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How human capital fuels mission success

Understanding transparency and vulnerability are keys to building a better stronger workforce

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In today's world, there are more challenges than ever facing those who manage the federal workforce.

These include the process of managing and staffing during a pandemic, the adjustment to a work-from-home lifestyle, and the large exodus from government, due in part to baby boomers retiring and positions not being backfilled.

Another challenge is the mix of experience levels in upper-level management positions, which in turn leads to a loss of institutional knowledge and human capital management expertise.

Regardless of a changing landscape or difficult times, the critical need remains for agencies to recruit effectively for open positions, develop team members' skills and achieve optimized workforce operations for continued mission success. Effectively optimizing your workforce enables individuals to be more efficient while also focusing operations on the overall agency mission.

Success Profile

A "Success Profile" provides a unique approach to supporting government in workforce development. It gives agencies a 360-degree look at an individual's hard and soft skills as well as their past experience and work. Also, once your team understands the agency as a whole, the Success Profile allows you to guide questions and deliver the correct people for each contract or job. There are many must-haves an agency can utilize in order to develop greater mission success over a period of time. The Success Profile strategy is not an overnight resolution but a process that should be developed and curated. Three primary must-haves are understanding, transparency and vulnerability.

Understanding

Fully understanding your division's or agency's specific needs is critical in this process. Get to know the elements beyond the job descriptions and technical skills on paper. Learn elements such as organizational and team culture, leadership styles, communication methods, the intersection of functions and more. Understanding your agency, its internal customers and their needs is vital, specifically because the soft side of the candidates' skills, and how the teams are balanced, are perhaps the most important factors in designing an effective operational team. If a candidate doesn't match with the environment and overall agency culture, that imbalance can reduce the likelihood of mission success.

Typically, high-performing individuals in an organization exhibit similar characteristics. Therefore, review your current team members, especially the recent hires, who have excelled in their position and within your agency culture. Also, see which high-performing individuals have stayed long term. These insights will give you additional clues as to the correct profile required for future hires.

Transparency

Transparency is key to developing relationships and job placements. Focus on customer competencies and match them with those who fit the puzzle pieces. This can be done in many ways, including by conducting a simple interview, going over a resume and looking at background work. To get more specific, you can gain insights such as the length and variety of the candidate's work history with certain agencies, specific contracts on which he or she has worked, their main areas of responsibility, and pace of advancement.

One topic that gets overlooked is the individual's personal interests, beyond work. What drives their interest? What do they do for hobbies and for fun? What charities or causes have they supported? Finding out who the candidate is as a person and where their interests lie will give you a fuller view of who they are and how they relate to the world. Social media is a great asset in researching these data points, as many individuals share openly and post regularly on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other channels.

You may also find on these channels comments about what prospective new team members have shared about current and past jobs, fellow team members and even bosses. This information will give you much greater understanding for whether to place that person in your organization, and if so, in what position they may be most efficient.

Vulnerability

Admitting there is an issue and discussing how you can alter your course of action is a massive step in the Success Profile process. Admitting to the problems or issues at hand will allow your team to make changes quicker and with a more committed approach. Be aware and be proactive.

Change will not occur overnight. Trust the process and stay committed to the journey while focusing on the positive changes that the Success Profile approach will bring to your agency's mission success,

strategically and logistically. Don't give up early on or as soon as you have a notion that "this isn't working" – stick with it!

Within federal agencies, certain departments and leaders have policies to which they need to adhere. Make sure to acknowledge these guidelines, but also work to adjust policies for the better. Have the difficult conversations with leaders and be an agent of change for the betterment of the agency.

An Optimized Workforce

As government continues to evolve to meet the needs of our citizens and national security, building the best government team for the future is imperative for the smart and effective functioning of our federal agencies. By following an approach such as the Success Profile, government managers will not just build a team, they will build an optimized workforce to support mission success across the federal spectrum.

As you work closely with your internal teams to understand the needs for team member matches, make sure to also have an eye toward the future — address what the team needs today and tomorrow. This will provide you with essential insight when matching candidates. Listen to your candidates, listen to your internal customers, and take the time and match the pieces. Your effort will ultimately lead to greater mission success for your organization.

If you hire based on these topics and work with your internal team members to understand what they need on a daily basis, specifically in regard to challenges or problems, the managing process will be simplified and allow you to adjust and work around any challenges. Better understanding leads to better workforce development, which ultimately leads to better mission success.