforce” and experiencing “big dividends in improving productivity and moral.” (See http://www.aarp.org/research/press-center/presscurrentnews/2006_best_employers.html.)

Winning programs take a comprehensive approach. They pay attention to the physical and mental demands of jobs and they deal with a broader range of issues that might impact performance. For example, many older workers are not ready to retire but feel the need for more control over their time and schedules. This often is magnified by family and health care demands such as caring for an ailing spouse or parent. Many older workers need the challenge of new roles and responsibilities.

Scientists in Finland have determined that an individual’s work ability is the integrated product of several individual, workplace and community factors.⁴ These include physical workload, rest/work schedule, flexible work schedules, teamwork, age-management skills for supervisors, physical exercise, risk factor reduction and worker skill building. Attention to these factors starting while workers are young will maintain high levels of work ability as they age.

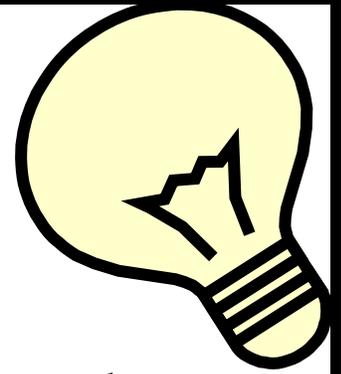
A Strategic Approach to the Aging Workforce

A successful program needs to accomplish four things. It will:

- Make sure that the physical and mental requirements of jobs match the capacities of older workers
- Address the full range of needs that older people bring to the job. This includes flexible options for making the transition to retirement and support for meeting family and community demands that might interfere with work.
- Begin to address aging when employees are young rather than waiting until later, ensuring that all workers maintain their physical and mental capacities as they age.
- Take advantage of the mix of generations, using older employees to mentor younger ones, thereby nurturing talent and transferring knowledge, skills and values.

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A successful program will have four strategic dimensions:

The work environment: Injuries and poor job performance are more likely to occur when work requirements exceed individual capabilities, a mismatch potentially more frequent among older workers. Workplace ergonomics and human factors engineering can reduce exposure to hazards so young workers can reach older ages without injury and older workers can continue work without further harm.

The general methods of workplace ergonomics to reduce physical stresses on the body and to fit the workplace to the worker include substituting mechanical for manual strength, reducing highly repetitive tasks, allowing adequate recovery time, reducing stressful postures and job rotation. For example, many workers above the age of 50 begin to have problems with balance. The principles of human factors and universal design can reduce the risk of injuries from trips and falls with hand rails along travel routes, housekeeping to reduce clutter, slip-resistant floors, repair of uneven or wet floors and the use of color contrast between stairway risers and treads.

Similarly, everyone's vision declines with age. There are practical measures to overcome problems with visual sharpness, color discrimination and depth perception: general lighting at intensities 50 percent greater than for younger workers; task lighting levels three times greater than general levels to help with fine-detailed, low-contrast objects; minimizing glare; placement of task lights to the side and in front of the worker to reduce shadows; increased contrast for stair edges and curbs; and high illuminance fluorescent fixtures to enhance color discrimination.⁵

While most jobs can be designed to fit most workers, it sometimes is necessary to provide alternate job assignments and retraining for workers whose physical capacities are so reduced that even modest strength or endurance is impossible and adjustments on the usual job are not feasible.

Work arrangements and work/life balance: Work schedules, supervisory relationships, decision control, communication and avenues for conflict resolution all can have an impact on the ability of employees to perform safely and productively. Factors affecting injury rates include levels of empowerment, delegation of control, labor-management relations, stress levels, grievance rates and job security.

There is a growing need for career paths, job designs, benefit and retirement options that take into account employee needs that change with age. For example, many employees are searching for alternatives to the traditional abrupt transition from full-time work to full-time retirement. The National Health and Retirement Study "has consistently shown that three out of every four older workers have said they would prefer to reduce hours gradually rather than retire abruptly" and that older adults are "increasingly interested in

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part-time opportunities and other activities to stay busy and productive with age.” Alternative job designs like flexible hours, job sharing, telecommuting or phased retirement may provide working environments that reduce job stress and enable safe and productive performance.

Individual attention to health promotion and disease prevention: Five chronic diseases that are more common with aging (heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic obstructive lung disease and diabetes) cause almost 70 percent of all deaths. Medical care costs are nearly two times more for employees with cancer, heart disease or diabetes than for those without disease, and these costs for 65-year-olds are four times those of 40-year-olds. Expenditures for employees at risk for these diseases – measured by blood pressure, body weight and cholesterol – averages over 50 percent more than for those at low risk. In addition, other chronic non-fatal problems of aging, such as arthritis or hearing loss, add enormous medical costs and disability.

Indirect costs – including absenteeism and low productivity, employee turnover and replacement – can be even greater than the cost of health care. A number of clinical services, particularly influenza immunization, colorectal cancer screening, mammography, cholesterol and blood pressure screening can prevent or delay disability from chronic conditions by as much as 10 years, especially when supplemented by not smoking, eating a healthy diet and moderate physical fitness .6

Social measures: Many daily living tasks become more challenging with aging and can interfere with successful job performance. For example, older workers who no longer can drive to work easily have greater needs for public transportation, car pools or telecommuting. Evolving family needs may become a significant distraction at work. For example, an employee may not be able to function adequately at work without knowing that the home health care needs of an older spouse are under control.

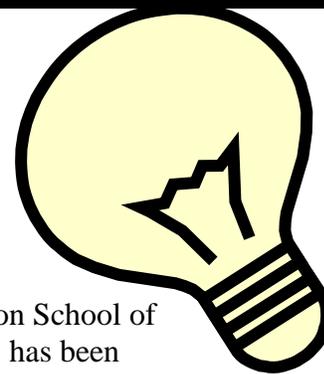
While some of these steps may be within the reach of individual employers (e.g. work-based car pools or elder care benefits), some must be addressed as broader social services such as improved access to health care, public transportation and laws to protect against discrimination.

Acknowledgment

While the author accepts full responsibility for the substance of this article, he would like to acknowledge that discussions and collaborative work with two groups of colleagues contributed substantially to developing the article’s themes and conclusions. The first group is the Institute of Medicine Committee on the Health and Safety Needs of Older Workers (David Wegman, Richard Burkhauser, Gary Burtless, Neil Charness, Paul Landsbergis, Charles Levenstein, Michael Marmot, Carolyn Needleman, Timothy Salthouse, Glorian Sorensen, Emily Spieler, Robert Wallace, Craig Zwerling and study

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director James McGee). The second group, from the University of Washington School of Public Health and the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, has been working with the author on a workshop for “Becoming an Age-Friendly Workplace” (Steve Hecker, Kate Stewart, Ken Scott, Rick Goggins, Lena Wang, Sharon Drozdowsky and Bruce Coulter).

Footnotes:

1 Dychtwald, K. See <http://www.agewave.com>.

2 Kotlikoff L., Burns S., 2004. *The Coming Generational Storm*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

3 Toossi M. 2005, November. Labor Force Projections to 2014: Retiring Boomers. *Monthly Labor Review*, 25-44.

4 Ilmarinen JE. 2001. Aging Workers. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 58(8), 546-52.

5 The Lighting Research Center, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, New York. <http://www.lrc.rpi.edu/programs/lightHealth/AARP/index.asp>

6 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2003. *The Power of Prevention. Reducing the Health and Economic Burden of Chronic Disease*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Benefits of a 4-Day Workweek. The Utah state government’s Aug. 4 implementation of a 4-day workweek could result in higher job satisfaction, lower levels of work-family conflict and increased productivity, revealed a new Brigham Young University (BYU) study.

Rex Facer and Lori Wadsworth of BYU’s Romney Institute of Public Management examined the outcome of Spanish Fork City’s transition to a schedule in which most employees work 4 10-hour days a week. Other Utah cities offering similar programs include Salt Lake, West Valley, Provo, West Jordan and Draper.

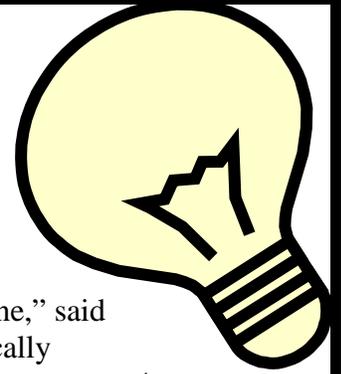
According to Facer, Utah cities embraced the new schedule to both save money on utilities and to give citizens a wider range of times to access city hall. Now they also are reaping the morale and retention benefits among employees who save on fuel costs by commuting 1 fewer day each week.

Workplace Satisfaction

BYU researchers found that even though 4-day workweek employees work the same number of hours as their traditional counterparts, they reported being more satisfied with their jobs, compensation and benefits, and were less likely to look for employment elsewhere in the next year.

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“I am hopeful that the state’s move to a 4-day workweek will be a positive one,” said Wadsworth. “There are going to be very real benefits for employees, specifically decreased gas cost, decreased commute time (both because they only have to commute 4 days, but also because they’ll be commuting during off-peak times, so the commute could potentially be shorter each day) and hopefully, improved work-life balance.”

Among the most significant findings was the 4-day workweek’s connection to conflicts between work and home. These employees were less likely to report that they come home too tired, that work takes away from personal interest and that work takes time they would like to spend with family. Other studies have linked work-home conflict with low job performance and lessened productivity.

“The challenges of balancing work and home lives have become much more complex,” Facer said. “Finding ways to better manage work-family conflict is important in building stronger organizations and satisfied employee bases.”

The study also showed that 60 percent of 4-day workweek employees reported higher productivity as a result of the new schedule.

Alternative Schedules

In 2004, Spanish Fork joined the ranks of other Utah cities that offer alternative scheduling to their employees. Unpublished findings from the researchers indicate that citizens are split evenly among support, neutrality and opposition to the 4-day workweek schedule. The program has continued to evolve since its inception in an effort to balance the complex and sometimes competing expectations of citizens. Within the last year, the city has reinstated Friday hours for some services.

Nine of Utah’s 15 largest cities offer some form of alternative work schedules to their employees, a trend that increasingly is prevalent across the county. Of these cities, the 4-day workweek schedule is the most common program, followed by a schedule that offers every other Friday off with employees making up hours in between.

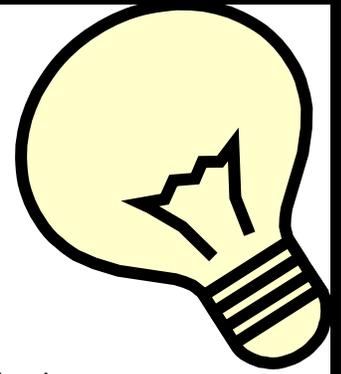
Facer adds that while the research shows some of the positive effects of alternative schedules, each city needs to evaluate its citizens, workforce and services carefully before and after adoption.

“Policies may need to be adapted to meet local needs,” he said. “Each city has to adapt to balance the very positive feelings the employees have about alternative schedules with the needs of the members of the community.”

The study appears in the June issue of *Review of Public Personnel Administration*.

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The NAF Corner:

The Family Medical Leave Act. For the average employee, the thought of having to balance work and care for a family member with a serious health condition can be very stressful. In fact, prior to the enactment of the Family Medical Leave Act (FLMA) of 1993, in many cases employees have had to choose between caring for a family member and maintaining employment. However, as a direct result of the enactment of the FLMA, employees no longer have to choose between work and family and the level of stress for many employees has reduced substantially.

In accordance with Army Regulation 215-3, all regular employees and regularly scheduled flexible employees in a continuing NAF position who have completed 12 months of NAF or appropriated fund (APF) civilian service are eligible under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to receive 12 administrative workweeks of leave without pay (LWOP) during a 12 month period. An employee may request the use of the FMLA under the following circumstances:

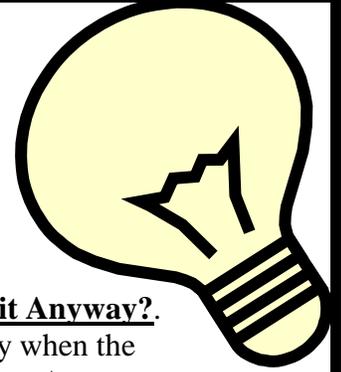
- the birth of a newborn child and the care of that child;
- the placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care;
- the care of a child, spouse, family member or parent who has a serious health condition; or
- for an employee with a serious health condition that renders them unable to perform the essential functions of their position. However, consistent with the current laws and AR 215-3, a regular employee may elect to substitute accrued or accumulated annual leave or sick leave for any part of the 12-week FMLA period.

In order for an employee to invoke the use of the FMLA, the employee is required to provide a 30-day written notice prior to the commencement date of the LWOP or accrued leave, except in instances where the need to take leave is not predictable and the required notice period is not possible. In addition, the employee is also required to support their request for leave by providing medical certification from the health care provider of the employee, spouse, child, or parent of the employee, as applicable. The amount of the LWOP or accrued leave approved must be consistent with the period documented by the health care provider. In instances where the 12-week FMLA period is due to the health of the employee, management may require a fitness for duty certification upon completion of the FMLA period.

For questions regarding employee entitlements under the FMLA, please contact the NAF Human Resources Office.

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The Selection and Release of NAF Employees – Whose Responsibility is it Anyway?

The selection and release of employees can be a frustrating process especially when the proper steps have not been taken to mitigate misunderstandings and confusion. A supervisor or designated selecting official who is tasked with selecting candidates for activity vacancies may provide selectees an indication as to when a selection will be made; however, the supervisor must abstain from informing the candidate of his/her selection decision.

Selecting officials shall not inform an employee in the current workforce or an external candidate of their selection or non-selection, but will notify the servicing NAF Human Resources (HR) Office in the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) of the final selection. In other words, the supervisor has the authority to make a selection, but that authority does not extend to making a firm commitment of employment. The job offer is accomplished by a representative of the CPAC NAF HR Office after the action has been reviewed for propriety.

In instances when an employee in the current workforce is selected for a vacancy, the NAF HR Office shall contact the employee to ensure he/she remains interested in the position. In the event the employee indicates interest, an HR Specialist/Assistant will contact the losing supervisor to arrange a release date. The CPAC representative will then advise the losing supervisor of the employee's selection and ensure the release date is pursuant to AR 215-3, which is normally no longer than the beginning of the second pay period following the notification.

Are Reference Checks Worth the Trouble? This article is written by Steve Opperman. It was posted in FEDSmith.

A recent article, "Overcome your past and land a job," on MSNBC.com caught my eye. The question that intrigued me was from a former employee of a private sector firm who had been fired for "sexual harassment." The basis for the question was that a potential employer, in doing a background check, was told that the person had been fired and why.

An attorney with whom the author of the article checked advised the questioner that "Since you were not convicted of a crime, your former employer has no right to tell anyone that you were fired for sexual harassment. There was no trial. There was just an accusation... That means, what your former employer is doing is 'totally defamatory and libelous.'" I questioned the "truthiness" (as Stephen Colbert of the Colbert Report would say) of that advice, but checked Black's Law Dictionary to validate my understanding of the terms defamatory and libelous.

Black's definition of defamation is "the act of harming the reputation of another by making a false statement to a third person." (emphasis added) If what the former

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employer was telling the potential new employer about the individual was true - the questioner admitted in framing his question that he had been fired for sexual harassment – I don't see how that response could be found to be defamatory or libelous.

While I think the attorney's advice was off-base, the article itself addressed an issue – reference checks – that I think is an essential part of the hiring process in Federal agencies, but one that is often neglected, misunderstood, or both.

If you are a supervisor, there are at least three ways in which you may become involved in the reference checking process – as a solicitor of information on a prospective employee, as a provider of information about a current or former employee, and as an applicant. In this article, I will focus on the supervisor as the reference checker. My rationale for encouraging selecting officials to check a potential employee's references – and I use the term here in the broad sense, meaning not just people the applicant has identified as references but also present and former supervisors and present and former co-workers – is that most of the selection process is based on the applicant's self-evaluation, such as in documenting experience, education and training on the application for employment and in addressing the knowledges, skills and abilities (KSAs) identified in the vacancy announcement as being critical to successful performance in the job being filled.

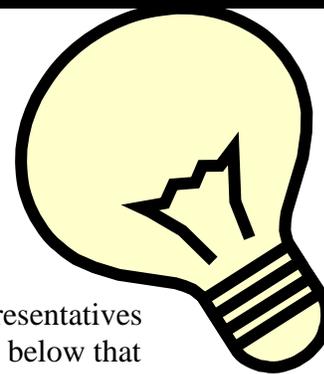
The job interview process allows for interaction and the selecting official can ask all best-qualified candidates to answer a series of job-related questions, but, as industrial psychologist Tom Janz found, the best predictor of future performance is past performance in similar circumstances. And the best way to assess that past performance is by talking to people who are familiar with the applicant's work and behavior, such as current or previous supervisors, as well as co-workers.

If reference checking is really an important part of the selection process, OPM would have published guidance for agencies on how best to do it. Right? Well, no, and most agencies haven't issued such guidance either. But fortunately, the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) has helped fill the breach. In a September 2005 report titled "[Reference Checking in Federal Hiring: Making the Call](#)," MSPB addressed this complex and multi-faceted issue thoroughly and provided to the President and the Congress some very useful findings and recommendations.

One major recommendation was for agencies to use OPM Optional Form (OF) 306, Declaration for Federal Employment, early in the selection process. While MSPB said that by applying for positions individuals give "implied consent" for the agency to do reference checks, the OF-6 explicitly gives the agency permission to do so. The form contains the following statement in a section titled "Certifications/Additional Questions": "I consent to the release of information about my ability and fitness for

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Federal employment by employers... and other authorized employees or representatives of the Federal government.” The applicant has to sign and date the form just below that paragraph. MSPB also encouraged agencies to document in their vacancy announcements the fact that there will be reference checks.

MSPB’s extensive review revealed a great deal of inconsistency among agencies as to the practice of reference checking, and observed that many agencies have no reference check strategy and provide little or no training to the employees who are checking references.

Among the other problems MSPB documented was that reference checking raises legal concerns in the minds of some selecting officials and others involved in the process. MSPB noted that “A recurring misconception among those asked about reference checking is that discussing performance or job-related behavior of an employee is not legal.” The report went on to provide assurances that it is “legal to request information about an applicant’s past job performance,” noting that reference checkers “in general have a qualified immunity against charges of invasion of privacy so long as they restrict their inquiries to job-related issues.”

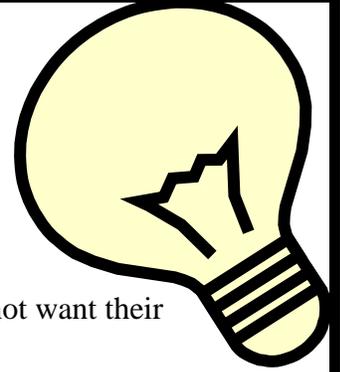
Litigation, mainly in the private sector, has “spooked” a lot of organizations and officials who would be asked to provide information about a candidate. For example, if you are checking references on an employee who worked in the private sector, you are very likely to be referred to Human Resources (HR) and that office is probably only going to confirm that the applicant worked there, the time period involved, and possibly the position(s) held. It is usually easier to acquire background information in the Federal sector, although former supervisors may be reluctant to provide negative information about a candidate if they think that person might be able to access their comments.

Another situation you may run into as a reference checker is a “clean record.” The MSPB report noted that “A ‘clean record’ generally refers to an employee’s official employment record that has been altered in a manner favorable to the employee as a result of a settlement agreement between the employee and an employer.” Often, such a settlement agreement is reached after an agency has taken action against an employee, up to and including removal, and the employee has filed an appeal, grievance or EEO complaint. In many cases, the settlement agreement provides that all reference checks on the employee are to be funneled to one specific official, usually in the HR office, and that official is authorized to provide only the most basic information about the employee, such as employment tenure and position(s) held.

You may also run into such issues as a former supervisor’s refusal to provide any information on a candidate or the applicant stating that she/he does not want the agency to check with his/her current supervisor. You cannot “force” a former supervisor to

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provide relevant information, and it is understandable that applicants might not want their supervisors to know they are seeking other employment.

However, the “bottom line” for me, when I was a selecting official, was that I would pass on a candidate unless I could gather enough reference information about the prospective employee to be comfortable that I was making the best possible selection. And unless the candidate was already on my staff, I would always do a reference check. So, answering my own question, I strongly believe that reference checks are worth your time and trouble as a selecting official. I think the risk you take by not doing them thoroughly and effectively is making a bad hire. As always, I recommend that you get advice from your HR staff, and, if you have legal questions, that you talk to your Counsel’s office.

General advice may not be applicable to specific situations. Be sure to check with your servicing HR Specialist for guidance on your particular situation.

Human Resources (HR) for Supervisors Course. The updated HR for Supervisors Course incorporates instruction applicable to the National Security Personnel System (NSPS). The course is 4.5 days long; includes lecture, class discussion and exercises; and, is designed to teach new civilian and military supervisors of appropriated fund civilian employees about their responsibilities for Civilian Human Resource Management. New supervisors completing this course do not need to complete the 2-day NSPS Course for Supervisors unless they determine the need for additional training.

Course dates are highlighted below. Course registration information will be disseminated not less than 3 weeks from the course start date.

15 – 19 September 2008
1 - 5 December 2008
2 - 6 March 2009
1 - 5 June 2009
14 – 18 September 2009

The instruction includes the following modules:

- Introduction of Army CHR which includes
 - Coverage of Merit System Principles and Prohibited Personnel Practices
 - CHRM Life Cycle Functions
 - Operation Center and CPAC Responsibilities
- Planning
- Structuring – Position Classification
- Acquiring – Staffing and Pay Administration

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- Developing – Human Resources Development
- Sustaining – Performance Management, Management Employee Relations, Labor Relations
- Equal Employment Opportunity

This instruction does not cover supervision of non-appropriated fund (NAF) or contract employees.

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 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

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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.

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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