THE HR WORKFORCE:
MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

An Occupation in Transition
A Comprehensive Study of the
Federal Human Resources Community

Part 3

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As part of its leadership role in Federal Human Resources Management (HRM), OPM works in partnership with agencies to ensure the recruitment, hiring, and retention of employees who are best suited to agency missions. In support of this role, OPM conducted a three-part special study of the Federal HR workforce. The first two parts track how the demographics and business of Human Resources (HR) is changing and what competencies are needed by the HR workforce. This third report documents the effects those changes are having on the ability of the HR workforce to assist agencies in meeting their strategic goals.

A principal study finding is that the business of Human Resources is changing. Downsizing, reorganizations, and a strong focus on results are forcing agencies to validate their business processes, reassess the role of the HR function, and evaluate the adequacy of the work performed by HR employees.

This report presents an analysis of the current state of the Federal HR workforce in terms of its value to organizations as reported by top-level officials, customers, and HR professionals. Our key findings are summarized as follows:

1. HR professionals need to perform the roles of Technical HR Expert, Strategic Business Partner, Change Agent, and Leader.

2. There is a gap between the competencies that HR professionals are currently using on the job and those that are viewed as important to the HR function.

3. Technical expertise is the foundation of the HR business function and is required in some form at every career level.

4. There is a serious gap in the ability of the HR workforce to provide basic quality technical advice.

5. Most agencies do not have a formal plan in place to close the competency gaps that have been identified.

6. Closing the gaps and rebuilding the Federal HR function will take commitment, planning, money, and time.

These findings add up to the general conclusion that the HR workforce is faced with serious challenges. However, in presenting them, OPM hopes that agencies will see the opportunities that can arise from the necessary retooling, realigning, and redesigning of the HR workforce. In addition, OPM is committed to working with agencies to rebuild the capability and expertise of the Federal HR workforce.

Study Overview

This report is the final installment of a three-part study entitled, *HR: An Occupation in Transition*. The first part, "Federal Human Resources Employment Trends," provides an overview of the demographic changes that have shaped the current Human Resources (HR) workforce over the last 30 years. The second part, "Looking to the Future: Human Resources Competencies," is a broad examination of the emerging roles and corresponding competencies that are both reflecting and redefining the occupation. As a final synthesis, this report answers the question: Given the changing demographic trends, are HR professionals prepared for the new and expanded roles they are expected to play; and, if not, how can the competency gap be closed?

As an organizing framework for the data collected and reported here, we used an HR competency model that had evolved from the work of the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA), the International Personnel Management Association (IPMA), and OPM's Personnel Resources and Development Center (Appendix A). That work was described in more detail in the second part of this study. In presenting these findings on the competency of the HR workforce, OPM hopes to heighten awareness of and stimulate action to correct critical deficiencies in the ability of the Federal HR workforce to meet agency needs.

Why Competencies? Why Now?

Human resources competencies have come to the forefront in the wake of major changes in organizational structures, the number of HR professionals, and required competencies. These changes are in response to the challenges and opportunities brought on by the new knowledge-based global economy. Both the private and public sectors are struggling to redefine their human resources function in terms of its focus and roles. To this end, competencies and competency-based systems are being adopted as viable tools to help reform and rebuild the HR function.

In the second report of this three-part study, we define a competency as "an underlying characteristic of an employee (i.e., a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self-image, social role, or a body of knowledge) which results in effective and/or superior performance." (Boyatzis, 1982). In the new results-oriented business environment, competencies play an important role in focusing attention on the skill base of the HR workforce. They provide a standard for measuring employee preparedness, developmental needs, and performance and serve as a launching point for strategic change.

Organizations are using competencies to re-shape the HR workforce after an era of unprecedented downsizing. As documented in the first report of this three-part study, the HR profession in the Federal Government has declined by 17.5 percent during the 1990s. The decrease has resulted in an inevitable loss of expertise. This, coupled with a deliberate decision to let line managers have more say in managing human resources, has led to the migration of more HR responsibilities to line managers. The focus on how agencies perform that was sparked

by the National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR) and the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) has led to reorganizations and more consolidated HR operations. In addition, agencies are experiencing changes in the delivery of HR services, an influx of technology, and a shift toward a more consultative role for HR staff. All of these factors have combined to create a human resources environment that demands new skills for successful performance.

Methodology

As a starting point for this third part of our study, we conducted an extensive literature review to find out where public and private sector industry leaders think HR should be heading in terms of its function within organizations. Next, we collected data from a survey of 379 HR professionals, focus groups conducted with 38 line managers, and interviews with 18 HR executives.

These data sources provide information about the HR function from more than 25 Federal agencies across the country. The findings reflect current perceptions of the present state of HR roles and competencies as well as concerns for the future as reported by executives, professionals, and customers.

> *The Survey Sample:* We selected a statistically valid random sample of HR employees from among all organizational and grade levels as well as each of the GS-200 HR series to participate in a phone survey of HR competencies. Staff members in our headquarters and field offices gathered participant responses to a variety of questions covering demographics, competencies, and training. (See "HR Competency Survey," Appendix B).
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> The survey respondents reflect the current demographic profile illustrated in the first report of this study, "Federal Human Resources Employment Trends." Of the HR professionals who participated in the survey:
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> ♦ **Approximately 53 percent reported that they are in the generalist GS 201 series.** This coincides with the increasing number of generalists as documented in the Civilian Personnel Data File (CPDF). A large portion of this increase is due to transfers from HR specialty series. Almost 45 percent of the generalists surveyed reported transferring to their current position from a specialty area. Only 22 percent of specialists surveyed transferred from generalist positions.
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> ♦ **About 53 percent reported that they are at the GS 12 and 13 grade levels.** This is in keeping with the first report's finding that over half of the total HR workforce is at these grade levels.
>
> ♦ **About 72 percent are women.** This is in line with the current representation of women in the HR workforce of 71 percent.

♦ **About 35 percent reported that they are minorities.** This is in line with the minority representation in the total HR workforce of 37 percent.

♦ **A little over 80 percent are aged 40 or over and about 49 percent have more than 20 years of Federal service.** This reflects the "graying of HR" highlighted in the first report of this study. About 20 percent of respondents are generalists over age 50 and about 15 percent are specialists over age 50. More than 20 percent of the respondents are over age 50 and at the GS 12-15 grade levels. In addition, if we assume that most survey participants who are over age 50 are part of the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), it is possible that at least 25 percent of the respondents may be eligible for full retirement within the next five years.

♦ **Almost 90 percent reported having continued their education beyond high school.** This is higher than the total HR workforce figure of 79 percent in the first report. In keeping with the first report findings, more than half of the respondents earned a bachelors degree or beyond.

The Focus Groups: In order to obtain the views of HR's primary customers, we conducted focus groups with 38 line managers. Our field divisions hosted groups comprised of managers from a variety of agencies. Each focus group examined the study's competency framework and answered the same set of questions. (See "Focus Group Questioning Route," in Appendix C). The questions were designed to solicit managers' perceptions about the type and quality of HR services provided to line managers, the current and required roles of HR office staff, and the competencies that HR staffs possess.

The Interviews: We then sought the views and insights of HR executives from 18 Federal departments and agencies, ranging in size from less than 5,000 to more than 200,000 employees. Through a series of personal interviews we explored the current HR environment, including the HR service delivery structure, changing roles and competency requirements, HR workforce capability, and HR workforce planning.

The results from our survey, focus groups, and interviews provided insights on what roles HR professionals should play and what competencies they should possess. Also, we were able to assess the degree to which today's HR professionals actually possess these competencies. The next section presents these results and describes the current state of Federal HR in the aftermath of reinvention and downsizing.

II. THE OCCUPATION IN TRANSITION

In both private and public sectors the business of HR has been changing as organizations transition from industrial to knowledge-based enterprises. The turning point in this transition for the Federal government occurred in 1993, with the creation of the National Partnership for Reinventing Government[1] (NPR). The NPR set out to change the culture and structure of government and in so doing, set in motion a process of continuous improvement to create a government that "works better and costs less." At about the same time, the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) reinforced the call for dramatic change in government operations with its focus on strategic planning and results. In the private sector, this same focus has led industry leaders to explore ways that HR can add more value to the organization. Current literature calls for HR professionals to become strategic partners with management while keeping a broad base of technical expertise. But what exactly has changed in HR and what does this mean for the Federal HR workforce?

The chart below shows the fundamental changes that occur in structure and culture as organizations move from an industrial enterprise to a knowledge-based enterprise.

HR in Transition

The Industrial Enterprise		The Knowledge-Based Enterprise
• Hierarchy/Control • Organized by functional specialty • Physically centralized	**STRUCTURE**	• Customer focused • Team-based • Functional integration • Virtual offices
• Employee-oriented • Rules-driven • Guardians/Protectors • Confrontational	**CULTURE**	• Business-oriented • Outcome/Results-driven • Shared accountability • Collaboration & Consensus building
• Program administration • Case/Action processing • Policy Manufacturing	**ACTIVITIES**	• Customization of services and tools • Organizational consultation/ Organizational development • Transaction management • Technology integration
• Administrative capabilities • Regulatory knowledge • Internal policy knowledge	**HR SKILLS**	• Full spectrum of HR competencies

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1 The National Partnership for Reinventing Government was previously known as the National Performance Review.

The height of the industrial era for the Federal sector was during the cold war when Federal employment exceeded three million, and the deficit was at an all time high. As the cold war ended, military bases were closed, automation revolutionized the way we work, and government organizations began the daunting task of downsizing. The reinvention revolution began and the NPR set out to help achieve the goals of improving management within tight budget spending caps and restoring the confidence of the American people in their government.

Reform of all administrative systems (e.g., procurement, budget, personnel) was key to achieving these goals. The NPR Report, *Reinventing Human Resource Management*, pointed out that "…the overly prescriptive [personnel] system has a very real impact on how government works – or doesn't."[2] The report went on to describe a vision for the future in which accountability would be defined in terms of results and within the context of decentralization, deregulation, simplicity, flexibility, and substantially increased delegations of authority. Federal managers would be responsible for managing their human resources and HR professionals would be deployed to the front line as responsive consultants and contributors to the organization's mission, having been freed by reform from paper intensive, time consuming and sometimes irrelevant work.

At the same time, the Congress was imposing severe spending limits and even going so far as to increase the Administration's downsizing target. In an effort to preserve frontline services to the taxpayer, administrative and other overhead functions were the natural place for both Congress and the Administration to look for savings.

As noted in Part 1 of this study, the number of Federal HR professionals has dropped by over 17 percent over the last 6 years as agencies have been reinvented and transformed, and as the total Executive Branch non-postal Federal workforce dropped below 2 million in 1995 for the first time in about 30 years. As more seasoned professionals retired or moved on, they often were not replaced. There was limited opportunity to hire new professionals into the occupation. The net effect is a lack of expertise at a time when HR professionals are being called upon to serve in new and unfamiliar roles as consultants and business partners.

According to the data collected for our study, HR executives and line managers identified the lack of technical expertise as the major cause of a decline in quality of HR service. About 60 percent of the HR executives interviewed reported having problems with the lack of technical experts due to budget and workforce cuts. Reasons given included downsizing, heavy workloads, poor attitudes of service providers, and a lack of training. These problems may only get worse given the current demographic trends. Given that one-third of the HR workforce will be eligible to retire in the next five years, the loss of expertise may continue to plague the HR community.

> *HR staffs were decimated by cuts. They are barely finding time for basic technical work, let alone time to change themselves into strategic partners.*
> *--A Federal HR Executive*

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2 National Partnership for Reinventing Government. *Reinventing Human Resources Management*. September 1993. Page 1.

Today, with their increased authority for HR management, line managers and HR staff have shared accountability for programs. HR professionals must be able to provide a link between their technical expertise and the organization's goals and objectives. An understanding of laws and regulations is necessary, but it should be coupled with an understanding of the goals and objectives of the business. In order to provide effective customer service in this new environment, HR professionals must become strategic business partners.

> *HR needs to be able to walk with managers, help them understand the consequences of their decisions, and offer options that take management goals into account – this is valued consultation.*
> *--A Federal HR Executive*

Redefining Roles

To accomplish this transition, new competencies are needed. Today's HR professionals, whether generalists or specialists, need new competencies to be able to fulfill four main roles: Business Partner, Leader, Technical HR Expert, and Change Agent. Descriptions of these roles are listed below.

Business Partner: Serves as a partner with management, sharing accountability with line management for organizational results. The HR professional works with management to analyze and devise solutions to organizational problems, is involved in strategic planning and aligning HR with the organization's mission and strategic goals.

Change Agent: Serves as a catalyst for change in the organization (e.g., helps the organization see the need for change and helps them through the change by providing training, installing new information systems, and/or adjusting compensation strategies to meet changing job requirements).

Leader: Ensures that Merit System Principles are adhered to, along with other issues of ethics and integrity, while serving as a champion for diversity. In addition, balances the need for employee satisfaction with organizational goals.

Technical HR Expert: Possesses a high level of HR knowledge and ability to strengthen HR programs to better meet organizational goals.

The following table lists these four roles and their corresponding competencies used in our assessments of the HR workforce. These are a subset of the combined NAPA, IPMA, and OPM competency model presented in Appendix A.

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BUSINESS PARTNER	LEADER	TECHNICAL HR EXPERT	CHANGE AGENT
Customer Service	Building Trust/Integrity/Ethical Behavior	Analytical Skills	Design and Implement Change
Organizational Awareness (Culture & Processes)	Communication	HR Law and Policies	Consensus/Consultation
Systems Thinking	Team Work	Diversity	Influencing Others to Act
Risk Taking	Conflict Resolution	Applying Information Technology to HR	Marketing
Innovation/Creativity		Measure Effectiveness	Organizational Development & HR Theories and Principles
Agency Mission Knowledge			
Link HR to Mission			
Understand Public Service Environment			

Knowing what roles and competencies are needed of the HR workforce is important. Equally important is knowing how well the Federal Government is redefining the role of HR. Our interviews with HR executives yielded the answers presented below.

Questions	Yes	No	Some
1. Has the role of the HR professional changed in your agency?	44%	28%	28%
2. Have the competency requirements for the HR professional changed?	72%	17%	11%
3. Is there a gap between the requirements and the actual competencies of current HR professionals?	94%	6%	0%
4. Do you have a formal plan in place to close the gap?	33%	44%	22%

*Note: Numbers are rounded.

Over 70 percent of the HR executives interviewed said that the role of HR professionals has undergone at least some change in their agencies. More than half of the HR executives who said

> *Both generalists and specialists must know more technical HR, plus serve as strategic partners and know the customers' business.*
> *--A Federal HR Executive*

the role has not changed recognized that there was a need for change. Most recognized the importance of the Business Partner role and the need for new competencies including organizational awareness, systems thinking, risk-taking, innovation, and consultation. At the same time, it is important to note that almost all of the HR executives stressed the critical need for HR professionals to retain technical expertise, especially in knowledge of laws and regulations and applying technology.

To a lesser degree, line managers in our focus groups also supported the notion of changing roles for HR. All of the line managers, HR's primary customers, recognized the role of the Technical HR Expert as currently existing. A small number of line managers also identified the business partner and leader roles as currently existing. Most agreed that it would be helpful if HR

professionals developed into business partners, leaders, and change consultants. However, their strongest emphasis was on the continuing need for high quality technical advice.

Where Do We Stand Now?

The information gathered from the HR executives and line managers is consistent with where the current literature says HR should be heading. However, knowing the views of HR leaders and customers is just one piece of the puzzle. The results of our survey of HR professionals give some cause for concern. Survey participants were asked to rate their current ability and the importance of each of the competencies in their work. The following presents the results.

Role	Competency	% Moderate to High or High Ability	% High or Critical Importance
BUSINESS PARTNER	Customer Service	93.8	98.1
	Organizational Awareness (Culture)	72.3	85.8
	Organizational Awareness (Processes)	74.3	84.9
	Systems Thinking	77.6	82.4
	Risk Taking	70.2	57.8
	Innovation/Creativity	76.3	77.9
	Agency Mission Knowledge	89.6	88.8
	Link HR to Mission	81.0	86.5
	Understand Public Service Environment	53.0	67.9
LEADER	Building Trust/Integrity/Ethical Behavior	98.4	97.9
	Communication	88.8	91.2
	Team Work	93.9	91.8
	Conflict Resolution	62.8	77.5
TECHNICAL HR EXPERT	Analytical Skills	72.3	68.3
	HR Law and Policies	78.1	90.9
	Diversity	78.7	80.0
	Applying Information Technology to HR	54.7	80.0
	Measure Effectiveness	55.9	67.0
CHANGE AGENT	Design and Implement Change	65.3	73.4
	Consensus/Consultation	82.9	85.7
	Influencing Others to Act	83.3	76.6
	Marketing	80.9	80.2
	Organizational Development & HR Theories and Principles	57.1	62.0

When these results are examined, the findings indicate that six of the nine competencies associated with the Business Partner role were rated as being of high or critical importance by at least 80 percent of respondents. However, for only three of the nine competencies associated with the Business Partner role did at least 80 percent of HR professionals rate their ability moderately high or high. Thus, it would appear that employees are recognizing the need to become business partners, but are not prepared to do so. This is an indication that there is a competency gap in the Business Partner role that industry experts, HR executives, and line managers identify as being important to organizational effectiveness.

For the Leader role, there is less of a discrepancy between ability and the importance of the competencies. Three of the four competencies associated with this role were rated as being of high or critical importance by 90 percent of HR professionals. Ability in these same three competencies was rated moderately high or high by over 85 percent of HR professionals.

Three of the five competencies associated with the Technical HR Expert role were rated as important by over 80 percent of respondents. However, when compared to their reported ability in these competencies, there is a gap between what the respondents' work requires and their skill level. For only two of the five competencies associated with this role did 78 percent of HR professionals rate their ability as moderately high or high.

Finally, three of the five competencies associated with the Change Agent role were rated as being of high or critical importance by between 75 and 85 percent of HR professionals. Ability in these same three competencies was rated moderately high or high by between 80 and 85 percent of HR professionals.

While HR professionals seem to be accepting the importance of new roles and competencies, there is further evidence that this may be more true in theory than practice. When asked to describe their primary role in their current assignment, the Technical HR Expert role was rated as being the primary role of over 50 percent of the respondents. When the responses to the importance questions are averaged, the Technical HR Expert role was rated as being of high or critical importance by about 77 percent of respondents. The Change Agent role was rated as being the primary role of about 30 percent of respondents; but, this role was rated as being of high or critical importance by 75 percent of respondents. While the Leader role was rated as the primary role of 13 percent of respondents, this same role was rated as being of high or critical importance by almost 90 percent of HR professionals. Finally, the Business Partner role was rated as being the primary role of only 5 percent of respondents, while this role was rated as being of high or critical importance by 80 percent of survey participants.

While these findings are not necessarily contradictory, work can be important even if it is not a primary role, it does show that day-to-day work in HR has not changed as much as the responses to the questions about the importance of various competencies might indicate. It appears that the Technical HR Expert role still dominates, though there has been some movement toward HR professionals becoming consultants on change. However, there has been little movement toward making professionals into strategic partners or leaders. In fact, the role of Business Partner was rated as being least important to the current assignments of over 50 percent of the respondents and the role of Leader was rated as being least important to the current assignments of about 38 percent of the respondents. These results show that HR professionals may not yet be fully committed to the new roles. In general, the actual roles of HR professionals do not correspond to what they, line managers, and HR executives indicate as being most important to their work.

Lost in the Gap

These findings clearly show that there are serious gaps between the importance HR professionals attach to various competencies and their assessment of whether they possess them. The

following table rank-orders the gaps between the competencies HR professionals feel are required/important in their work and those that they possess.

Role	Competency	% Competency Gap (Importance – Ability)
Technical HR Expert	Applying Information Technology to HR	25.4
Business Partner	Understanding Public Service Environment	15.0
Leader	Conflict Resolution	14.7
Business Partner	Organizational Awareness (Culture)	13.5
Technical HR Expert	HR Law and Policies	12.8
Technical HR Expert	Measure Effectiveness	11.1
Business Partner	Organizational Awareness (Processes)	10.6
Change Agent	Design and Implement Change	08.1
Business Partner	Link HR to Mission	05.5
Change Agent	Organizational Development & HR Theories and Principles	04.9
Business Partner	Systems Thinking	04.8
Business Partner	Customer Service	04.3
Change Agent	Consensus/Consultation	02.8
Leader	Communication	02.4
Business Partner	Innovation/Creativity	01.6
Technical HR Expert	Diversity	01.4

These data show that employees reported serious gaps in three of the four competencies associated with the Technical HR Expert role. Since most HR executives described the Technical HR Expert role as being the foundation of the business of HR, the effects of these gaps are damaging. An unfortunate result of this lack of skill may be the dramatic decline in HR customer service cited by line managers. Serious gaps also were reported in competencies associated with the Business Partner role, which both HR executives and line managers identified as becoming increasingly necessary for organizational effectiveness.

These findings are consistent with the results in the table on page 9 that show that 94 percent of the HR executives we interviewed identified a gap between the required and actual competencies of the current HR workforce. Perhaps even more significant is that almost 70 percent of the HR executives we interviewed have little or no formal plan in place to close the gaps.

Evolving Expertise

Before turning to a full discussion of transformation strategies, it is important to consider further the serious gap in technical expertise. This gap exists not only in terms of what could be called traditional technical expertise--knowing all the HR rules and regulations and guarding against violations by managers--but also technical expertise in an expanded sense, including an active understanding of the benefits of diversity, knowledge

> *The change is evolutionary and requires continued proficiency in technical HR areas as well as the development of new competencies.*
> *--A Federal HR Executive*

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of information technology in relation to HR, and the ability to analyze HR proposals and decisions in a broader context and measure their organizational effects.

According to our findings, technical expertise is needed at all levels of an organization. These skills are the core competencies that all employees need to successfully carry out their other roles. Competencies from the Business Partner, Leader, and Change Agent roles also are necessary; however, requirements for each of these competencies can be distributed according to their importance at any given career level. The following figure depicts how these competencies build during a career and how technical expertise is the foundation upon which HR employees at all levels must rely in order to help agencies improve their effectiveness.

			Lead
		Coach	•Organizational Development
	Apply	•Conflict Resolution	•Design and Implement Change
	•Organizational Awareness	•Building Trust/ Integrity/Ethical Behavior	•Marketing
Learn	•Consensus/ Consultation	•Link HR to Mission	•Influencing Others
•Agency Mission Knowledge	•Innovation	•Team Work	•Understand Public Service Environment
	•Risk Taking	•Systems Thinking	•Communicate Expectations
	•Customer Service		
Trainee/ Intern	**Journey Level**	**Team Leader/ Supervisor**	**Manager/ Executive**

TECHNICAL HR EXPERTISE
◆HR Laws and Policies   ◆Analytical Skills
◆Measuring Effectiveness   ◆Diversity
◆Applying Information Technology to HR

At the entry level, an employee's primary job is to learn. Developing an understanding of the agency's mission and the laws and regulations governing HR is crucial at this stage. However, trainees also need to begin acquiring other competencies in their role as Technical HR Experts and start recognizing how they relate to the strategic direction of the agency.

At the journey level, employees should be applying their knowledge. They need to be able to analyze HR proposals, understand their potential effects, diagnose problems, and offer suggestions and alternatives in order to help managers get the job done while ensuring adherence to HR laws and values. This requires an appreciation for diversity as they work with a variety of people to set HR goals and solve HR problems. In addition, with increasing automation it is necessary for employees at the journey level to be familiar with information technology tools that can assist them in their work.

> *Today's HR professionals must read the law, understand the intent, interpret for themselves, help managers understand, and present a range of options for informed decisions – all grounded in a solid appreciation of what the manager is trying to achieve.*
>
> *--A Federal HR Executive*

Supervisors and team leaders must build upon their understanding of HR laws and policies and the application of technical expertise to meeting customer needs in order to develop coaching and trouble-shooting skills. Employees at this level should set a tone for their team members to provide honest and ethical service in order to build customer trust. Team leaders also must resolve any conflicts that arise in providing services, promote team work, foster diversity, help team members link their work to the agency mission, and be able to measure the effects each HR decision will have on the entire organization.

Finally, HR managers and executives must have technical expertise in order to steer a course for the HR function within organizations. These leaders will find it difficult to add value to agency strategic plans if they do not know how legal and policy changes shape HR, the types of analysis their customers need, how effective their programs are, the business value of diversity, or how new information technologies can help employees do their jobs better.

Agencies need to develop action plans to address the loss of expertise, the declining level of the HR workforce in traditional skills, and the need to develop new competencies that were pre-viously unnecessary for HR professionals to have. The following section presents strategies agencies can use to close the competency gaps and complete the HR transformation.

III. TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES

Knowing where the HR function is heading and where it currently stands is the first step toward transforming HR. Competencies and competency models are useful tools in the transformation process. They provide a means to raise the bar on performance expectations and push the HR occupation toward new practices and approaches. With these models as the compass the following strategies show how organizations can successfully transform their HR function into a valued business asset.

Stop Playing the Numbers Game

> *"Looking ahead, federal employees foresee that their ability to meet mission requirements will be impacted as a result of workforce reductions. Strategic mission planning will be vital to continue successful agency operations and improved employee morale."*
> *--OPM, "Downsizing in the Federal Government," August 1998*

Agencies need to look at the size and makeup of their HR workforce in relation to the strategic objectives of their organizations. Workforce planning emphasizes the Government's ability to deliver services. Agencies can act to ensure continuing HR effectiveness through careful planning, especially if faced with across-the-board cuts.

Recognizing that organizations will stay lean in the future, investments in information technology that will help transform HR also need to be made. Potential benefits include reduced operating costs, reduced processing time, increased productivity, and improved customer service. However, there are lessons to be learned from the pioneers of HR automation who made deep up-front cuts in HR staffs in order to fund technology improvements, only to seriously degrade customer service while awaiting the promised investment payoff. When choosing which technologies will serve them best, agencies need to take implementation and piloting time needed into account in their workforce plans.

Figure Out What Fits

> *"You can't finish the puzzle if you don't have all the pieces."*
> *--Anonymous*

Transformation to a technically competent, results-oriented HR function involves changing the way HR is viewed, performed, and marketed. The necessary competencies must be quickly identified and adopted. The following five steps can be used as a model for transforming HR into a competency-based essential business function. These relate closely to the model described

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in the OPM's *HRM Accountability System Development Guide*, with special emphasis here on the role of HR competencies.

1. Plan

The first step in rebuilding the HR function is planning. Agencies should determine their need for change based on a number of factors including expert opinion, workforce demographics, budgets, customer requirements, employee perceptions, and available information technologies. If there is a need for change, action steps should be addressed in the strategic and performance planning process. This makes the importance of transforming the HR function visible and provides compelling justification for resource requirements.

2. Assess

Next, agencies should assess the degree of change that is needed, taking into consideration the organizational culture and the current competency levels of the HR workforce. Agencies have different ways of doing business and employees bring different skills to the workplace. Thus, each organization will need to identify any core competencies that should apply to the entire HR workforce as well as those needed by individuals in specific HR functions. The organizations should then assess the competency gaps and use the information to cost out and set developmental and staffing priorities.

> *There cannot be a "one size fits all" competency model. Models must be customized/ operationalized.*
> *--A Federal HR Executive*

3. Communicate

Once a change strategy has been adopted, a key ingredient to completing the HR transition is communicating expectations and results. In general, agency proponents of transforming HR must market the idea to everyone within the HR community and to their customers. Top-level support, customer needs, budgetary constraints, employee self-identification of the need to change, job and promotion opportunities, rewards, and consequences of not changing are all persuasive arguments that can help sell HR transformation to a change weary and leery workforce.

4. Incorporate into Major Programs

To prevent all the efforts made in planning, assessing, and communicating the HR change effort from sinking into empty rhetoric, agencies need to ensure that HR competencies are incorporated into the major program areas of the HR function as they are applied to the agency's HR workforce. There are two options for closing the competency gap – hire or retrain. Ideally, the HR transformation will take place through a combination of these in the form of hiring high level expertise, hiring and developing interns, and formal career programs. However, agencies with limited resources must find a way to balance these two options.

♦ **Classification:** OPM is currently revising classification standards for the entire GS-200 occupational group under the job family standard concept. The new classification standards will reflect the required roles and competencies expected of the HR workforce.

♦ **Staffing:** OPM is planning to revise the qualification standards to reflect a competency-based approach for use in recruitment and hiring. Agencies will be given the flexibility to choose from a set of job-related competencies, based on agency specific needs, to staff their HR positions. Managers should allow time for current employees to become qualified through developmental opportunities.

♦ **Employee Training and Development:** The employee training and development program area also will play a crucial role in transforming HR. Agencies need to commit the time and resources that will allow employees to develop the required competencies. Agencies have many options for the types of training and development that will help employees to attain the competencies. These are highlighted in the next section below.

♦ **Performance Management:**   The performance management program can support a competency-based approach. While an organization is rebuilding it's HR function, performance plans and rewards can focus on the development of competencies, but once the gap has been narrowed, performance management programs should shift to an emphasis on results more than capacity. Policies can be put in place to hold managers and supervisors accountable for allowing time and resources for employee development. Of course, the performance of individuals who cannot or will not develop and demonstrate required competencies must be addressed.

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5. Measure Results and Adjust

Finally, agencies must periodically measure their results in transforming the HR function. Knowing how well HR is doing in relation to what was planned allows agencies to make adjustments and prioritize goals on a continuing basis. Also, it is helpful if organizations regularly survey the competency levels of their employees to ensure continued alignment with the ever-changing strategic goals of the organization.

Develop Competencies

> *"There is no security on this earth,*
> *there is only opportunity."*
> *--Douglas MacArthur*

As highlighted in the second report, "Looking to the Future: Human Resources Competencies," a major determinant of how successful agencies will be at changing the business of HR will be how well they re-tool the existing HR workforce. This will not be easy. For starters, agencies

should market the developmental and advancement opportunities to be had in order to get buy-in from disenchanted employees who are weary of further change. In addition, competency development may require large amounts of agency resources in terms of money and time. Also, competencies should not be used merely as a checklist by which employees can track their training. Instead, agencies should develop measures for demonstrated applications of the learned competencies to ensure adequate returns on their investment.

There are a number of options agencies should consider when deciding how to develop HR competencies in their employees. One option includes formal courses that may be offered internally, through external vendors, via computer based training, or through collaborations with colleges and universities. When deciding which of these methods is most effective, agencies should consider things like costs, course content, trainer experience, convenience, and length.

Another option is on-the-job training. Through this method, employees learn and practice HR competencies in work assignments and job rotations. These rotations can be among different roles, specialties, or functions such as policy, processing, and advisory services.

A third option that may be relatively easy to set up and low in cost is developing competencies through supportive networks. For example, HR professionals can practice their consulting skills, share information, and learn from each other through peer networks. In addition, mentoring and coaching support programs can provide development opportunities in a one-on-one setting between managers or executives and HR employees.

Some organizations are using aspects of these three approaches to developing competencies in formal certification programs for HR professionals. Agencies can tailor certification programs to meet their own unique requirements. For example, some might choose to provide certifications based solely on formal courses completed by an employee. Others might choose to certify HR professionals only after they demonstrate through on-the-job performance that they actually acquired the necessary competencies. Still others might choose to link certification to job assignment, either offering assignments that will develop the

> *The HR profession needs a "seal of approval program" – a formal certification process that will produce a new generation of HR professionals.*
> *--A Federal HR Executive*

competencies needed for certification, or withholding assignments until certification is complete. Examples of competency development plans, including some certification programs, are provided below.

Learn From Others

"None of us is as smart as all of us."
--Ken Blanchard

Agencies who are about to embark on the journey that will lead to a transformed HR function should know that they are not alone. Some agencies have paved a way with innovative practices and comprehensive changes that serve as resources for other organizations interested in completing the HR transition.

The following agencies have established innovative programs to help HR professionals become and remain competent in the HR function:

U.S. Air Force Personnel Management Information and Support System. The Air Force implemented an electronic HR expert system via the World Wide Web to help supervisors and employees with civilian personnel issues. The Personnel Management Information and Support System (PERMISS) is like an on-line personnel handbook which contains general guidance, regulatory references, a list of related topics, sample letters, and electronic forms. In addition, the Air Force Education Services Office offers computer-based HR instruction on CD-ROM or through the Internet.

Department of the Army HR Development Program. The Army Civilian Training, Education, and Development System (ACTEDS) has drafted a developmental plan for Civilian Personnel Administration (CPA) professionals. The plan provides a competency-based approach to managing the CPA career program's professional training and development component. Among other things, the plan identifies training and development roles and responsibilities, illustrates a variety of career paths, identifies core competencies needed for the career paths, provides information on developmental opportunities, and provides a master training plan to be used in preparing individual development plans.

National Institutes of Health HR Certification Program. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has developed a competency-based certification program for HR generalists. In order to be certified as consultants, HR employees must demonstrate that they have acquired the necessary competencies. Recertification is required every two years and is based on services provided and individual development efforts. In support of this certification program, training budgets were tripled. So far, about two-thirds of the NIH HR staff has successfully completed the first round of certification.

Department of the Navy HRM Career Development Framework. The Department of the Navy (DON) has proposed a career development framework for their civilian HR professionals. A key feature of the program includes competency-based certifications given by supervisors prior to assignment. Competencies are identified for every level and functional area of HR and are included in crediting plans for prospective employees. Professional development is provided through formal courses and on-the-job training. The DON has moved toward implementing this program by contracting with the USDA Graduate School to provide training for HR staff; however, other program components are still in the development stage.

Patent and Trademark Office HR Competency Development Resource Guide. The PTO has developed a resource guide for HR professionals who are looking to acquire the competencies required by the agency. Guidance is based on four types of learning: technical, experiential, self-directed, and PTO University certifications.

For technical competencies, employees are encouraged to take courses and participate in workshops and other training venues that relate to the required competencies. Experien-

tial learning takes place through details, special assignments, mentoring, and coaching activities. Competencies may also be gained by self-directed learning through computer programs and correspondence courses. Finally, the PTO University offers a certification program in HR. In addition, HR professionals can get a Career Studies certificate that builds professionalism through the introduction of well-established business ideas and practices. This certificate is the starting point for a PTO University Business Associates Degree. Other Associates degrees also are available.

Department of the Interior Comprehensive Career Management Program. The Department of the Interior (DOI) is planning to construct and implement a career management program for HR professionals. The DOI is using a hybrid competency model based on the OPM and NAPA models. This model will enable DOI bureaus to use OPM's HR Manager software which allows organizations to tailor competencies to match their unique career development needs.

These HR initiatives are excellent sources for other agencies interested in transforming their HR function. However, some agencies also are developing competency-based career development programs for other occupations. In particular, the acquisition, financial, and information technology professional occupations have made great strides in providing comprehensive development programs to increase the competency o their workforces. Descriptions of these programs are provided below n the belief that the HR community can learn from non-HR initiatives as well.

Defense Acquisition Career Development Program. The Department of Defense designed a comprehensive standard-based development program for their acquisition workforce in response to the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA). The development program includes certification standards designated as either "mandatory" or "desired" for each acquisition career field. Each career field is divided into three career levels for the purpose of establishing standards and qualifications. Military and civilian employees in the acquisition workforce follow career paths that list the assignments, experience, education, and training necessary for career progression. Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are used for civilian employees until they achieve a minimum certification at the Advanced or Senior Level (Level III).

Training is provided through formal Defense Acquisition University (DAU) courses. Alternate equivalent courses are listed in the DAU Catalog. Educational assistance also is provided through cooperative degree programs, a DOD scholarship program, a tuition reimbursement program, and a repayment of student loans program. In addition, the military branches have acquisition intern programs to help prepare employees for high-level acquisition positions.

NASA Financial and Resources Management Career Development Guide. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) developed a comprehensive career development guide for its Federal financial management professionals. Using the core competencies developed by the Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Council and the Joint Financial Management Improvement Program (JFMIP), NASA provides a road map for continuing professional development.

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Training options for both general and technical competencies are presented for three job categories: Business Resources Management, Financial Management, and Technical Support. Individual development is expected to take place through on-the-job training, formal courses, and developmental experiences or activities. Professional certification is encouraged by NASA and various certification programs are included in the Guide.

Patent and Trademark Office Information Technology Development Plan. The Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) has implemented a training plan in response to the provisions of the Clinger-Cohen Act. This Act requires agencies to establish knowledge and skills requirements, assess the degree to which existing staff meet those require- ments, develop strategies and plans to improve staff knowledge and skills, and report on progress in improving the quality of their information technology (IT) staffs.

Using the core competency framework established by the Chief Information Officers (CIO) Council, the PTO established a certification program through the PTO University at the undergraduate and graduate levels for IT specialists and users. Other certificate programs also are available through the PTO partnerships with George Washington University and Northern Virginia Community College. In addition, the PTO Office of the Chief Information Officer established a Management Information Technology Series that consists of five in-house classes designed to increase understanding about the IT processes and tools used by the PTO.

The experience of these leaders in the Federal Government's push to reform HR and other functions will be helpful to other agencies that are beginning the HR transformation. The strategies and examples presented make up a recipe for successful change that could raise the image and status of HR from a rules-oriented "necessary evil" to an essential element for organizational effectiveness.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

The Federal Government's most valuable resource is the talented people who carry out the work of each agency. Without attracting and retaining the right people, in the right jobs, with the right skills and training, no organization can effectively perform its mission. HR professionals are critical players in this process. They represent the front line of customer service to Federal employees and managers, as well as to citizens seeking employment opportunities with their government.

This HR workforce, which has declined 17.5% since 1991, is expected to become a strategic business partner, to acquire new competencies and perform new roles, and to address the complex personnel issues that have resulted from greater delegation and increased flexibility within the HR system. These new responsibilities represent an exceptional opportunity - and challenge - to transform the HR workforce into a critical and valued contributor to agency mission accomplishment. OPM and agency HR leaders will work together to meet this challenge.

OPM will work with agency HR leaders to:

DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE ACTION PLAN TO INCREASE EXPERTISE IN ALL TECHNICAL SPECIALTIES

This study identified a serious gap in technical expertise. Line managers consistently pointed to this lack of technical expertise as the major cause of a decline in the quality of HR services. A coordinated, comprehensive action plan will be developed to ensure that HR professionals at every level have the high degree of technical knowledge needed to fulfill their new roles and continue to provide quality service to their agencies and the public. This action plan will include an approach to HR certification to enhance the professionalism of the occupation.

CREATE AN INDEX OF ALL OPM TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CURRENTLY TARGETED TO THE HR WORKFORCE

In addition to conferences and workshops, OPM program offices have created many products (CD ROMs, handbooks, guides, newsletters, special workshops and training, etc.) for use by HR professionals and others, including line managers and employees. Although most are currently available on the OPM web site under various topic areas, OPM will create a page specifically for the HR workforce that indexes all of these resources and contains an ongoing schedule of planned conferences and other learning activities. It will be linked to related sites both internal and external to OPM so that HR professionals have a single, comprehensive source of the information they need for both personal development and better service delivery.

EXPLORE DESKTOP ACCESS TO HR FUNCTIONAL TRAINING AND EXPERT SYSTEMS FOR MANAGERS AS WELL AS HR PROFESSIONALS

OPM recently issued several automated tools, including a CD-ROM on dealing with performance problems and a training video on the Merit System Principles. The feasibility of building on these and other automated products to create a Governmentwide automated HR information support system, accessible through the Internet, designed for use by both line managers and HR professionals, and capable of delivering "just in time" training to the desktop will be explored.

DEVELOP A SUCCESSION PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR THE FEDERAL HR WORKFORCE (INCLUDING INTAKE AND DEVELOPMENT)

Out of a total HR professional workforce of about 21,000, agencies hired only 49 trainees at the GS-5/7 level in FY 1998.[3] Nearly 1/3 of the HR workforce will be eligible to retire over the next 5 years. While succession planning is typically a responsibility of each agency, a focus on the HR occupation as a whole is needed to identify ways to supplement and support agency-based initiatives. In-depth analysis of the occupation in each agency and/or establishment of a framework for a Federal HR Intern Program will be explored.

IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM FOR BENCHMARKING AND SHARING BEST HR PRACTICES

Benchmarking means, "looking for the companies that are doing something best and learning how they do it in order to emulate them." (Hammer & Champy, p.132) Sharing of best practices can spark new ideas for tailoring new solutions to problems, or becoming more efficient in delivering service. Once identified, ideas will be shared at conferences and workshops, on the HR workforce web site described above, or through a broadcast speaker series.

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3 OPM's Central Personnel Data File defines New Hires as Excepted appointments, Competitive appointments (Career, Career Conditional, and Temporary/Limited), and Reinstatements.

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Appendix A

OPM Personnel Resources and Development Center
HUMAN RESOURCES COMPETENCY MODEL

Role	Competency	Demonstrates	Activity
STRATEGIC PARTNER	• *Organizational Awareness* • *Problem Solving* • Customer Service • Stress Tolerance • Oral Communication	• Understanding of public service environment • Knowledge of agency's mission • Knowledge of organizational development principles • Understanding on client's organizational culture • Knowledge of business system thinking • Understanding of business process & how to change and improve efficiency and effectiveness • Innovation & encourages risk-taking	• Interacts with customers in a way that demonstrates customer concerns and problems are heard, builds confidence and trust • Links HR policies and programs to the organization's mission & service outcomes • Applies organizational development principles • Adapts HR services to the client's organizational culture • Designs and/or carries out HR services that incorporate business system applications • Uses HR principles that change business processes to improve its efficiency and effectiveness
LEADER	• Decision Making • *Planning & Evaluation* • *Conflict Management* • Self-Management • Self-Esteem • Oral Communication	• Analytic, strategic & creative thinking • Knowledge of staff & line roles • Knowledge of business system and information technology	• Acts decisively • Manages resources e.g. human, funds, equipment • Applies conflict resolution methods in organizational situations • Uses consensus & negotiation coalition building skills to improve overall communication
EMPLOYEE CHAMPION	• *Flexibility* • *Teaching Others* • *Learning* • Interpersonal Skills • Oral Communication	• Develops employee & agency's relationships • Understands, values, & promotes diversity • Balances both agency's & employees' demands & resources	• Develops other's talents to maximize human potential • Mentors individuals to develop talent • Assesses & balances competing values e.g., policies & mission needs • Builds trust relationships
TECHNICAL EXPERT	• *Technical Competence* • *Legal, Government, & Jurisprudence* • *Personnel & Human Resources* • *Information Management* • *Arithmetic** • *Mathematical Reasoning** • Customer Service • Writing • Reading • Memory • Attention to Detail • Oral Communication	• Knowledge of human resources law & policies • Knowledge of work-life & organizational plans • Knowledge of information technology	• Applies expertise in the full range of the HR arena to support agency's mission and business needs • Uses surveys and other tools to provide information to help create an effective & efficient work environment • Adapts information technology to HR management
CHANGE CONSULTANT	• *Teamwork* • *Reasoning* • *Influencing/Negotiating* • *Integrity/Honesty* • *Creative Thinking* • Oral Communication • Stress Tolerance	• Organizational development principles • Understanding of marketing • Representation of HR products and services • Understanding of team behavior	• Assesses the readiness for change & identifies appropriate change strategies • Designs & implements change processes • Applies organizational development principles • Applies innovative strategies including identifying and recommending solutions to various personnel & HR issues • Uses consensus, consultation & negotiation/consensus building • Influences others to act • Practices & promotes integrity & ethical behavior • Works in teams • Communicates well

The competencies are not limited to the particular assigned role. In reality, competencies will be fluid among the various HR roles. This model is a compilation of IPMA, NAPA, and OPM models. Also included are concepts from Human Resources Champions by David Ulrich. Italicized competencies are unique to this specific role; the other competencies are applicable to more than one role.
*These competencies are required for some classification and staffing work.

ADVANCE COPY

HR COMPETENCY SURVEY

I. Competencies (Abilities, Skills, Behaviors, & Knowledge)

1.   What is your current position in HR?
        A.   Generalist GS 201
        B.   Staffing GS 212
        C.   Classification GS 221
        D.   Employee Relations GS 230
        E.   Labor Relations GS 233
        F.   Employee Development GS 235
        G.   EEO GS 260

2.   What is your current GS grade?
        A.   GS 5-7
        B.   GS 9
        C.   GS 11
        D.   GS 12
        E.   GS 13
        F.   GS 14
        G.   GS 15

ROLE: STRATEGIC BUSINESS PARTNER

Competency: Customer Service

3.   How would you rate your ability to identify and meet customer needs?
        A.   No to Low Ability
        B.   Low to Moderate Ability
        C.   Moderate Ability
        D.   Moderate to High Ability
        E.   High Ability
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

4.   How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
        A.   No Importance
        B.   Low Importance
        C.   Moderate Importance
        D.   High Importance
        E.   Critical Importance
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

5.	Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
	A.	Yes
	B.	No

Competency: Organizational Awareness - Understanding organizational culture

6.	How would you rate your ability to tailor HR programs and services to support the culture of the organization?
	A.	No to Low Ability
	B.	Low to Moderate Ability
	C.	Moderate Ability
	D.	Moderate to High Ability
	E.	High Ability
	F.	Not Applicable
	G.	Don't Know

7.	How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
	A.	No Importance
	B.	Low Importance
	C.	Moderate Importance
	D.	High Importance
	E.	Critical Importance
	F.	Not Applicable
	G.	Don't Know

8.	Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
	A.	Yes
	B.	No

Competency: Organizational Awareness - Business Processes

9.	How would you rate your ability to understand the business processes of your customers in order to improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness?
	A.	No to Low Ability
	B.	Low to Moderate Ability
	C.	Moderate Ability
	D.	Moderate to High Ability
	E.	High Ability
	F.	Not Applicable
	G.	Don't Know

10. How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
    A. None
    B. Little Importance
    C. Moderate Importance
    D. High Importance
    E. Critical Importance
    F. Not Applicable
    G. Don't Know

11. Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
    A. Yes
    B. No

Competency: Organizational Awareness - Business System Thinking

12. How would you rate your ability to consider all external and internal environmental factors when providing advice and solutions to customers?
    A. No to Low Ability
    B. Low to Moderate Ability
    C. Moderate Ability
    D. Moderate to High Ability
    E. High Ability
    F. Not Applicable
    G. Don't Know

13. How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
    A. No Importance
    B. Low Importance
    C. Moderate Importance
    D. High Importance
    E. Critical Importance
    F. Not Applicable
    G. Don't Know

14. Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
    A. Yes
    B. No

Competency: Risk Taking

15.   How would you rate your willingness to take risks to get your job done?
        A.   No to Low Ability
        B.   Low to Moderate Ability
        C.   Moderate Ability
        D.   Moderate to High Ability
        E.   High Ability
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

16.   How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
        A.   No Importance
        B.   Low Importance
        C.   Moderate Importance
        D.   High Importance
        E.   Critical Importance
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

17.   Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
        A.   Yes
        B.   No

Competency: Creativity and Innovation

18.   How would you rate your ability to create and present new insights and innovative approaches in making or supporting organizational improvements?
        A.   No to Low Ability
        B.   Low to Moderate Ability
        C.   Moderate Ability
        D.   Moderate to High Ability
        E.   High Ability
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

19.   How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
        A.   No Importance
        B.   Low Importance
        C.   Moderate Importance
        D.   High Importance
        E.   Critical Importance
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

20.   Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
A.   Yes
B.   No

Competency: Know agency or serviced organization mission.

21.   How would you rate your understanding of the mission of your agency or serviced organization(s) (i.e., legal mandate, customers, products, services, measures)?
A.   No to Low Ability
B.   Low to Moderate Ability
C.   Moderate Ability
D.   Moderate to High Ability
E.   High Ability
F.   Not Applicable
G.   Don't Know

22.   How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
A.   No Importance
B.   Low Importance
C.   Moderate Importance
D.   High Importance
E.   Critical Importance
F.   Not Applicable
G.   Don't Know

23.   Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
A.   Yes
B.   No

Competency: Link HR to Mission

24.   How would you rate your ability to link HR activities to support the mission of your agency or serviced organization(s)?
A.   No to Low Ability
B.   Low to Moderate Ability
C.   Moderate Ability
D.   Moderate to High Ability
E.   High Ability
F.   Not Applicable
G.   Don't Know

25. How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
  A. No Importance
  B. Low Importance
  C. Moderate Importance
  D. High Importance
  E. Critical Importance
  F. Not Applicable
  G. Don't Know

26. Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
  A. Yes
  B. No

Competency: Understand A Public Service Environment (e.g., Political, Legislative)

27. How would you rate your ability to keep current on political and legislative activities that may affect your organization and/or the HR community?
  A. No to Low Ability
  B. Low to Moderate Ability
  C. Moderate Ability
  D. Moderate to High Ability
  E. High Ability
  F. Not Applicable
  G. Don't Know

28. How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
  A. No Importance
  B. Low Importance
  C. Moderate Importance
  D. High Importance
  E. Critical Importance
  F. Not Applicable
  G. Don't Know

29. Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
  A. Yes
  B. No

ROLE: LEADER

Competency: Building Trust/Integrity/Ethical Behavior

30.   How would you rate your ability to demonstrate professional behavior to gain the trust and confidence of customers? (e.g., follow up on commitments made on a timely, accurate and complete basis, do not abuse the privilege of accessibility to confidential information, avoid appearance of favoritism).
        A.   No to Low Ability
        B.   Low to Moderate Ability
        C.   Moderate Ability
        D.   Moderate to High Ability
        E.   High Ability
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

31.   How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
        A.   No Importance
        B.   Low Importance
        C.   Moderate Importance
        D.   High Importance
        E.   Critical Importance
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

32.   Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
        A.   Yes
        B.   No

Competency: Communication

33.   How would you rate your ability to express ideas and exchange information clearly, avoiding HR technical jargon?
        A.   No to Low Ability
        B.   Low to Moderate Ability
        C.   Moderate Ability
        D.   Moderate to High Ability
        E.   High Ability
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

34.   How would you rate the importance of this ability?
        A.   No Importance
        B.   Low Importance
        C.   Moderate Importance
        D.   High Importance
        E.   Critical Importance
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

35. Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
   A.   Yes
   B.   No

Competency: Team Work

36. How would you rate your ability to work effectively in a team?
   A.   No to Low Ability
   B.   Low to Moderate Ability
   C.   Moderate Ability
   D.   Moderate to High Ability
   E.   High Ability
   F.   Not Applicable
   G.   Don't Know

37. How would you rate the importance of this ability?
   A.   No Importance
   B.   Low Importance
   C.   Moderate Importance
   D.   High Importance
   E.   Critical Importance
   F.   Not Applicable
   G.   Don't Know

38. Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
   A.   Yes
   B.   No

Competency: Conflict resolution

39. How would you rate your ability to use negotiation and conflict resolution techniques?
   A.   No to Low Ability
   B.   Low to Moderate Ability
   C.   Moderate Ability
   D.   Moderate to High Ability
   E.   High Ability
   F.   Not Applicable
   G.   Don't Know

40. How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
   A.   No Importance
   B.   Low Importance
   C.   Moderate Importance
   D.   High Importance
   E.   Critical Importance
   F.   Not Applicable
   G.   Don't Know

41.   Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
        A.   Yes
        B.   No

ROLE: HR TECHNICAL EXPERT

Competency: Analytical Skills

42.   How would you rate your ability to use quantitative and qualitative data to analyze organizational information?
        A.   No to Low Ability
        B.   Low to Moderate Ability
        C.   Moderate Ability
        D.   Moderate to High Ability
        E.   High Ability
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

43.   How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
        A.   No Importance
        B.   Low Importance
        C.   Moderate Importance
        D.   High Importance
        E.   Critical Importance
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

44.   Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
        A.   Yes
        B.   No

Competency: Human Resource Law and Policies

45.   How would you rate your knowledge of human resource law and policies?
        A.   No to Low Ability
        B.   Low to Moderate Ability
        C.   Moderate Ability
        D.   Moderate to High Ability
        E.   High Ability
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

46. How would you rate the importance of this knowledge in your work?
   A. No Importance
   B. Low Importance
   C. Moderate Importance
   D. High Importance
   E. Critical Importance
   F. Not Applicable
   G. Don't Know

47. Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
   A. Yes
   B. No

Competency: Diversity

48. How would you rate your ability to promote diversity in the workforce?
   A. No to Low Ability
   B. Low to Moderate Ability
   C. Moderate Ability
   D. Moderate to High Ability
   E. High Ability
   F. Not Applicable
   G. Don't Know

49.   How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
        A.   No Importance
        B.   Low Importance
        C.   Moderate Importance
        D.   High Importance
        E.   Critical Importance
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

50.   Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
        A.   Yes
        B.   No

Competency: Applying Information Technology to HR

51.   How would you rate your knowledge of current and emerging information technologies to improve HRM efficiency and effectiveness?
        A.   No to Low Ability
        B.   Low to Moderate Ability
        C.   Moderate Ability
        D.   Moderate to High Ability
        E.   High Ability
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

52.   How would you rate the importance of this knowledge in your work?
        A.   No Importance
        B.   Low Importance
        C.   Moderate Importance
        D.   High Importance
        E.   Critical Importance
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

53.   Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
        A.   Yes
        B.   No

Competency: Measure Effectiveness

54.   How would you rate your ability to measure the effectiveness of HR systems in supporting the mission of
        your agency or serviced organization(s)?
        A.   No to Low Ability
        B.   Low to Moderate Ability
        C.   Moderate Ability
        D.   Moderate to High Ability
        E.   High Ability
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

55.   How would you rate the importance of this ability?
        A.   No Importance
        B.   Low Importance
        C.   Moderate Importance
        D.   High Importance
        E.   Critical Importance
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

56.   Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in
        this ability over the past three years?
        A.   Yes
        B.   No

HR ROLE: CHANGE

Competency: Design and Implement Change

57.   How would you rate your ability in designing and implementing a change process?
        A.   No to Low Ability
        B.   Low to Moderate Ability
        C.   Moderate Ability
        D.   Moderate to High Ability
        E.   High Ability
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

58.   How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
        A.   No Importance
        B.   Low Importance
        C.   Moderate Importance
        D.   High Importance
        E.   Critical Importance
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

59.   Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
        A.   Yes
        B.   No

Competency: Consensus/Consultation

60.   How would you rate your ability to build consensus and provide consultation?
        A.   No to Low Ability
        B.   Low to Moderate Ability
        C.   Moderate Ability
        D.   Moderate to High Ability
        E.   High Ability
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

61.   How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
        A.   No Importance
        B.   Low Importance
        C.   Moderate Importance
        D.   High Importance
        E.   Critical Importance
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

62.   Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
        A.   Yes
        B.   No

Competency: Influencing Others to Act

63.   How would you rate your ability to influence the actions of others?
        A.   No to Low Ability
        B.   Low to Moderate Ability
        C.   Moderate Ability
        D.   Moderate to High Ability
        E.   High Ability
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

64.   How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
        A.   No Importance
        B.   Low Importance
        C.   Moderate Importance
        D.   High Importance
        E.   Critical Importance
        F.   Not Applicable
        G.   Don't Know

65. Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
   A. Yes
   B. No

Competency: Marketing

66. How would you rate your ability to persuade customers of the benefits of particular HR programs and/or actions?
   A. No to Low Ability
   B. Low to Moderate Ability
   C. Moderate Ability
   D. Moderate to High Ability
   E. High Ability
   F. Not Applicable
   G. Don't Know

67. How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
   A. No Importance
   B. Low Importance
   C. Moderate Importance
   D. High Importance
   E. Critical Importance
   F. Not Applicable
   G. Don't Know

68. Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
   A. Yes
   B. No

Competency: Organizational Development & HR theories & principles

69. How would you rate your ability to apply human resource management theories to improve organizational performance? (e.g., HR, leadership, management, OD, social science theories, etc.)
   A. No to Low Ability
   B. Low to Moderate Ability
   C. Moderate Ability
   D. Moderate to High Ability
   E. High Ability
   F. Not Applicable
   G. Don't Know

70. How would you rate the importance of this ability in your work?
   A. No Importance
   B. Low Importance
   C. Moderate Importance
   D. High Importance
   E. Critical Importance
   F. Not Applicable
   G. Don't Know

71. Including training that you are already scheduled to take, have you received informal or formal training in this ability over the past three years?
   A. Yes
   B. No

72. Considering everything you must be able to do, how would you rate your ability to do your job?
   A. No to Low Ability
   B. Low to Moderate Ability
   C. Moderate Ability
   D. Moderate to High Ability
   E. High Ability

II. HR Role

NARRATIVE: Describe the primary activities that you perform in your job?

_____

_____

73. Which of the following best describes the office in which you work?
   A. Policy Office at Agency Headquarters or Department Level
   B. Policy Office at Major Command/Bureau/Other Agency Subcomponent
   C. Operating Personnel Office
   D. Processing or Service Center
   E. Other _____

74. If you work in an operating personnel office, describe the role of your personnel organization.
   A. Provide full service
   B. Provide advisory services only
   C. Other _____

75. In the last 5 years, has the way the work is structured changed in your office?
   A.   Yes
   B.   No

      NARRATIVE: If yes, describe how it has changed? (e.g., from traditional full service office to shared services center, etc.)_____

      _____

76. Do you anticipate any changes in how the work is structured in your office over the next year or two?
   A. Yes
   B. No

      NARRATIVE: If so, how do you think it will change?_____

      _____

77. Where did you work prior to your current job?
   A.   Came right from school
   B.   Came from the private sector
   C.   Came from a non-profit organization
   D.   Came from state or local government
   E.   Came from another Federal agency
   F.   From another part of this office/organization/agency
   G.   Other _____

78. If you came from another Federal position, did you transfer from another HR series?
   A.   Yes
   B.   No

79. If yes, which HR series did you transfer from?
   A.   GS 201 (Generalist)
   B.   GS 212 (Staffing)
   C.   GS 221 (Classification)
   D.   GS 230 (Employee Relations)
   E.   GS 233 (Labor Relations)
   F.   GS 235 (Employee Development)
   G.   GS 260 (EEO)
   H.   Other _____

80. If you transferred from a non-HR series, which series did you come from?
   A.   Switched from a non-HR series
   B.   GS 301 (Public Policy)
   C.   GS 343 (Public Management)
   D.   GS 360 (EEO Private Sector)
   E.   Other (specify)_____

81. If you are in the generalist (GS 201) series, what is the primary specialized HR knowledge that you use on the job?
    A.   Staffing
    B.   Classification
    C.   Employee Relations
    D.   Labor Relations
    E.   Employee Development
    F.   EEO
    G.   Other _____
    H.   Not applicable

82. As a Generalist (GS 201), what is the second most used specialized HR knowledge that you use on the job?
    A.   Staffing
    B.   Classification
    C.   Employee Relations
    D.   Labor Relations
    E.   Employee Development
    F.   EEO
    G.   Other _____
    H.   Not applicable

83. What is the third most used HR specialized knowledge that you use on the job?
    A.   Staffing
    B.   Classification
    C.   Employee Relations
    D.   Labor Relations
    E.   Employee Development
    F.   EEO
    G.   Other _____
    H.   Not applicable

84. As a Generalist GS 201, what is the least used HR specialized knowledge that you use on the job?
    A.   Staffing
    B.   Classification
    C.   Employee Relations
    D.   Labor Relations
    E.   Employee Development
    F.   EEO
    G.   Other _____
    H.   Not applicable

85. How would you best describe your role(s) in your current assignment beginning with the primary role. My primary role is:
- A. (Strategic) Business Partner
- B. Management Consultant
- C. HR Technical Expert
- D. Leader
- E. If none of these fit, how would you describe your job in your own terms _____

    _____

86. My second most important role is:
- A. (Strategic) Business Partner
- B. Management Consultant
- C. HR Technical Expert
- D. Leader

87. My third most important role is:
- A. (Strategic) Business Partner
- B. Management Consultant
- C. HR Technical Expert
- D. Leader

88. My least important role is:
- A. (Strategic) Business Partner
- B. Management Consultant
- C. HR Technical Expert
- D. Leader

89. How long have you worked in the HR field?
- A. Less than a year
- B. 1-5 years
- C. 6-10 years
- D. 11-15 years
- E. Over 15 years

90. How long have you worked in your current position?
- A. Less than a year
- B. 1-5 years
- C. 6-10 years
- D. 11-15 years
- E. Over 15 years

91. What is your academic educational level?
- A. Less than high school
- B. H.S. Diploma
- C. Some College
- D. Associate Degree
- E. Bachelor Degree
- F. Masters Degree
- G. Ph.D.
- H. J.D. (Law)

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92. For those with post-high school education, what did you major in?
  A.   Public Administration
  B.   Human Resource Management
  C.   Business
  D.   Communications (Public Relations)
  E.   Finance (Accounting, Budgeting, Economics)
  F.   Social Science (Psychology, Sociology)
  G.   International Relations
  H.   Other _____
  I.   Not applicable

93.   Have you been certified in any formal HR certification program?
  A.   Yes
  B.   No

94.   If yes, from where did you receive it?
  A.   USDA Grad School
  B.   University/College
  C.   Professional Organization (SHRM, IPMA etc)
  D.   Other   _____

III. Demographics

Take Information off the Sample - No need to ask these questions:

95.   Gender:
  A.   Female
  B.   Male

96.   Age:
  A.   21-39
  B.   30-39
  C.   40-49
  D.   50-55
  E.   56+

97.   Race:
  A.   A
  B.   B
  C.   C
  D.   D
  E.   E

98.   Years of service:
        A.   0-5
        B.   6-10
        C.   11-15
        D.   16-20
        E.   21-30
        F.   31 - 40

Focus Group Questioning Route

1. Where does your HR service come from (e.g., full service office on-site, remote office)?

2. Has your HR servicing arrangement changed in the last 3-5 years?

3. (Exhibit A) Please take a look at the organizational structures. Do the descriptions in the left column identify personnel-related work units that you recognize from your agency? Which ones do you recognize? Which are you not familiar with? Has the structure for delivering HR services changed in your agency in the last 3-5 years?

4. What services or assistance do you get from the HR operating office at your agency? Has this changed in the last 3 years?   How?

5. How would you rate the quality of the services you get from your HR office? What are they good at? Where are they lacking?

6. Has the overall level of quality changed in the last 3 years? How?

7. Please take a look at the HR Competency Model. We are defining competencies as "knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors." (Appendix A: OPM's model of competencies) In general, from your dealings with your HR office, would you say the HR staff possesses these competencies? Which do they seem best at? In what competencies are they most lacking?

8. Please look at the roles listed in Exhibit B. Does your HR office fulfill these roles? Are these roles the ones that you need them to play? If not, what roles would be helpful?

9. Do they possess any of these competencies to a greater degree now than 3 years ago?

10. If you could make one recommendation to your HR office to improve the level of its competencies to service your needs, what would that be?