



# POST AND PURSUE

Improving federal hiring using data and targeted recruitment

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PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

LinkedIn®

The Partnership for Public Service is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works to revitalize the federal government by inspiring a new generation to serve and by transforming the way government works. The Partnership teams up with federal agencies and other stakeholders to make our government more effective and efficient. We pursue this goal by:

- Providing assistance to federal agencies to improve their management and operations, and to strengthen their leadership capacity
- Conducting outreach to college campuses and job seekers to promote public service
- Identifying and celebrating government's successes so they can be replicated across government
- Advocating for needed legislative and regulatory reforms to strengthen the civil service
- Generating research on, and effective responses to, the workforce challenges facing our federal government
- Enhancing public understanding of the valuable work civil servants perform

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with over 500 million members in over 200 countries and territories around the globe. The company's mission is to connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful. When members join LinkedIn, they get access to people, jobs, news, updates, and insights that help them to be great at what they do.

# INTRODUCTION

In this time of tight budgets and the Trump administration's call for workforce reductions, it is more critical than ever for agencies to fill vacancies with the most highly skilled and qualified individuals available. However, the cumbersome federal hiring process can be a deterrent for agencies attempting to bring top talent into public service.

In an annual federal survey, a large number of employees responded that government is falling short when it comes to recruiting the best people. Only 41 percent of federal employees said their agencies and work units were recruiting individuals with the right skills, according to the 2016 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government® rankings compiled by the Partnership for Public Service.

The Partnership and LinkedIn set out to understand how agencies can overcome the hiring barriers through the use of data analysis and targeting—also known as data-driven recruitment—to recruit talent more effectively.

Through interviews and workshops with agency human resources staff and human capital managers, we identified three key elements for improving hiring: using data to find talent; encouraging collaboration between hiring managers and human resources staff; and relying on special hiring authorities.

# TALENT SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Using data like this, agencies can get better and faster at targeting their recruitment efforts and hiring qualified talent.

## FEDERAL CYBERSECURITY PROFESSIONALS

Cybersecurity professionals are critical to safeguarding federal systems and information.



# 8,402

federal cybersecurity professionals were hired in fiscal 2016

### STATES WITH THE MOST CYBERSECURITY HIRES IN FISCAL 2016

Washington, D.C. 1,108

Maryland 1,085

Virginia 1,048

California 570

# 405,190

cybersecurity professionals listed on LinkedIn in 2016

# 20,000+

of those professionals were located in “hidden gem” areas, or markets with a high number of professionals and lower competition

### HIGH COMPETITION AREA



**Washington D.C.**  
39,645 Professionals

### HIDDEN GEM AREAS



**Los Angeles, CA**  
12,800 Professionals  
**Baltimore, MD**  
8,900 Professionals

Data can help a recruiter know where to search, how to search, and help inform the evaluation of applicants for a position. Insights on supply and demand for a certain type of talent, for example, can inform an agency's recruiting strategy. A recruiter may find that their local talent markets are high demand and decide to focus on searching for or developing internal talent. Or the agency may emphasize relocation benefits in a job announcement to attract talent interested in moving from hidden gem areas.

## FEDERAL AUDITORS

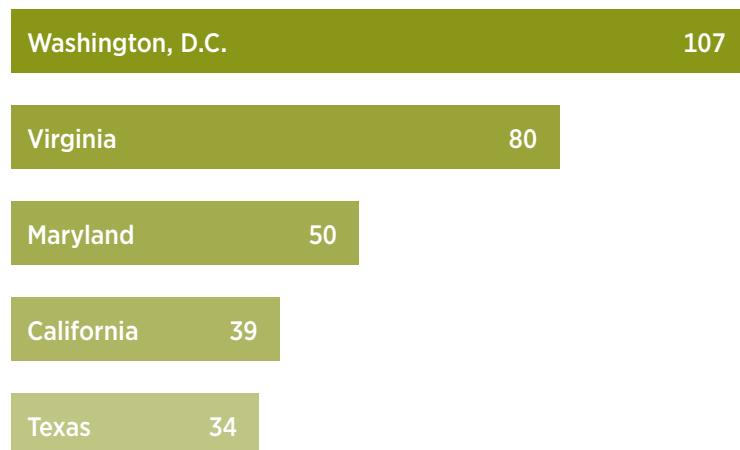
Auditors are critical to ensuring that government delivers results efficiently.



# 562

federal auditors were hired in fiscal 2016

### STATES WITH THE MOST AUDITOR HIRES IN FISCAL 2016



# 171,000

audit professionals listed on LinkedIn in 2016

# 12,000+

of those professionals were located in "hidden gem" areas, or markets with a high number of professionals and lower competition

### HIGH COMPETITION AREA



**New York, NY**  
18,000 Professionals

### HIDDEN GEM AREAS



**Washington, D.C.**  
6,900 Professionals

**Houston, TX**  
5,400 Professionals

**Methodology:** Competition is calculated using the number of messages sent by recruiters per LinkedIn member. Higher demand means that professionals are receiving more contact from recruiters than peers in other areas.

**Source:** Partnership analysis of FedScope data; LinkedIn

# IMPROVING HIRING THROUGH DATA-DRIVEN RECRUITMENT

Teams using analytics are

**2x**

more likely to improve their recruiting efforts

**3x**

more likely to realize savings and gains in efficiency

With millions of users to draw from, sources such as USAJOBS and LinkedIn can provide a large amount of data to help find talent.

**500,000,000+**

users on LinkedIn

**6,000,000+**

users on USAJOBS

Source: LinkedIn, "Data Driven Recruiting", Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1ZZQ6es>

## USE DATA TO FIND TALENT

### TALENT POOL

A collection of qualified employees and potential applicants that an organization can draw on to fill a position.

The traditional federal hiring process typically involves "posting and praying," that is, posting a job announcement and waiting for resumes to come in. This way may satisfy basic requirements and regulations, but is not an effective way to hire top-quality talent. "If you only expect to reach your audience via USAJOBS, you're missing a huge opportunity," said Michelle Earley, program manager for the Office of Personnel Management's jobs website.

Rather than hoping good applicants somehow come across online job listings, agencies could use data to significantly improve their chances of hiring the best talent. The insights agencies glean from good data can help them identify and locate qualified candidates, enabling human resources personnel to actively pursue them.

Organizations such as LinkedIn and OPM, through its USAJOBS site, compile massive amounts of data on employees and job seekers, and make the information searchable. Agency recruiters can find candidates based on keywords in their resume or profile, and target the search using filters such as geographic location, professional experiences, skillsets, or particular colleges and universities.

## SUCCESS STORY: DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

The Department of the Interior takes advantage of the USAJOBS data. Interior, responsible for maintaining and protecting federal lands and natural resources, employs more than 70,000 people across all 50 states and six territories. Hiring can be challenging for such a dispersed workforce operating in a decentralized structure. So Martin Pursley, director of talent management, makes sure the department focuses on data for workforce planning and recruiting.

Recently, the department's National Park Service was having difficulty hiring a pilot and turned to a USAJOBS resume mining tool to research talent pools. The pilot job required applicants to have law enforcement responsibilities as well as aviation experience. Initially, the agency could not find any applicants with what appeared to be a

relatively novel combination of law enforcement and aviation experience, along with the necessary certifications.

The hiring team took a step back. After reevaluating the agency's needs, the team determined it was more important to find a trained pilot than someone with a law enforcement background. Team members figured the agency could always train licensed pilots—the higher priority for this job—in law enforcement skills. They refined their search criteria and found they could quickly identify candidates with skills and experience as a pilot. If the National Park Service had simply posted an announcement requiring aviation and law enforcement experience, it is likely the position would have stayed vacant for much longer.

# ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION

Data-driven recruitment requires more than just combing through numbers and information. For organizations to recruit effectively, hiring managers and human resources staff must collaborate regularly. This includes communicating about the specific skills an agency needs for a particular position, and having ongoing conversations about where the data leads and what talent is available.

When hiring managers and HR staff don't collaborate, it can lead to miscommunication and misunderstandings over job qualifications, search criteria and the standards for assessing candidates. "Many times HR and hiring managers are talking past each other," said OPM's Earley, and that can lead to hiring delays. According to OPM, "when hiring managers and human resources professionals engage in collaboration during the hiring process, they improve their hiring outcomes."<sup>1</sup> The process becomes much more efficient when hiring managers and HR staff align their efforts.

### COLLABORATION MEANS...

#### For human resources:

- Meeting with hiring managers before the recruitment process begins, to discuss the specific skills a position requires
- Researching and refining the target talent pool using data analysis tools
- Continuously meeting with hiring managers to refine the outreach strategy

#### For hiring managers:

- Identifying the critical competencies needed in the job
- Ensuring the position announcements that are posted are accurate and up-to-date
- Providing feedback on the search criteria used to find candidates

<sup>1</sup> Office of Personnel Management, "Hiring Excellence: Focus Areas", Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2oadJHW>

**MYTH**

Hiring managers should refrain from getting too involved in their hiring actions to avoid any appearance of impropriety in the hiring process.

**TRUTH**

According to OPM, there are many ways that hiring managers can and should be involved in the hiring process to help ensure a successful outcome.

**MYTH**

Inviting people to apply for job openings violates Merit System Principles

**TRUTH**

According to OPM, there is no statute or regulation that says you cannot invite people to apply for your job openings. Use your contacts and networks to spread the word about your job opening.<sup>2</sup>

## SUCCESS STORY: DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

In 2015, the Air Force launched a data-driven recruitment strategy to hire 80 people for its Long-range Stand-off Cruise Missile program. Program hiring had paused due to budget cuts and a corresponding delay of three years. When the budget was restored, the program executive officer, Major General Scott Jansson, wanted to hire people quickly. To tackle the hiring challenge, Jansson connected Kenneth Pickler, the missile program's lead financial manager, with Michael Brosnan, who leads the Air Force Civilian Service's talent acquisitions out of the Air Force Personnel Center—the personnel management office for the department's uniformed and civilian workforces.

Together, Pickler and Brosnan and his team began filling the many vacancies in the program, using LinkedIn data. "More than half of our positions were vacant when we were told to start hiring—48 of the 80 positions that we were authorized for were vacant when we started this journey," Pickler said.

When Pickler and Brosnan began their search, they found themselves repeatedly reviewing lists of candidates who did not have the relevant experience and training needed for the program. Once team members started using data-driven recruitment, they were able to tailor job postings for the specific skills needed, define what

type of candidate they were looking for, identify and rate profiles, and proactively reach out to candidates.

Partnering with hiring managers is especially critical when recruiting for hard-to-fill positions, according to Eileen Chaisson, one of the recruiters on Brosnan's team. Instead of posting job announcements and hoping the right people will notice them, Chaisson meets with hiring managers to determine the best search terms they can use to filter the data and target a particular talent pool. The team uses specific industry terms that potential candidates are familiar with, and lists the required qualifications and certifications in the announcement.

As potential candidates are identified, hiring managers rate candidates on a three-point scale: good, great or ignore. Chaisson sends a direct message to those "great" candidates, inviting them to apply for a position. One candidate who wasn't actively searching for a new job, was so impressed when he heard from her that she said he told her, "If you're doing this stuff just to hire people, I want to come and work for you."

What mattered most to Chaisson was that "the talent pool was larger because of our efforts." The targeting strategy sped the Air Force's ability to find high-quality talent quickly, Brosnan said, enabling the team to "shave three weeks off the hiring process."

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<sup>2</sup> Office of Personnel Management, "Federal Recruitment Myths and Truths", Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2iojaQF>



# TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIRING AUTHORITIES

To realize the full potential of data-driven recruitment, agencies must also use all the hiring authorities at their disposal. In a 2016 report, the Government Accountability Office found that in fiscal year 2014, hiring managers used just 20 hiring authorities of the more than 105 that are available to them.<sup>3</sup> Some of them are specific to particular agencies, but many of these authorities are available to all departments and agencies.

The Veterans Recruitment Appointment, for example, allows agencies to hire eligible veterans outside of the competitive hiring process, up through the GS-11 level. In another example, Schedule A is a government-wide direct hire authority that allows agencies to fill critical positions without going through the competitive hiring process when there is a shortage of qualified candidates to meet a hiring need. By not using all the hiring authorities at their disposal, agencies are missing out on opportunities to hire more efficiently. Too often, however, agencies do not know about many of these existing authorities.

## SUCCESS STORY: DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

In addition to the dozens of people the Air Force had to hire for its cruise missile program, it also had to fill 180 vacancies in its Global Strike Command's Nuclear Command and Control Center. The department was able to use direct hiring authority for 80 cybersecurity positions, and it combined that tactic with data-driven recruitment to hire people quickly.

Brosnan and his team planned a job fair and used LinkedIn recruiting tools to identify and market the jobs to the appropriate talent pool. They then extended invitations to those potential candidates and invited the hiring managers as well. Brosnan's team conducted interviews at the event and made provisional offers on the spot, relying on the direct hiring authority to bypass many of the steps involved in the competitive hiring process. While at the job fair, "we made 26 tentative offers," Brosnan said. A firm offer depended on the outcome of candidates'

background checks, so not every offer led to the hiring of a new Air Force employee.

Agencies also can use data and targeting when recruiting for a competitive hire. Under these civil service positions, which are open to all applicants, hiring relies on thorough evaluation of candidates' education, technical knowledge and experience.<sup>4</sup> "Even when it comes to hiring traditionally, through the competitive hire process with positions posted on USAJOBS, we can still use the same tools to attract candidates," Brosnan said. Instead of collecting resumes, however, the department directs candidates to its USAJOBS announcement. "We still own the front part of driving candidates to vacancy announcements," he said.

Interior's Pursley echoed this approach. "The key is that we reach out to brand our agency and encourage folks to consider us," regardless of the hiring authority.

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<sup>3</sup> Government Accountability Office, "Federal Hiring: OPM Needs to Improve Management and Oversight of Hiring Authorities", Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2kpWLjV>

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<sup>4</sup> Office of Personnel Management, "Hiring Information: Hiring Authorities", Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2kSwJJf>

# CONCLUSION

It often is not effective for agencies to post job announcements and “pray” the right people will see them and apply. Agencies that use data and actively pursue candidates can improve their hiring processes. By bringing federal recruiting into the 21st century, agencies can make government as innovative and effective as the private sector at hiring the best talent.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information on LinkedIn Recruiter  
<http://bit.ly/1JzzOS8>

For more information on the USAJOBS Resume Mining Tool  
[Recruiter-Help@USAJOBS.gov](mailto:Recruiter-Help@USAJOBS.gov)

For more information on hiring authorities  
<http://bit.ly/2kSwJJf>

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