

Deregulation and Delegation of Human Resources Management Authority in the Federal Government



United States
Office of
Personnel
Management

Office of Merit
Systems
Oversight and
Effectiveness

MSE-98-3
July 1998

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Since the advent of the National Performance Review (NPR) in 1993 and the subsequent abolition of the Federal Personnel Manual (FPM), the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has pursued a general policy of deregulating Federal human resources management (HRM) systems and delegating HRM authorities to the greatest extent possible. The broad goals of this effort have been to simplify and reduce the cost of the Federal HRM system, while putting more HRM authority in the hands of line managers who are directly responsible for agency mission accomplishment.

It must be understood, however, that there are limits to the amount of deregulation and delegation that can reasonably occur. Deregulation and delegation must be done within the parameters of the merit system principles (the values that govern the Federal HRM system), laws, and public policy. The principles, laws, and policies were designed to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service within a context of fair and open competition and fair and equal treatment of employees and applicants. Some of these principles, laws, and public policies are perceived as obstacles to deregulation and delegation. This creates a challenge to achieve the appropriate balance between these goals by using creative and imaginative ideas that work within the given parameters.

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, the study presents a governmentwide analysis of the current state of deregulation and delegation, including findings, observations and context. This can help agencies identify where they stand relative to other agencies and provide an overview of progress to date in this area. Second, this study identifies agencies that have made the greatest strides in deregulation and delegation.

General Findings

Deregulation

- Deregulation varies widely among agencies. The majority of Human Resources (HR) Directors report that OPM and their agencies have reduced personnel rules and regulations, but focus group participants expressed varying perceptions. Most have seen *some* deregulation, but there are significant minorities who have seen either no deregulation or an actual increase in regulations. These perceived increases appear to be the result of either agencies replacing eliminated OPM rules and regulations with their own rules or of new legal requirements.

- Focus group participants report that deregulation has not occurred in many of the areas most important to managers and supervisors. With the elimination of the FPM, there is generally more flexibility in interpreting Title 5. Specific areas of HRM such as performance management have also been deregulated by OPM. Still, managers and supervisors believe that it remains too difficult to hire, fire, and advance employees due to what they view as archaic and overly complex systems.
- There are many barriers that focus group participants perceive as inhibiting either deregulation itself or the ability of managers to benefit from it, including regulatory and policy changes, union and partnership agreements, and budgetary restrictions. In addition, Federal personnelists, managers, and supervisors express a number of concerns about the eventual impact of deregulation, including possible inconsistencies in the interpretation of Title 5, lack of knowledge of what they can and cannot do as a result of deregulation, and the future quality of personnel services.
- Many surveyed HR directors and focus group participants note strong accomplishments by their own agencies in the area of deregulation. Survey responses identify the Department of Commerce and the Department of Health and Human Services as agencies at the forefront of deregulation, while focus group comments further highlight the efforts of the Department of Agriculture, the General Services Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, the Department of Interior, and the National Labor Relations Board.

Delegation of HRM Authority

- Delegation of HRM authority has also occurred in varying degrees among Federal agencies. Although OPM has delegated much HRM authority to agencies in some program areas, not all agencies have re-delegated that authority further down the chain of command to managers and first-line supervisors. Authorities are often not consistently delegated within an agency.
- A comparison of these findings with those of a similar study conducted in 1992 shows that, while delegations have increased in some areas of HRM such as performance management, there has been no significant change in the degree to which agencies have delegated HRM authority to their first-line supervisors overall. In fact, the survey comparisons show that in some instances, supervisors are actually enjoying fewer delegations of authority than in 1992.
- A review of the extent of delegations of authority by program area shows that delegation to the lowest levels possible is most likely to occur in program areas such as leave and staffing, and least likely in classification and disciplinary actions.

- Many managers and supervisors say they would like the authority to make higher level decisions such as classifying positions, making final selections, and disciplining and removing employees -- though some agencies report that they have given supervisors these higher level authorities. Still, other focus group participants indicate that managers and supervisors do not want the additional workload and responsibility required by these delegations.
- Defense-related agencies lead the way in delegating authority to first-line supervisors, while non-Defense agencies tend to lag behind in their delegations.

Accountability

- As the Government moves toward increased deregulation, delegation, and flexibility for managers, the question of how managers and supervisors are being held accountable for making personnel-related decisions that further mission accomplishment and comply with the merit system principles becomes more vital. At this point, accountability for HRM tends to be focused more on personnelists than line managers, and is mostly limited to compliance with laws, rather than also integrating accountability for results.

Implications and Recommendations

- Deregulation has had limited success to date and much remains to be done. The personnel system is still perceived as cumbersome, with unnecessary rules and regulations that continue to interfere with the timely completion of work. Part of the reason for this perception may be that deregulation is not occurring in areas where managers and supervisors say they see the most need -- classification, staffing, and adverse actions. They believe deregulation in these areas would help them to perform the duties most important to achieving their missions. However, it is not easy to say what would be the “ideal” amount of deregulation.
- Regulations are not necessarily a “bad” thing. They provide a valuable level of consistency when implementing laws. Nevertheless, regulations should also allow for flexibility as much as possible, and deregulating certain areas would help contribute to that flexibility. OPM recognizes that agencies may sometimes have legitimate reasons for retaining requirements that OPM no longer compels. In such cases, the decision is made to fulfill a genuine agency need rather than a Governmentwide requirement. OPM sees its role as providing HRM leadership and services to balance flexibility and consistency across the Government, and should therefore encourage agencies to begin or to continue to deregulate where appropriate and when in the best interest of the agency.
- Delegation also has seemed to enjoy limited success, and that again may be because it is not occurring in areas managers perceive the most need. However, there may be good

reason to limit the amount of delegation in highly sensitive areas, such as adverse actions, and delegations must be consistent with the merit system principles, law, and public policy. Again, OPM should encourage agencies to begin or continue delegating where appropriate, to allow managers flexibility yet also ensure consistency.

- Managers and supervisors are not well informed about what deregulation has taken place, what authorities have been delegated to them, what current flexibilities exist, and what tools are available to them. OPM and agencies should ensure that they are given information on what they can and cannot do, and education on how to deal with these changes in responsibility.
- Further study of the topics of deregulation and delegation may be appropriate to pick up where this study left off. As noted, there are considerable differences among agencies in the degree of HRM deregulation and delegation. It might be very instructive to explore in more depth how certain agencies have taken the lead in these areas, what barriers they overcame, and what difference it has made.

INTRODUCTION

The issues of deregulation and delegation of human resources management (HRM) authority have become increasingly important in the Federal Government over the last few years. In 1993, Vice President Al Gore's National Performance Review (NPR), now known as the National Partnership for Reinvention, brought these issues to the forefront by advocating the reinvention of our Government. NPR sought to create a Government that puts people first by: cutting red tape, empowering employees to get results, cutting back to basics, and putting customers first. In support of this effort, NPR urged agencies to review their internal regulations and decide what could or could not be eliminated, and to put as much authority as possible in the hands of line managers responsible for carrying out their agencies' missions.

Human resources management was identified by NPR as a critical component of the proposed reforms. In its summary report, *Creating a Government that Works Better and Costs Less*, NPR cited five major actions that should be taken to reform the Federal human resources system: 1) "deregulate" personnel policy by phasing out the Federal Personnel Manual (FPM); 2) delegate examining authority to agencies and abolish central registers and the standard application form (SF-171); 3) simplify the General Schedule (GS) system to give agencies more flexibility in classification and pay; 4) allow agencies to design their own performance management and reward systems; and 5) improve the system for dealing with poor performers.

As the lead agency for Federal HRM, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has taken significant and, in some cases, dramatic actions since 1993 to carry out these recommended actions. The FPM was abolished with considerable fanfare by 1994, with a few pieces of necessary technical guidance in areas such as pay determination and benefits placed in subject matter handbooks available in electronic format. Mandatory centralized registers were eliminated and hiring authority for virtually all Federal positions delegated to the agencies. The SF-171 was abolished, and job candidates are now allowed to use resumes or other formats as an alternative when applying for positions. Regulations in the area of performance management were drastically reduced and simplified, allowing extensive freedom to agencies to design their own systems as to the number of rating levels, use of multiple rater approaches, and other features.

Less progress has been made in classification and dealing with poor performers, in large part because major reforms in these areas require legislative action. Even with this obstacle, however, OPM has found ways to promote NPR-like reform, especially in classification. The revitalized demonstration project authority and other initiatives show clearly OPM's interest in promoting innovation and flexibility in individual agencies, even where it cannot yet be offered governmentwide.

It must be understood that deregulation and delegation is ultimately limited to what can be done within the core values of the merit system principles (which are the values that govern the Federal HRM system), laws, and public policy. These principles, laws, and policies were designed to

ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service within a context of fair and open competition and fair and equal treatment of employees and applicants. Some of these principles, laws, and public policies are perceived as obstacles to deregulation and delegation. This creates a challenge to achieve the appropriate balance between these goals by using creative and imaginative ideas that work within the given parameters.

In its recommendation regarding the FPM, the NPR spoke in the same breath of phasing out “all agency implementing regulations.” While OPM has been the focal point for efforts to reinvent Federal HRM, the NPR was clear in its vision that the effort could not be successful without comparable deregulation activities taking place at the agency level. It follows, too, that NPR’s intent regarding empowerment of managers will not be achieved unless OPM’s actions to delegate HRM authority are replicated within agencies.

Purposes of the Study

This study has been planned and conducted in order to identify the extent to which the deregulation of Federal HRM systems and delegation of HRM authorities to line managers advocated by NPR have actually taken place. To this end, the report presents a governmentwide analysis of the current state of deregulation and delegation of HRM authority in the Federal Government, primarily as reported to us by agency HR officials, managers, supervisors, and personnelists at various agency installations in the Washington, DC area and around the country. Drawing on this information, the report also identifies agency leaders in deregulation and delegation, who can point the way to how more extensive deregulation and delegation can be achieved.

Before describing the study further, it is important to clarify what is meant here by the terms “deregulation” and “delegation.” These terms are sometimes used almost interchangeably and, while they are related, they actually refer to different aspects of how line managers can be given additional HR authority. The term “deregulation” is defined in this study as the process of creating agency and managerial flexibility in human resources management by reducing or removing regulations or restrictions. “Delegation” is defined as the act of empowering agencies and managers by passing along to them the legal authority to make specific human resources management decisions.

Given OPM’s efforts to deregulate some aspects of Federal HRM, the study attempts to gather a broad range of information about the degree to which deregulation has occurred within agencies and its impact. As noted above, the elimination of the FPM was a broad signal of OPM’s intent in this area. Yet, it has been unclear what impact this might have had among the agencies. Do agency personnelists and managers believe that the absence of the FPM leaves a void? More importantly, are they filling any perceived gaps with current guidance for managers of their own? How prescriptive or “regulatory” is this policy or guidance?

While abolishing the FPM was important, symbolically and substantively, it was only a portion of OPM's effort in recent years to deregulate Federal HRM at the governmentwide level. Thus, the broader deregulation question addressed by this study is, do agency line managers -- as an outcome of all that has taken place recently to deregulate Federal HRM -- believe that this deregulation has given them more authority and flexibility to manage their human resources?

Likewise, the report probes the issue of delegated HRM authority. Specifically, we wanted to determine to what extent delegation of HRM authority has occurred. In what specific program areas has OPM delegated authority to agencies? Have authorities actually been redelegated to managers and supervisors, and do they want more delegations? Finally, what has been the impact of the delegations they have received on their ability to manage human resources?

Methodology

In an effort to gather the information needed to answer these questions, a number of sources were consulted and two new data collection instruments were designed and administered. The sources included, among others, the NPR reports on Federal HRM, OPM documents relating to flexibilities in the current HR system, and an internal OPM study from the early 1990s on the extent of agency delegations. This information was used to establish historical perspective and a partial baseline for the state of deregulation and delegation prior to the study.

The first new data collection instrument was a questionnaire administered in 1997 to Directors of Human Resources Management, or their representatives, at 30 agencies. The questionnaire was designed to allow HR officials to report the extent and effects of deregulation in their agencies and specifically what human resources management authorities they have delegated and to what level. The questionnaire yielded a 97 percent response rate, with 29 of the 30 agencies responding. The 30 agencies contacted represent 93 percent of the non-postal Executive Branch agencies and 62 percent of total Federal Government employment across all branches.

The questionnaire was designed to duplicate to some degree the survey originally administered in 1992 as part of an *OPM Review of Delegated Personnel Management Authorities*. This made it possible to compare data from 1992 and 1997, at least in the area of delegation, to see what progress has been made. While these comparisons provide useful information, it must be noted that the 1992 survey went to a different target audience (and included individuals at field locations in addition to headquarters HR officials in the various agencies), so the population responding to the two questionnaires is different to some extent.

To complement the questionnaire and provide a "user" perspective on the impact of deregulation and delegation across the Government, a set of focus group questioning routes was also designed for collecting perceptual data from managers, supervisors, and personnelists. All focus group questioning routes were pretested in Philadelphia, PA and Washington, DC. Then, a nationwide series of focus groups was conducted with employees from various Government agencies in cities across the country, in order to provide the widest possible perspective on the impact of HRM

deregulation and delegation. In all, seven focus groups were conducted with managers (GS-14 - SES), seven with first-line supervisors, and seven with personnelists, for a total of 21 focus groups. Three focus groups (personnelist, supervisor, manager) were conducted in each of the following cities: Atlanta, GA; Chicago, IL; San Francisco, CA; Denver, CO; and Newark, NJ. Six focus groups (two sets each of personnelists, supervisors, and managers) were conducted in Washington, DC.

Given the primary purpose of the report -- to gain and present a governmentwide analysis of the current state of deregulation and delegation -- the study instruments and methods were designed with breadth of coverage in mind, and not for in-depth agency analysis. Nevertheless, it is possible from the data collected to make some broad comparisons among individual agencies, and we have taken this opportunity to highlight agencies which appear to be leading the way in deregulation and delegation.

It is also possible to compare Defense-related agencies with non-Defense agencies.¹ This type of breakdown is often made in Government studies, because of the Defense-related agencies' size and what are often considered to be their unique mission and culture. In this case it seems particularly relevant, because the highly structured subunits and clear lines of authority and accountability associated with the military and its civilian counterparts in the Defense-related agencies might have an effect on the degree of HRM deregulation and delegation there. So, to explore this issue, comparisons have also been made here between Defense-related and non-Defense agencies.

¹ For the purpose of this report, Defense-related agencies include the services (i.e., the Departments of Air Force, Army, and Navy), as well as other non-service Defense agencies. Non-Defense agencies are those agencies not associated with the Department of Defense.

DEREGULATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

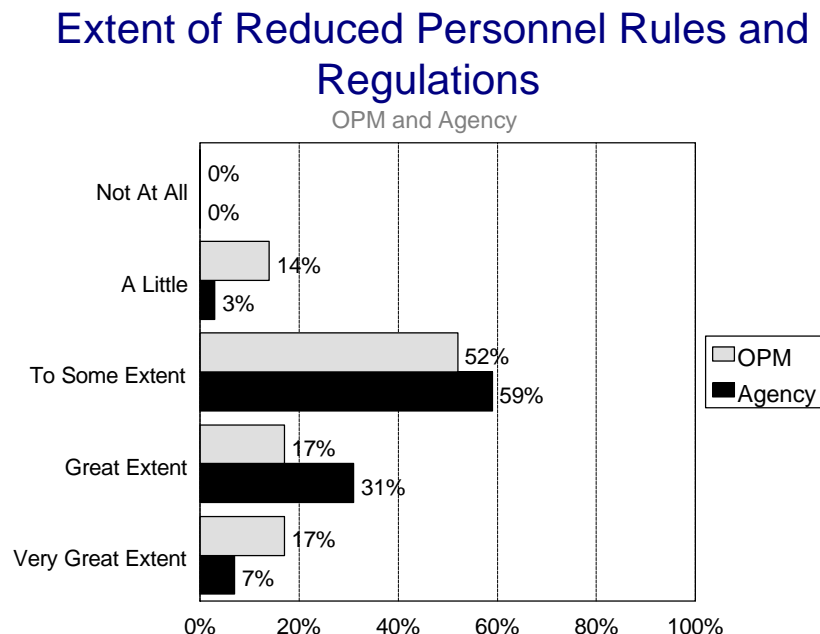
General

The extent and effects of deregulation vary widely among agencies. Overall, responses from surveyed HR Directors show that OPM and agencies are reducing personnel rules and regulations at least to some extent, and few agencies are creating new rules, policies, or practices to replace those eliminated by OPM. However, the responses also suggest that OPM and agency rules and regulations are still making personnelists' jobs difficult and are interfering with timely completion of work.

The perceptions revealed during nationwide focus groups with managers, first-line supervisors, and personnelists contrast somewhat to those of the survey responses. Perceptions on the extent that deregulation has occurred are evenly split. There are those who perceive a decrease in regulations, those who discern an increase, and those who say little to no change has occurred. While caution should be used in extrapolating from focus group findings, there appears to be no strong consensus among managers, supervisors, and personnelists on how much effect, if any, deregulation has had.

Extent of Deregulation

The majority of surveyed HR Directors report that OPM and their agencies have reduced personnel rules and regulations in the last four years. Eighty-six percent of respondents claim that OPM has reduced rules and regulations from some extent to a very great extent. An overwhelming 97 percent report that their own agencies have reduced rules and regulations from some extent to a very great extent (see chart below).



Focus group participant perceptions are mixed as to the extent of deregulation. They say the elimination of rules and regulations has occurred in various parts of the human resources field. Supervisors, managers, and personnelists noted the elimination of the FPM, SF-171, and some of their own agency personnel regulations, and changes in performance management. In addition to eliminating or reducing rules and regulations, they have seen deregulation through the simplification of HRM processes and procedures, such as the automation of processes in staffing and classification and other innovations.

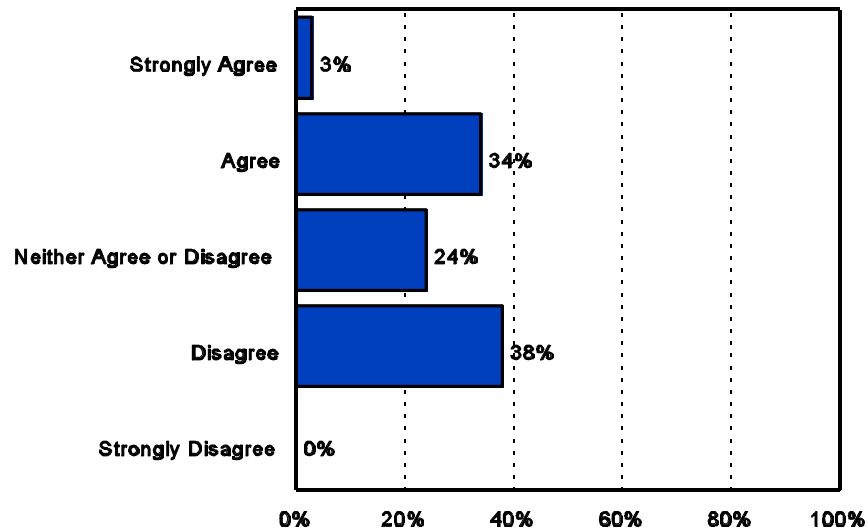
As indicated above, some focus group participants indicate that rules and regulations have actually increased over the past four years. They have seen this increase, for example, through the new Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (I/CTAP) regulations, as well as in agency regulations to offset the reduced OPM regulations and elimination of the FPM. In fact, 21 percent of the surveyed HR Directors agree that agency rules, policies, and practices have been created to replace those eliminated by OPM. The participants also view bargaining unit contracts as causing an increase in rules and processes. Ironically, some participants also mentioned the increase in regulations to carry out the Family Medical Leave Act, alternative work schedules, and flexiplace (though these are generally viewed positively). In these instances, new laws to increase employee flexibility to balance family and work priorities are also perceived as adding complexity and additional regulation to the HR system.

Finally, there were those focus group participants who claim to have seen very little to no change in OPM and agency rules, regulations, and processes. They make the point that although the FPM was abolished, most of the laws and regulations are still intact.

Flexibilities

A major rationale for deregulation is to give line managers needed flexibility in managing human resources. Although they believe that at least some deregulation has occurred, surveyed HR Directors are split as to whether the reduction of personnel rules and regulations has actually made the overall personnel system more flexible in meeting managers' needs. Thirty-seven percent of respondents agree that the reduction has made the system more flexible for managers while 38 percent disagree. Twenty-four percent neither agree nor disagree.

Reduction of Personnel Rules has made the Personnel System more Flexible to Managers' Needs



Technically, though the FPM was guidance rather than regulation, it was often treated by agencies as a regulatory document, and many of the focus group participants cite its elimination as an act of deregulation that allows them more flexibility. Without prescriptive guidance, interpretation of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), is more flexible. Managers, supervisors, and personnelists are able to go back to the core concept and spirit of the law. In many agencies, personnelists now work more closely with managers in finding ways to help them obtain an objective, rather than saying “no” because the FPM does not allow it.

Focus group participants identify a number of new flexibilities resulting from deregulation. The personnel program area that has been most positively affected by deregulation is performance management. Since OPM deregulated this function, thereby giving agencies more say in their own performance systems, managers have been able to experiment with different types of appraisal and award systems. Many organizations have begun using pass/fail or three level rating systems and 360 degree appraisals. They have delinked awards from performance ratings and experimented with various types of non-monetary awards. Most focus group managers, supervisors, and personnelists are satisfied with these changes and the opportunity to experiment, though specific aspects of these systems have caused some concern. For instance, some focus group participants believe that using different performance systems causes inconsistencies Governmentwide and even agencywide, and that these systems often do not motivate employees (e.g., the pass/fail system).

Other reported flexibilities include less up-front paperwork on many actions (such as promotions) and automated systems for recruiting, classification, and requesting personnel actions. As mentioned above, initiatives that have actually increased regulations, but have provided more flexibilities, are the Family Medical Leave Act, alternative work schedules, and flexiplace. The ability to grant alternative work schedules and locations relieves much tension among the workforce and allows managers and supervisors to work with employees to set up schedules that are most beneficial to the work environment and mission of the organization.

Overall, though, the picture painted by focus group participants is still one of limited flexibility in the HR arena. The CFR and most personnel processes are still in place, and it is still difficult to classify, hire, fire, and promote employees (flexibilities most desired by managers and supervisors).

Still other focus group participants note that it is too early to tell what effect deregulation has had on the personnel function. So many other things are happening at the same time (e.g., hiring freezes, downsizing, new legal requirements such as I/CTAP regulations, labor-management partnership efforts, budget cuts, and centralization), it is hard to tell what is causing the actual changes in the personnel arena. They feel more time is needed to learn how to implement the changes and gauge the actual effect.

What Deregulation Managers Want

Given this mixed picture, it is not surprising that there are many areas which focus group participants would like to see further deregulated. They say that the classification system is too complicated. It makes it difficult to create positions that managers believe they need in order to complete the mission of their agency, and it is too complicated for managers and supervisors to understand and use without extensive training. Staffing regulations make it too difficult for managers and supervisors to hire qualified employees in a timely manner.

Managers often perceive laws and public policies like I/CTAP, veterans preference, and the “rule of three” as hindrances to hiring the best qualified candidates. Pay restrictions also make it difficult to hire employees who possess unique, highly needed skills at a rate of pay acceptable to them. Managers and supervisors also want a more simplified process for dealing with poor performers. As it stands, the process is perceived as too cumbersome, and many supervisors find it easier to ignore the problem than to go through the full process and documentation requirements. Many also indicate they would like to see labor management relations deregulated in order to loosen new requirements placed on managers and supervisors by partnership agreements and union contracts. Again, it should be noted that these laws, public policies, and protections were enacted for many legitimate reasons. OPM remains an advocate of these requirements and encourages agencies to eliminate internal barriers that keep them from capitalizing on existing flexibilities.

Barriers to Deregulation

Managers indicate they would like additional deregulation, and many HR officials and managers agree that, even with some deregulation, managers still do not have the flexibility they need. For example, over 50 percent of surveyed HR officials perceive that the deregulation that has occurred has not made HR less cumbersome. What has occurred to prevent more deregulation

from taking place, making it difficult for managers and supervisors to enjoy more flexibility in HRM?

From information gathered through the focus groups, we were able to identify a number of barriers to additional deregulation and managerial flexibility. For instance, in this time of deregulation, there has actually been an increase in regulations revolving around new personnel programs, most notably I/CTAP. I/CTAP is an experimental program, currently authorized until 1999, that replaced the centralized Interagency Placement Program (IAP), in which OPM maintained an extensive inventory of displaced workers and required agencies to clear that inventory before filling competitive service vacancies. A major difference between the two programs is that the responsibility for considering I/CTAP applicants rests squarely with the agencies, as this program has been delegated directly to them.

Most managers, supervisors, and personnelists acknowledge the importance of the intent of the I/CTAP program, which is to effectively place displaced Federal workers into new jobs. Nevertheless, they claim that the added regulations make the hiring process more cumbersome. Hiring officials must consider applicants who are "well qualified" equally with those who are "best qualified." Also, in many instances, they say they are not able to hire desired minority group candidates because they must hire an I/CTAP eligible. They say that they are missing out on extremely talented candidates while many of the I/CTAP candidates are being hired into jobs they do not really want and do not feel comfortable performing. Others indicate that they do not see many I/CTAP eligibles taking advantage of the program, but that hiring processes still require more time and resources due to the regulations.

Managers may feel stifled by the new requirements, but in comparing I/CTAP to IAP, they seem to currently have much more flexibility. In regard to considering "well qualified" candidates, under the old program the displaced employee had only to meet *minimum* qualifications to receive selection priority. Also, "well qualified" is defined by the agency, not OPM. Regarding being unable to hire minorities, minorities and women are usually disproportionately separated when RIF's occur, so it seems that I/CTAP should be a rich source of candidates for affirmative action programs. As for having to hire employees who do not want the job, the displaced employees must take the initiative to apply for positions under I/CTAP, whereas employees were referred for positions whether they were interested or not under the IAP.

More commonly than an increase in regulations, though, focus group participants spoke of factors or indicators that, in their view, undermine the desired effect of deregulation. Union and partnership agreements are seen by many as a barrier to flexibility. Deregulation has caused unions to fill the gap of reduced regulations in order to protect employees' rights, and union contracts have placed many new restrictions on managers. These agreements make it even more difficult to admonish poor performers or take staffing actions. National agreements are becoming more and more prevalent, and these agreements restrict local flexibility. In some cases, the national union signs off on almost all actions, reviews every hiring decision, and is involved in all meetings between management and employees. Many management decisions must now be

discussed with the union and the decisionmaking process is therefore prolonged. For this reason, some agency participants see the involvement of the union as a trend toward “re-regulation.” At one agency a new union contract altered the performance management system from a three level system back to a five level system, which the participant said was a step backward.

In some cases, however, the union and management have worked well together to come up with better ways of addressing HR issues. For instance, a General Services Administration (GSA) manager cites a new pass/fail system established by a union/management team at the national level. A Department of Education participant says that union involvement has taken the form of helpful advice and ownership rather than actual authority. Another participant adds that unions and partnership are adding the structure the system has lost through deregulation, a structure the participant feels is needed to efficiently run such a complex system. As seen through these examples, union representation is an important aspect of the Federal system. In situations where they are perceived as problematic, unions and management must learn to strike a balance between workforce representation and management flexibilities.

Other barriers to realizing new flexibilities from deregulation are budgetary and resource restrictions. Agencies’ budgets and staffs are shrinking from year to year. Therefore, they cannot exercise many of the new flexibilities. For example, they do not have money to give awards, and because of staff shortages, they cannot give time off awards. The I/CTAP regulations and elimination of the SF-171 create more work for the smaller staffs.

Centralization of personnel services has also been perceived as a barrier to exercising flexibilities under deregulation. Personnel actions often take just as many, if not more, steps to implement through a centralized office. Supervisors and personnelists still have the paperwork and many of the regulations, but fewer resources to do the work. As personnel resources are being centralized away from direct contact with managers, they are making decisions on their own without the help of personnel specialists to answer questions, review decisions, or interpret regulations.

Finally, many focus group participants cite a particular case -- the elimination of the SF-171 as the mandatory form for applying for a Federal job -- where they have perceived an act of deregulation as actually making their jobs more difficult. They believe that doing away with the SF-171 has made it difficult and inefficient to assess applications. Applicants can submit resumes or other Government forms that do not necessarily contain all of the information needed to rate and rank them. Therefore, supervisors and personnelists report spending extra time recontacting applicants for the additional information, and this causes inconsistencies, takes too much time, and inconveniences the applicants and screeners. Applicants and the public in general have not been surveyed here as to whether they now find the application process more customer friendly and appealing -- the intended result of the elimination. If the elimination of the form has caused an increase in potential and best qualified candidates, that end may justify the means.

Concerns

While there are many barriers that hinder deregulation and prevent managers, supervisors, and personnelists from benefitting from new flexibilities, there are also underlying concerns expressed about what will happen as deregulation progresses. Although many in the Federal sector had anticipated deregulation with the hopes of creating a more results-focused and less compliance-oriented Government, deregulation and the prospect of more deregulation have led to anxiety about inconsistencies and unfairness in the personnel system, lack of knowledge about what is required under deregulation, and the future quality of personnel services.

The most notable concern is consistency. With the abolition of the FPM, personnelists spend much more time interpreting Title 5 and case law. For many, this freedom of interpretation is welcomed and challenging. They feel they can be more creative and flexible in using, applying, and interpreting laws and the CFR, thereby helping and consulting with managers rather than saying “no” to them.

However, this freedom also can cause inconsistencies in implementing personnel regulations, even within the same office. One personnelist may interpret a regulation differently than the next, and agencies end up doing things very differently. This also opens up the opportunity for managers and supervisors to “shop around” for the answer they want. The participants fear that this raises the potential for disparity and inequitable treatment governmentwide, with some agencies interpreting the laws very conservatively while others adopt more creative interpretations, thereby opening up more flexibilities for their employees.

The focus group participants argue that the FPM was a great tool. It gave uniform, governmentwide guidance that is needed in order to manage such a complex personnel system fairly. While some of it was unnecessary and overly prescriptive, they say it was a good resource, especially for employees new to the field. In fact, there are many personnelists who admit to still having a copy of the FPM and using it for reference purposes.

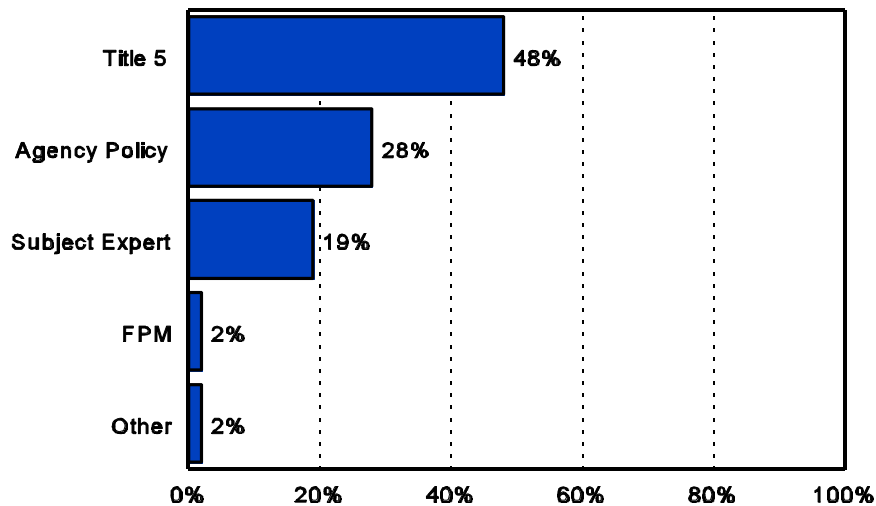
Lack of knowledge regarding deregulation is also a concern. With the abolition of the FPM, many managers, supervisors, and personnelists have become confused as to what they can and cannot do. Many managers and supervisors assumed that deregulation would mean that the rules would be thrown out and they would be able to do as they saw fit. They have since learned that this is not the case. There are still rules, regulations, and laws in place, but they are confused as to what has actually changed and what has not. Therefore, making decisions on human resources management has become even more difficult. With each decision they make, they feel they are taking a risk and possibly opening themselves up to complaints or law suits. Participants report that they would like to see some type of document or other informational device that shows what changes have taken place and what flexibilities these changes allow. Many also feel that they need more training in personnel policy and issues to know how to most effectively use the system.

Finally, focus group participants are concerned about the future quality of personnel services in a less regulated setting. As personnel offices downsize and centralize, they are losing many seasoned employees who have institutional knowledge and vast experience in interpreting the CFR. As these seasoned employees leave, the newer, inexperienced personnelists are having to deal with issues and guide managers without the same knowledge or experience. They must maneuver through the system without the FPM or assistance perhaps from knowledgeable personnelists.

Guidance for Personnel Decisionmaking

The possible lack of structure and guidance in the post-FPM Federal personnel system was further addressed in both the survey and the nationwide focus groups, where personnelists, supervisors, and managers were asked what guidance they use when making personnel-related decisions and giving advice. In response, both focus group and survey participants say they are relying more on the CFR for guidance than other avenues. Forty-eight percent of the survey respondents cite the CFR, while agency policy came in second with 28 percent, and subject matter experts third with 19 percent. Only two percent of respondents indicate that they still rely on the FPM for guidance.

Guidance Personnelists Use



The focus group participants acknowledge that many personnelists still have copies of the FPM to use as a reference tool, though not for citations. However, they rely on the CFR and case law much more now than they did before the FPM was eliminated, and they also refer to agency policy and subject matter experts as frequent resources. A few participants indicate that they look to private sector company practices and the Internet for ideas and information.

Are the CFR and other sources cited adequate as guidance for personnelists? Many of the participants believe that they are not. Even seasoned personnel specialists are hesitant about how much flexibility they have in interpreting Title 5, and are not sure what they can and cannot do anymore. They would like some type of procedural guidance, perhaps similar to the FPM, for consistency's sake, but indicate that little or no replacement guidance has been issued to them as the FPM and other agency and OPM regulations have been eliminated. Some have tried obtaining help and guidance from OPM, but found it hard to contact OPM representatives because of the downsizing that agency has also gone through. Often, when they do ask questions of OPM, they are told that decisions are up to the agency.

Of course, this kind of uncertainty may simply be the price of flexibility. The freedom to act more independently at the local level, in order to meet the mission requirements of the agency, makes it more important for personnelists to understand how HRM can support those requirements and to make decisions accordingly. Some personnelists, in other words, must learn a new role.

Defense-related agencies vs. Non-Defense Agencies

Finally, a comparison was made between Defense-related and non-Defense agencies. Survey responses indicate no particular difference here, with deregulation in Defense-related agencies generally occurring to more or less the same extent and having the same effect as in non-Defense agencies. A few survey questions, however, do indicate some differences. Regarding whether a reduction of personnel rules and regulations has made the personnel system more flexible to managers' needs, 75 percent of Defense-related agencies agree while only 32 percent of non-Defense agencies agree. Regarding whether agency rules, policies, and practices have been created to replace those eliminated by OPM, only 5 percent of Defense-related agencies agree compared to 16 percent of non-Defense agencies.

Agency Leaders in Deregulation

As indicated in previous sections, deregulation has been more extensive in some program areas than others, and its impact on managers' authority and flexibility to act has sometimes been limited by a numbers of factors. Similarly, the extent and success of deregulation appears to vary considerably among agencies. Several surveyed HR Directors and focus group participants were able to note strong accomplishments by their agencies in the area of deregulation, and it is possible to identify, at least tentatively, agencies that stand out as leaders in this effort.

According to survey information, two such leaders in deregulation are the Department of Commerce (DOC) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Survey data show that both agencies have deregulated to a very great extent and that agency rules, policies, and practices have not been created to replace those eliminated by OPM. Both agencies agree that a

reduction of personnel rules and regulations has made the personnel system more flexible to meet managers' needs and less cumbersome, and DOC finds that rules and regulations do not interfere with the timely completion of work. (See [Appendix B](#) for a compilation of survey results for all respondents).

Agency Survey Leaders		
Survey Question	HHS	DOC
Extent agency has reduced regulations	Very Great Extent	Very Great Extent
Agency policies have been created to replace eliminated OPM polices	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Reduction of regulations has made system more flexible to managers' needs	Strongly Agree	Agree
Reduction of regulations has made system less cumbersome	Strongly Agree	Agree

Not enough focus group information specific to these agencies was available to corroborate the survey findings. However, several of the focus group participants indicate that their agencies have made great strides in successfully eliminating many internal agency rules and regulations. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture did away with many of its internal regulations at the same time that OPM eliminated the FPM. The personnel system now allows for more interpretation and letting common sense play a larger role than rigid rules.

GSA has deregulated and simplified its regulations considerably and pared down large rule and guidance-oriented documents to just a few pages. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has reduced many rules, regulations, and its administrative handbook. One IRS organization reduced 54 rules to six concepts.

The Department of Interior reports having deregulated substantially. It eliminated more than 50 percent of its internal regulations (which were just restatements of the law and the CFR) while its bureaus also deregulated. For instance, Mineral Mine Safety eliminated 75 percent of its internal regulations. Interior's Merit Promotion Plan (MPP) was a huge document with the Department, each bureau, and each personnel office within each bureau required to have its own MPP. Now, everyone uses the same three page Question and Answer MPP.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has also taken agency deregulation seriously. Its first step was to clarify the scope and extent of HR written policy. It then tried to reduce this written policy by 50 percent, and has been successful in eliminating old, obsolete policies and not writing replacement guidance. Nevertheless, as the survey results in Appendix B show and focus group comments reinforce, success stories like these have not been repeated at every agency.

DELEGATION OF HRM AUTHORITIES

General

As with deregulation, surveys and focus group results indicate that delegation of HRM authority varies greatly among Federal agencies, and that even within agencies authority is not always evenly delegated. To gather basic information about the degree of delegation, a questionnaire was administered in 1997 to Directors of Human Resources Management or their representatives at 30 Federal Government agencies. As noted above under *Methodology*, a large portion of the questionnaire was originally administered in 1992, although there were some differences in who responded to the two surveys. So, although the findings must be interpreted with caution, it is possible to compare 1997 results with those from 1992.

A general comparison of responses with the earlier survey suggests that only a few new delegations have been given to first-line supervisors since 1992. Indeed, the survey also suggests that, in some areas, supervisors are actually enjoying fewer delegations of authority than in 1992 (see [Appendix E](#)).

Comments from focus group participants provide even more information about what has occurred. Personnelists, managers, and supervisors in these groups have seen OPM and agencies make delegations to managers in areas such as classification, staffing, performance management, and training. These delegations have helped some managers get personnel actions processed faster, but speed alone does not help them to do their jobs better. However, a number of managers and supervisors still report having received no delegations of personnel authority from their agency.

Program Areas

As the survey shows, delegations of HRM authority are more likely to be given to first-line supervisors in some program areas than others. Questionnaire responses regarding the 32 specific delegations of authority have been tallied to reveal which program area agencies most often give *complete* or *limited* authority (see definitions below) to their supervisors. The following table shows the percentage of possible delegations made by the majority of agencies within specific program areas.

Extent of Delegation of HRM Authority by Program Area			
Program Area	Number of Possible Delegations	Number of Delegations Given by Majority of Agencies	Percent of Delegations Given by Agencies
Leave	4	4	100%
Staffing	10	7	70%
Training	3	2	67%
Performance Management	6	4	67%
Classification	4	2	50%
Disciplinary Actions	5	2	40%

As shown in the table above, the area where agencies have consistently given their supervisors the most authority is leave. The majority of agencies report they have given complete or limited authority to first-line supervisors for all four leave delegations. The survey lists ten possible delegations of authority in the staffing program area. Of those ten delegations, most agency responses say they have given complete or limited authority to their first-line supervisors for seven, or 70 percent, of those delegations. Sixty-seven percent of delegations of authority for training and performance management have been distributed by the majority of Federal agencies, while 50 percent of classification authorities have been given to supervisors. As one might expect, due to the seriousness of these actions, disciplinary actions is a program area in which delegations are not freely distributed to first-line supervisors. The majority of agencies have distributed only about 40 percent of possible delegations of authority to first-line supervisors in this area.

The sections below provide a more in-depth look at each program area. Particular attention is paid to comparisons between 1992 and the current level of delegations, and between Defense-related and non-Defense agencies. In reviewing these results, it is important to keep in mind the following definitions of the survey response categories, which describe varying degrees of authority possessed by first-line supervisors:

Complete Supervisory Authority: First level supervisors have complete and final authority for all, or substantially all, personnel actions and decisions of this type. Such actions and decisions are not reviewed or approved by anyone else.

Limited Supervisory Authority: First level supervisors have complete and final authority for personnel actions and decisions in this area *in some circumstances*. Limitations are imposed by factors such as grade level, cost, or duration of the personnel action or decision involved.

Supervisory Authority to Recommend: First level supervisors have *Supervisory Authority to Recommend* virtually all personnel decisions of this type, but *formal approval* rests with a higher level manager.

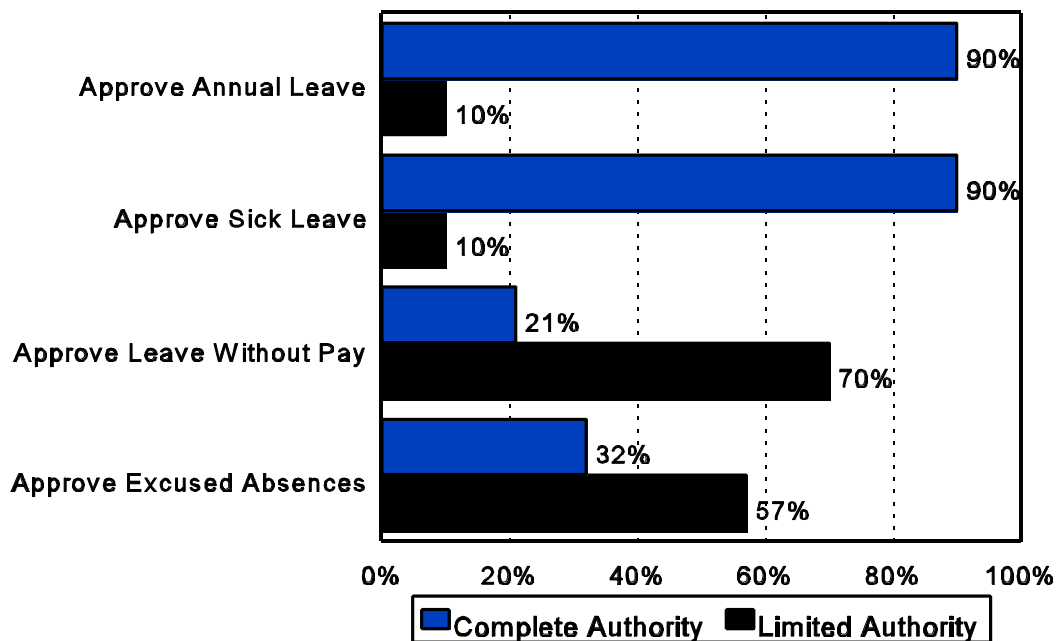
No Supervisory Authority: First level supervisors *have no Supervisory Authority in this area to take or recommend* personnel actions or decisions. *Only higher level managers* have authority to take personnel actions and make decisions in this area.

Not Delegated: Authority to take personnel actions and make decisions in this area *has not been delegated* to first level supervisors or managers. Authority to take personnel actions and make decisions in this area is retained by top management or the Personnel Officer.

Leave

As already noted, leave is the area in which supervisors have enjoyed by far the greatest delegation of authority. This is not surprising because historically, managers and first-line supervisors have almost always had this authority. All of the agencies responding to the survey report that supervisors have *complete or limited* authority to approve requests for annual and sick leave. Twenty-one percent of agencies say supervisors have complete authority and seventy percent report their supervisors have limited authority to approve requests for leave without pay. Interestingly, while fifty percent of Defense-related agencies have granted *complete* authority to approve leave without pay requests to their supervisors, only 16 percent of non-Defense agencies have done so. Most of the agencies responding to the questionnaire have issued complete or limited authority to approve excused absences (mostly limited authority).

Leave Delegations

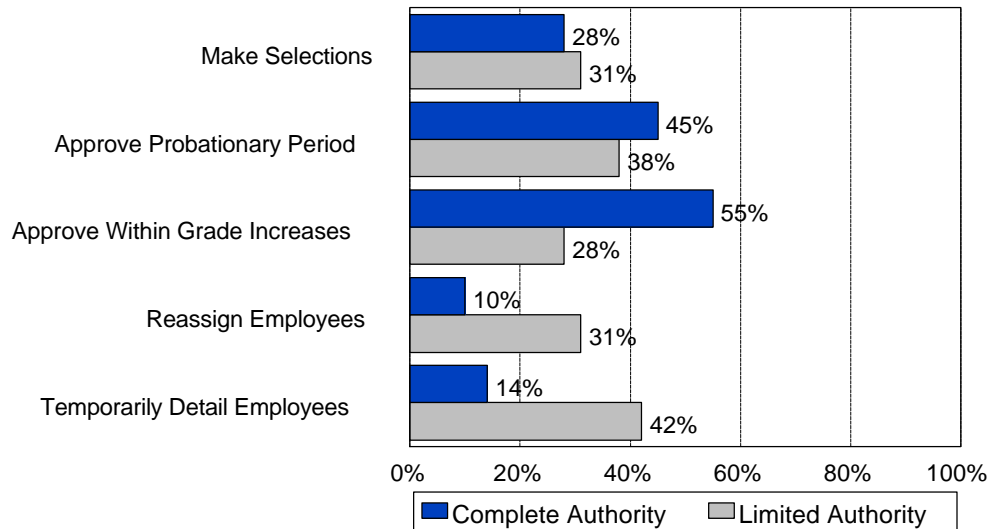


Staffing

In order to best incorporate all delegations of authority covered by the survey, the staffing category includes delegations that go beyond what is traditionally included in this category, such as approving official travel and authorizing overtime. Managers and supervisors across the Federal Government have been granted staffing delegations in varying degrees. Often, supervisors can only make recommendations in the more critical areas of staffing such as making selections, permanently reassigning or temporarily detailing an employee, and for approving official travel and overtime.

Specifically, survey responses indicate that more than half of supervisors have complete or limited authority to *make* selections using OPM certificates, while the remaining 41 percent of agencies responding to the survey report they can only *recommend* a selection from a certificate. A comparison of responses from Defense-related agencies and non-Defense agencies reveals that Defense-related agencies (75 percent) are more likely to give complete authority to first-line supervisors to make a selection than non-Defense agencies (20 percent).

Staffing Delegations

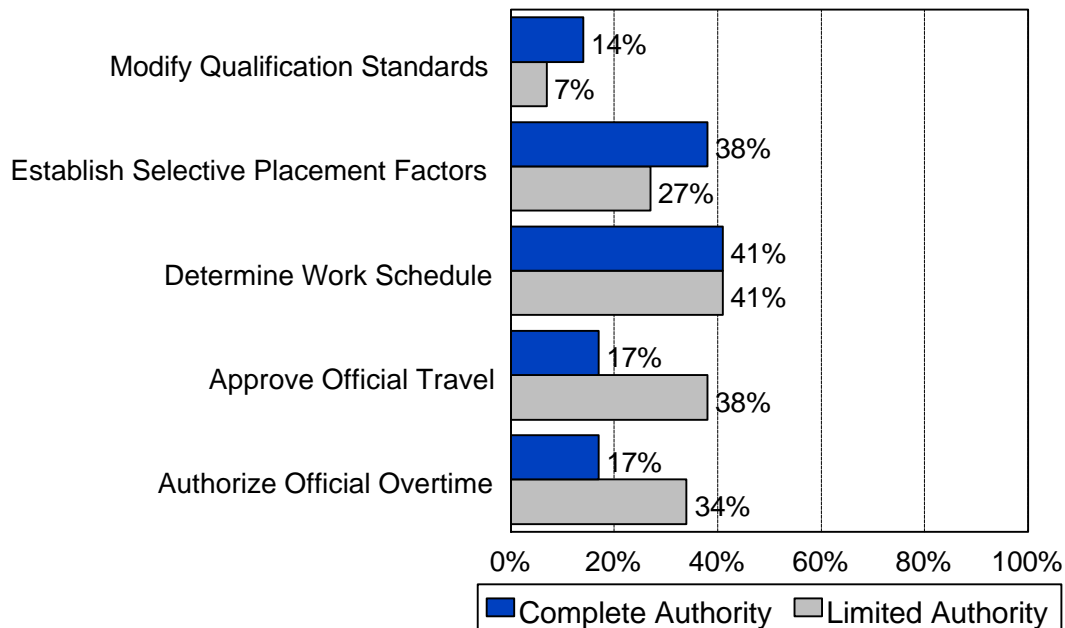


Most agencies report that supervisors have either complete or limited authority to approve or disapprove employees' completion of their probationary periods and within grade increases. According to survey responses, more Defense-related agency first-line supervisors (75 percent) than non-Defense agency supervisors (40 percent) appear to have been given complete or limited authority to approve employees' successful completion of their probationary periods. Interestingly, when compared with responses to the same survey administered in 1992, fewer first-line supervisors today appear to have complete authority in this area than before (see [Appendix E](#)).

One might believe that permanently reassigning employees and detailing employees is a basic part of the supervisory function in the Federal Government. However, first-line supervisors do not always have the authority to make final decisions about employee reassignments and details. Supervisors at almost a third of agencies have *limited* authority to reassign employees permanently, while supervisors at more than half the agencies responding to the survey (52 percent) only have the authority to *recommend* a permanent reassignment. However, Army, Commerce and the DoD non-service agencies have issued complete authority to make reassignments to their supervisors.

Similarly, responses from the survey show that while almost half (42 percent) of supervisors have limited authority to detail an employee, 45 percent can only recommend a detail for employees. A few agencies, including Air Force, Army, DoD non-service agencies, and OPM have issued complete authority to their supervisors to detail employees. As this suggests, Defense-related agencies have granted more authority to their first-line supervisors than non-Defense agencies for approving reassignments and temporary details. A comparison of responses to an early administration of the survey reveals that more first-line supervisors (14 percent) currently have complete authority to detail employees than they did in 1992 (4 percent).

Staffing Delegations (Continued)

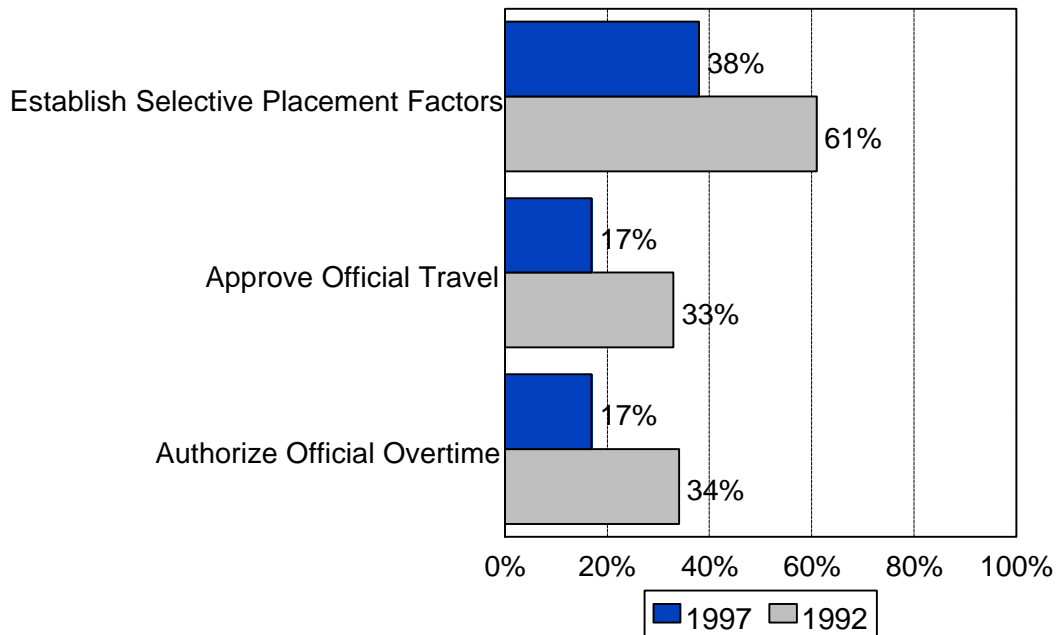


More than a fifth of the agencies report they have delegated either complete or limited authority to modify the Qualification Standards, also called the X-118, but 34 percent of agencies state that supervisors have authority only to recommend modifications to the X-118. Unlike most agencies, Air Force, Army, EEOC, and the DoD non-service agencies have given complete authority to modify the X-118 to their supervisors. Still, more than a third of agencies (41 percent) have *not* delegated the authority at all to supervisors or managers.

Most agencies have issued complete or limited authority to supervisors to determine work schedules, including AWS, flexitime and part-time schedules, approve official travel, and authorize official overtime. More non-Defense agencies have issued complete authority to first-line supervisors than Defense-related agencies to determine work schedules. When comparing responses with the earlier study (see chart below), fewer first-line supervisors have complete authority now to approve official travel and overtime (both 17 percent) than in 1992 (33 percent and 34 percent respectively).

Staffing

Trend Analysis

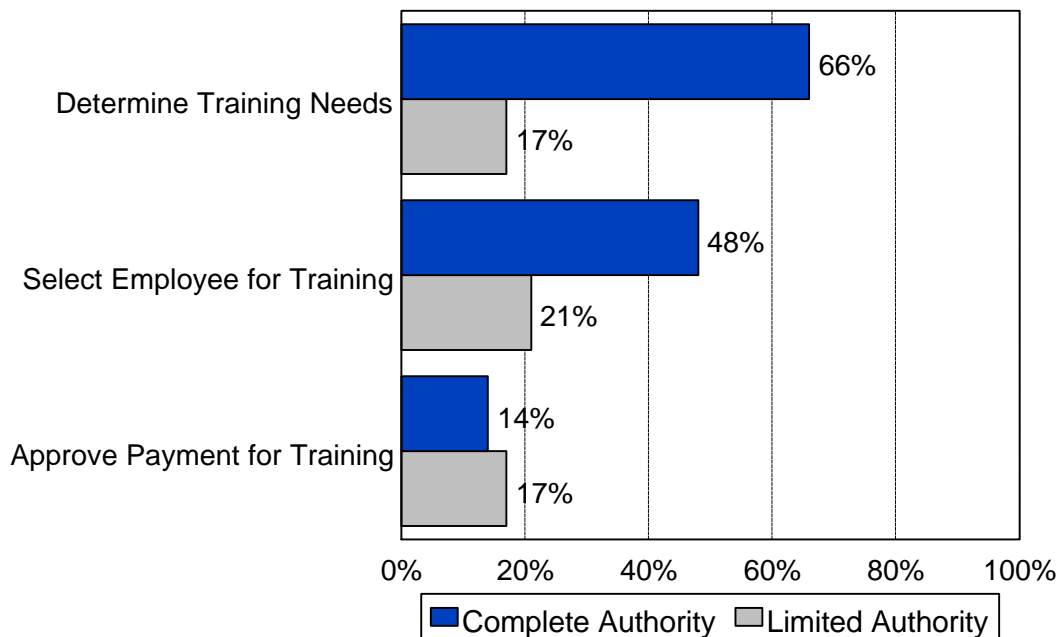


Training

Supervisors and managers are enjoying substantial delegations of authority in training. Agencies report most supervisors have complete or limited authority to determine employees' training needs and select them for training. Although first-line supervisors can determine training needs and select employees for training, most agencies have not delegated supervisors authority to allocate funds for training. Only 31 percent of agencies responding to the survey report their supervisors have complete or limited authority to approve payment for training employees, although four agencies -- USDA, Army, Commerce, and the DoD non-service agencies -- have granted complete authority for payment to their supervisors. Just less than half (48 percent) of the agencies report supervisors can only request and *recommend* payment for employee training opportunities.

A comparison of current data with the 1992 data highlights the great improvement in agencies' efforts to delegate complete authority for training to supervisors. While in 1992, only 31 percent of supervisors had complete authority to determine the training needs of their employees, currently 66 percent of supervisors have that authority. Today, agencies report that 48 percent of their supervisors have been given complete authority to select an employee for training compared with only 15 percent in 1992. This level of change is encouraging, and we should continue to advocate further delegation of HRM authority across Government.

Training Delegations

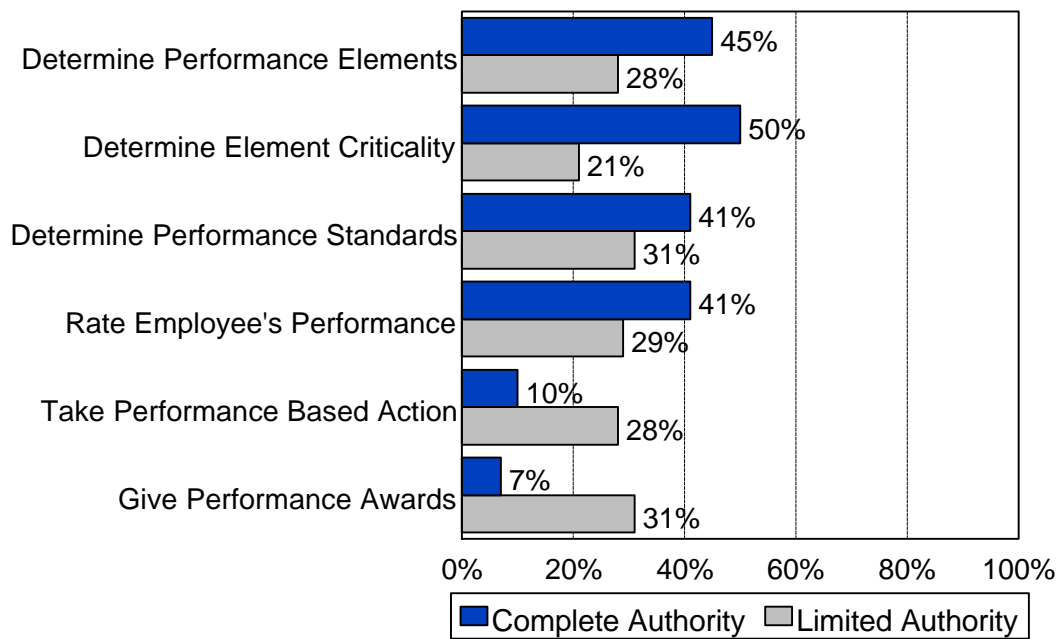


Performance Management

Supervisors have also been delegated much authority in the area of performance management. Almost three-fourths of agencies report their supervisors have complete or limited authority to determine performance elements of employee performance plans, the criticality of each performance element and performance standards for employees. In accordance with current regulations which require only that the rating be signed by the appraising official, 70 percent of agencies say they have delegated complete or limited authority for supervisors to rate employees' performance.

For many years, the issue of dealing with poor performers has been of great concern to managers and supervisors in the Federal Government. The law requires that performance based reduction in grade and removal actions must be approved by two levels. Results from the questionnaire show that authority to deal with poor performers, in any manner, is generally held at a higher level than the first-line supervisors. This is not surprising given that agencies may choose to retain higher level review to ensure that actions of this magnitude are perceived to be carefully thought through and fairly taken. Three agencies report having delegated *complete* authority to supervisors to take personnel actions based on less than fully successful performance. Regulations for taking action "for such cause as will promote the efficiency of the service" do not require a second level review, and that may explain why a few agencies report delegating complete authority to first-line supervisors.

Performance Management Delegations



The granting of awards is another area of performance management in which first-line supervisors across the Federal Government appear to have restricted authority. Most supervisors and managers (62 percent) have the authority to recommend that an employee be given an award (e.g., special act or service award or quality step increase). Only Commerce and the DoD non-service agencies have given supervisors complete authority to give awards, while Army, Energy, Commerce, EEOC, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), HUD and SSA have given supervisors limited authority.

Since 1992, there has been a significant effort to delegate some authority to first-line supervisors in performance management. More agencies have delegated complete authority to first-line supervisors for determining performance elements, the criticality of those elements and determining performance standards. Specifically, in 1992 only about 33 percent of agencies reported their first-line supervisors had complete authority to determine performance elements, while 45 percent of agencies currently state first-line supervisors have this authority. Responses from the 1992 survey show that only seven percent of agencies reported their supervisors had complete authority to determine critical elements. Currently, 50 percent of agencies say their managers have complete authority to determine criticality. While only four percent of first-line supervisors had been given complete authority to determine performance standards in 1992, 41 percent of agencies in 1997 report their supervisors have this authority.

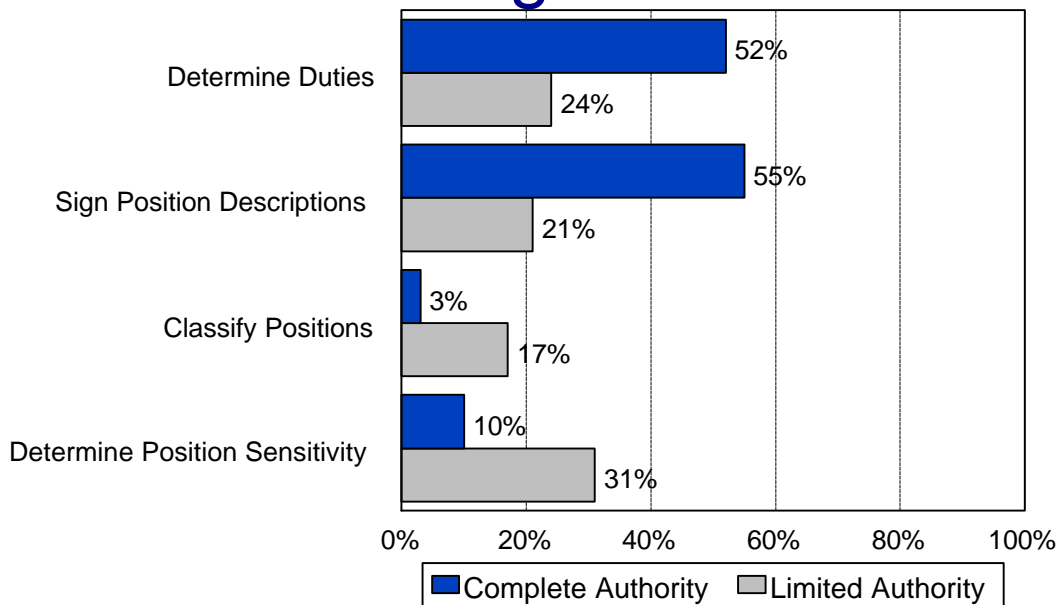
Nevertheless, a comparison of current questionnaire responses with those gathered in 1992 shows that there are some critical areas where supervisors have less authority now than they did then. Specifically, while in 1992, 54 percent of agencies gave supervisors complete authority to rate an employee's performance, only 41 percent of agencies in 1997 report giving supervisors the same authority.

Position Classification

Focus group data gathered from managers and supervisors across the United States reveal that they have received a few delegations of HRM authority in classification. However, supervisors and managers say they have seen very few increases in real authority and flexibility, in part because the rules that govern the system have not changed substantially. Questionnaire responses support supervisors' and managers' claims that they have some classification authority in that 52 percent of agencies report supervisors have complete authority to determine the duties and responsibilities of positions (write position descriptions). Furthermore, 55 percent of agencies report that supervisors have complete authority to sign and certify the accuracy of a position description.

Many supervisors and managers state they would like more significant delegations of authority in classification, and questionnaire responses support their assertion that they do not have all the delegations they might like. Although most agencies have given first-line supervisors the authority to write and sign the position description, more than half (55 percent) of agencies report supervisors have NOT been delegated authority to actually classify positions. Nevertheless, some agencies are taking the lead in this area. One agency, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), reports it has given supervisors *complete* authority to classify positions. The Departments of Army, Commerce, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) have delegated *limited* authority to classify positions to their supervisors.

Position Classification Delegations



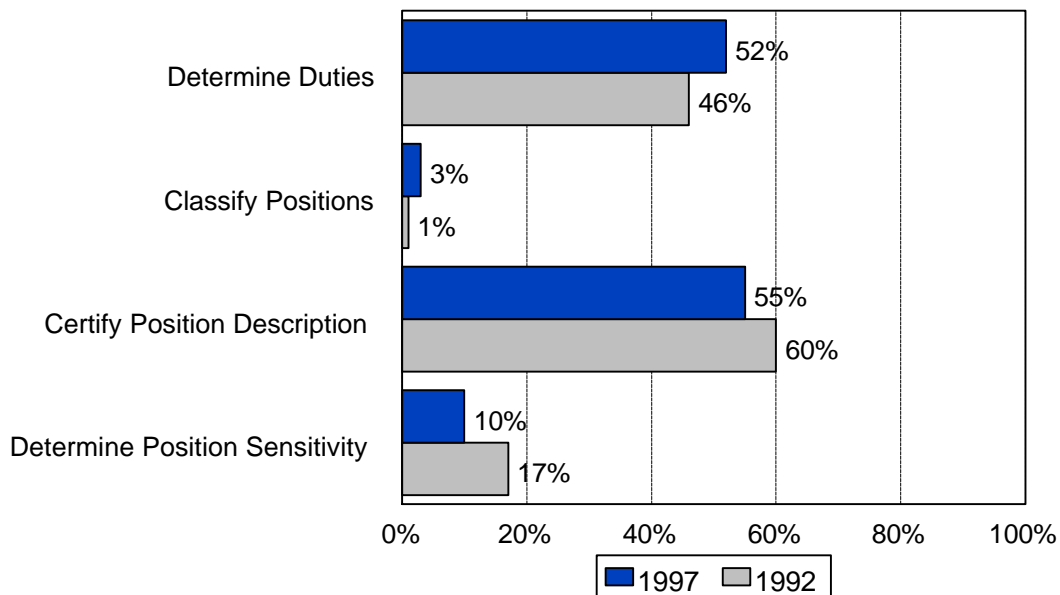
Another part of the classification process is assigning position sensitivity to a position description (sensitive or non-sensitive). Survey responses show that the responsibility for assigning position sensitivity varies greatly across the Federal Government. The Departments of Air Force and Justice and the Social Security Administration are the only agencies reporting they have issued complete authority to determine position sensitivity to first-line supervisors. Thirty-one percent of agencies report they have issued limited authority and 28 percent have issued authority to *recommend* only, while nearly a quarter of agencies (24 percent) report they have not delegated the authority to determine position sensitivity at all.

A review of the 1992 study shows similar response patterns with minimal change since 1992 in the amount of delegation of classification authority to first-line supervisors. More agencies have granted first-line supervisors the authority to determine duties (write the position descriptions) (52 percent vs. 46 percent) and actually classify positions (three percent vs. one percent) than in 1992. But, fewer first-line supervisors have complete authority to sign position descriptions (55 percent vs. 60 percent) and determine position sensitivity (10 percent vs. 17 percent) than they did in 1992. Given the responsibility of first-line supervisors for managing and assigning work, one might expect a substantially higher level of delegations for at least some of these authorities.

When comparing Defense-related agencies' responses to the survey about position classification issues to those of non-Defense agencies, Defense-related agencies are far more likely to give first-line supervisors the authority to classify and determine position sensitivity than non-Defense agencies.

Classification

Trend Analysis

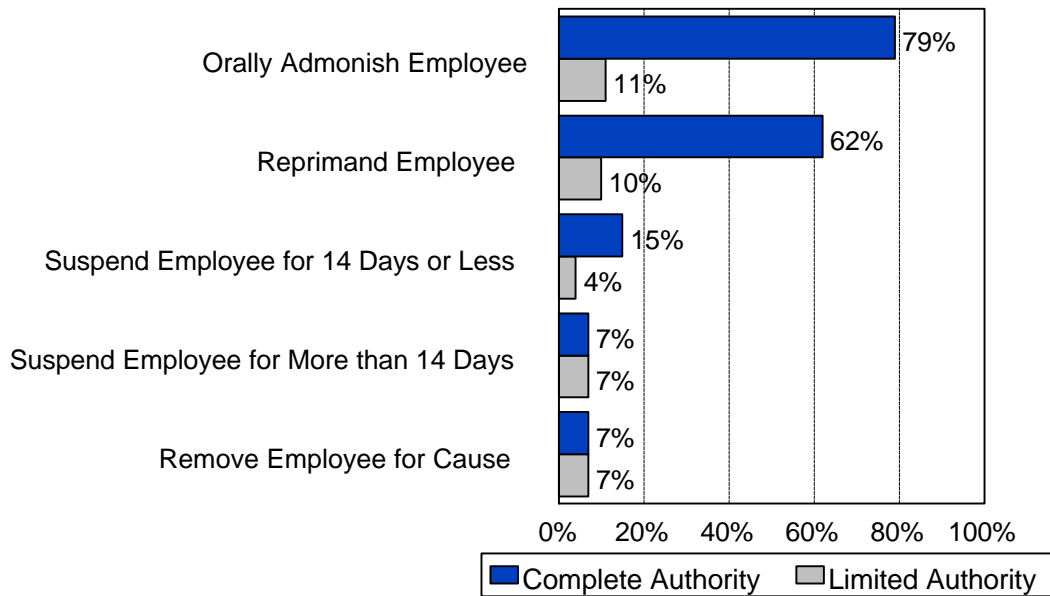


Disciplinary Actions

Focus groups reveal that supervisors and managers have concerns about the amount of delegation in employee discipline. Although a few managers and supervisors stated that they have some delegation of authority, most say they would like more. Managers and supervisors specifically state they would like more authority to reprimand, suspend, and fire problem employees. Analysis of the survey data supports the fact that first-line supervisors have some delegations of authority, but also shows that complete authority to suspend and fire employees is held at a higher level than the first-line supervisory level.

First-line supervisors do have the authority to admonish and reprimand employees when necessary. Most agencies report that they have issued complete or limited authority to orally admonish employees officially and formally reprimand employees in writing to first-line supervisors. However, supervisors need to go to a higher authority for decisions related to the suspension or removal of employees. Seventy-four percent of agencies have given supervisors the authority to *recommend* a suspension of fourteen days or less, but only a few agencies like Army, EEOC, HUD, and the DoD non-service agencies (15 percent) have given complete authority to supervisors to suspend an employee for a short period, while Commerce has given limited authority to its supervisors. Likewise, most supervisors (71 percent) have been issued the authority to recommend employee suspensions of more than fourteen days, but Army and the DoD non-service agencies are the only agencies that report they have delegated the full authority to take this action directly to supervisors. Supervisors at Commerce and HUD have been given *limited* authority to suspend an employee for more than fourteen days.

Disciplinary Actions Delegations



As one might expect, agencies exert even more caution in giving first-line supervisors the authority to remove employees. Generally, final decisionmaking authority is held at a higher level than the first-line supervisory level. Most agencies (72 percent) report supervisors have been given the authority to recommend the removal of an employee for cause. Only Army and the DoD non-service agencies say they have delegated complete authority to remove an employee, while Commerce and EEOC have given limited authority to their first-line supervisors. Ten percent of the agencies surveyed (USDA, SEC, and the Railroad Retirement Board) say they have not delegated this authority at all, even to make recommendations. It can be assumed that in instances where first-line supervisors have been delegated complete authority to take adverse actions, these are for conduct related issues. The laws and regulations do not require a second level review for these actions, as they do for performance based actions. A review of the results from a similar 1992 survey revealed that no significant changes have occurred in the delegation of authority for disciplinary actions.

Overall, more Defense-related agencies have issued complete authority to first-line supervisors than non-Defense agencies in taking disciplinary actions against employees. While half the first-line supervisors in Defense-related agencies have complete authority to suspend or remove employees for cause, less than one-seventh of the non-Defense agencies have given this authority to first-line supervisors.

Impact of Delegation of HRM Authority

With the exception of a few agencies, it is clear that there has not been a major movement toward increased HRM delegation in the Federal Government. Therefore, any positive impact from increased delegation within agencies is obviously not likely to be great at this point.

It is important to acknowledge here that the widespread delegation of OPM authorities to agencies does not automatically mean that each agency should further delegate all these authorities internally to the lowest possible level. OPM's action is intended rather to give agencies the choice of delegating or not delegating, within the general governmentwide policy of delegating wherever possible.

Recognizing that this choice exists, it is equally important to note that in many instances agencies have chosen not to delegate in cases where it appears they might have. In all areas except disciplinary actions (see [Appendix B](#)), there are authorities that have been delegated in some agencies but not in others that would appear to be highly appropriate for first-line supervisors, and consistent with the description of the supervisory role in OPM's *General Schedule Supervisory Guide*. Though some of the overall delegation percentages appear high, they do not seem high enough based on basic supervisory duties. Examples of such authorities include writing and certifying position descriptions, determining selective placement factors and approving work schedules, determining performance elements and standards, approving travel and excused absences, determining employees' training needs and selecting them for training.

Furthermore, as with deregulation, even where delegation has increased, there appear to be factors at work that are reducing its impact. Part of the problem is that few agencies appear to have issued additional guidance for managers on how to deal with the new delegations of authority they have received. Only a few managers say they have received internal guidance booklets, manuals, or handbooks. There are some who say the guidance they have received has been sufficient, but that is because they have not received any extensive new delegations in the first place. First-line supervisors on the other hand say that, since they don't know exactly what has been delegated, they do not know if they have sufficient guidance. Supervisors may not be as knowledgeable as managers about delegations of authority within their agency because a redelegation of authority has not occurred to their level. Supervisors and managers agree that a centralized listing of what has been delegated within their agency and a pamphlet from OPM listing what has been delegated from OPM to agencies would be helpful. Supervisors and managers would also like more training in how to execute delegations, more advice about the pros and cons of making various personnel decisions, and access to more information on personnel regulations and guidance, possibly utilizing CD-ROM.

Managers in general appear to have a greater understanding of and a more positive view of delegations of HRM authority than first line supervisors. Nevertheless, both supervisors and managers state that although they have seen delegations of authority to some limited degree, they do not perceive a great increase in their flexibility or ability to exercise their new powers. However, they recognize this perception of a lack of increased flexibility and authority as a result of delegation may be linked to other organizational factors. Many supervisors, managers, and personnelists agree that internal agency reorganizations and centralization of personnel offices may be strong reasons they have not felt the impact of delegations of authority. Budget limitations and FTE ceilings, NPR goals to increase the ratio of employees to supervisors, the partnership executive order and union agreements, and an inability to hire due to freezes impair their ability to see the value-adding features of delegations of authority. Some supervisors say that only work, not real authority, has been delegated.

More Delegations of Authority or Not?

Not surprisingly, supervisors and managers say they would like more delegations of authority than they already have. Specifically, supervisors and managers want more authority to deal with equal employment opportunity matters, employee discipline, staffing, compensation, and labor relations. Supervisors and managers say they would like greater flexibility in handling EEO grievances and complaints. Supervisors and managers already correctly perceive they have limited authority to handle employee discipline cases, and some would like to have the authority to fire employees for unacceptable performance or any other justifiable cause. Staffing is an area in which supervisors and managers would also particularly like to see additional delegations of authority. They would like greater flexibility to exercise their independent judgement in hiring the best candidates and promoting deserving employees.

Classification is the one area of delegation about which supervisors and managers expressed ambivalence in the focus groups. Most state that while they have the authority to write the position description, they would also like to have the authority to actually classify the position, but only if the classification system is reinvented so that it is more user-friendly. Supervisors and managers say the current system is too labor and paper intensive to use because of its complexity.

Some managers also expressed a desire -- under a less complex classification system -- to manage to budget rather than FTE level.

While managers and supervisors say they would like additional authorities in several program areas, they are also concerned about the increased work load associated with taking on these new responsibilities. One manager states, "I don't want a whole lot of added personnel responsibilities. As a supervisor we have enough to do just getting our organizational mission met without all the personnel work." Another manager states, "I do not have time to do my work and Personnel's work, too." So, although many individual managers and supervisors seem eager to embrace new authorities, some express ambivalence about aspects of delegation.

Barriers

There is a large degree of similarity between the barriers cited by personnelists, supervisors, and managers regarding delegation of authority and those cited earlier with regard to deregulation. The barriers to delegations do not so much prevent it from occurring as make it difficult for managers and supervisors to exercise the authority they have received. In staffing, for example, managers perceive that new regulations like I/CTAP combine with older laws like veterans preference and the "rule of three" to restrict their ability to act. Although managers understand that these public policy initiatives have an important purpose, they still perceive them as obstacles to getting the job done. In addition, administrative requirements such as increased supervisory ratios, FTE limitations, hiring freezes, labor-management partnerships and union agreements also can have this effect. So, too, does the general shortage of budgetary resources found in many agencies.

Concerns

As with deregulation, managers, supervisors, and personnelists expressed concerns about what will happen when the barriers are surmounted and delegations become more widespread. One set of comments touched again on the theme of inconsistency. It is feared that delegations first from OPM to agencies and then down to line managers and supervisors will lead to inconsistent application of the rules, eventually bringing about chaos within the Federal personnel system.

One effective solution to this problem would be for managers and supervisors to have access to expert advice when they needed it. But, as already noted, many agencies have not been quick to

offer such guidance to managers and supervisors. Managers, supervisors, and personnelists themselves expressed concern about whether personnel staffs would be able in the future to provide the needed advice and oversight. This concern about the lack of guidance and assistance became a central theme in the focus groups.

In the past managers and supervisors consistently went to personnel and received guidance on how to handle personnel-related issues. The majority of supervisors and managers report they still go to their personnel offices for guidance. However, over the last few years the changing role of HR, punctuated by the downsizing and centralizing of personnel offices, has created an increased strain on supervisors' and managers' relationship with personnelists. In an era of increased deregulation and delegation, managers would like to see the personnel office become more consultative rather than rule-oriented, and offer training on the use of delegations, while maintaining some internal guidelines for consistency's sake. Personnelists acknowledge the need for a change in their roles and say they are trying to be more consultative with supervisors and managers when they have questions. But establishing this new relationship has not been easy when personnel offices shrink drastically or are removed to remote locations.

Downsizing has caused many "seasoned personnelists" to take early retirement. This massive upheaval leaves managers to work with new personnelists who may not have the skill and experience or consultative abilities to properly advise them when taking difficult personnel actions. A few managers state they have even tried to seek assistance from OPM when making difficult decisions, but found OPM was not easily accessible. Supervisors share managers' concern over the loss of personnel expertise as experienced personnelists leave the Government. One supervisor says, "I'm concerned over what is an apparent decrease in the knowledge level of the personnel staffs as they continue to downsize. Not only do we sometimes question the advice we get, but the response time to our questions has increased considerably." Another supervisor states, "We still look to personnel to keep us out of trouble, but they can't if they're no longer here."

Centralization of personnel is another variation on the problem of inadequate support from the personnel office. Supervisors and managers say handling new delegations of authority has been difficult when they can no longer "walk down the hall and pull-up a chair with a personnelist." "Long distance consulting is difficult." "The administrative duties needed to perform personnel actions are done at the local level, but it still must be cleared through HQ." Some supervisors and managers say they go instead to colleagues, administrative officers or the Inspector General's office for advice and guidance, or even former personnelists still located in their proximity.

Agency Leaders

As detailed in the function-by-function analysis (e.g., staffing, classification, etc.) above, agencies vary widely in the degree to which they have delegated HRM authorities. So, it is hardly surprising that there are large differences among agencies *overall*. According to survey results,

Army, Air Force, and the DoD non-service agencies stand out as leading the way in delegating authority to the first-line supervisory level. Of 32 delegations of authority, the DoD non-service agencies report giving first-line supervisors complete authority to execute 26 of those delegations. Army has issued 24 complete delegations of authority, while the Air Force has given first-line supervisors complete authority over 15 delegations. As in the case of deregulation, not enough focus group information specific to these agencies was available to corroborate the survey findings. The fact that Defense-related agencies appear to lead the way in delegating authority to their supervisors may be due to the organizational structure of the agencies, in that they are extremely large conglomerate agencies with highly structured subunits. Also, the nature of the work in Defense-related agencies, requiring as it does a swift response to emergencies relating to national defense, may also create a culture in which authority is delegated to the lowest level possible within the department.

ACCOUNTABILITY

As the Government moves toward increased deregulation, greater delegation of personnel authority, and more flexibility for managers, the question of how those managers and supervisors are being held accountable for making personnel-related decisions that support mission accomplishment and adhere to the merit system principles becomes more vital. Since this important issue cuts across our two main topics, deregulation and delegation, and deserves special emphasis, we have placed it by itself in this section.

In the past, accountability has been perceived as being compliance-oriented, focusing on strict adherence to the rules. The onset of NPR has expanded the definition to emphasize the concept of accountability for results. With the increases in deregulation and delegation of HRM authority to managers and supervisors and the increased emphasis in achieving measurable results, it is necessary to recognize that accountability is not limited to compliance but must also incorporate mission accomplishment in its definition. HRM accountability must strike a balance between autonomy and flexibility to support mission accomplishment (accountability for results) on the one hand and adherence to applicable laws and regulations on the other.

Managers and supervisors participating in the focus groups conducted for this study were asked about HRM accountability to gauge how accountable they feel for the proper and effective use of the authorities they have. They gave a variety of responses as to how they are held accountable, with the most frequent answers focusing on compliance. Their comments indicate that much of the impetus for accountability comes from the outside, rather than the participants' own chain of command (with a few exceptions).

Some of the responses were oriented toward accountability for results, including performance plans, customer satisfaction and the quality of managers' staff and products. Mostly, however, managers focused on compliance oriented issues and how they are held accountable by their personnel offices, unions, third party organizations (e.g., OPM, Merit Systems Protection Board, General Accounting Office), and the threat of complaints and grievances. Other answers include the threat of their authority being removed, the General Counsel's Office, budgetary restrictions, the Federal Managers Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA), their employees, automated tracking systems, and their own consciences.

A minority of participants indicate that there is actually very little accountability among managers and supervisors for HRM, especially considering the new flexibilities being granted to managers. Many personnelists say they are still being held accountable for human resource decisions, even when managers make those decisions. They believe that managers do not want to be held accountable and want to be able to blame Personnel if something goes wrong. They say that there is no real system to track accountability, little oversight, and no one willing to take the responsibility for being accountable. These participants voice concerns about the state of accountability and look to OPM to take a greater role in ensuring accountability for compliance with the law, possibly through more in depth or frequent evaluations.

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IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Some progress has been made in some areas of Federal HRM in both the deregulation of HR systems and the delegation of authorities to managers and supervisors. However, the impact of deregulation and delegation initiatives varies, first and foremost because the amount of deregulation and delegation in some program areas and in some agencies has not been as great as anticipated. Then, too, barriers have arisen that muffle the impact on managerial flexibility even where deregulation and delegations have taken place. Finally, the lack of information and guidance for managers and supervisors, and the bewildering array of other events also occurring over the last few years, have obscured for them the impact of these initiatives on their ability to manage their human resources more effectively.

Deregulation

With no clear consensus on the actual extent of HRM deregulation throughout the Government, it is not surprising that views on the impact of deregulation are not strongly positive. It is not easy to say what would be the “ideal” amount of deregulation. Regulations are not necessarily a “bad” thing. They provide a valuable level of consistency when implementing laws. Nevertheless, regulations should also allow for flexibility as much as possible, and deregulating certain areas would help contribute to that flexibility. OPM recognizes that agencies may sometimes have legitimate reasons for retaining requirements that OPM no longer compels, and this should be seen as a countervailing pressure to deregulation rather than a barrier. Still, many focus group participants see the movement to deregulate as incomplete and are undecided as to whether or not deregulation has increased managerial and supervisory flexibility.

- Personnelists, managers and supervisors are undecided as to whether deregulation itself has had much effect on the degree of flexibility for managers because there are too many other things occurring at the same time, such as hiring freezes, downsizing, new legal requirements, partnership, and budget restraints. Perhaps after the initial confusion caused by the various changes dissipates, managers and supervisors will see more clearly the effects of deregulation.
- Managers and supervisors believe it is still too hard to hire, fire, and promote deserving employees. Managers and supervisors would like more deregulation in the areas of classification, staffing, and adverse actions to help them perform the duties most important to achieving their missions. Probably for these reasons, many HR officials and focus group participants do not generally believe that the personnel system has been made less cumbersome, and believe that unnecessary rules and regulations still interfere with the timely completion of work.

- With the abolition of the FPM and many OPM and agency personnel rules and regulations, the spotlight has been put on the CFR more than it ever has been in the past, and personnelists are relying on it much more for guidance than any other avenues.

Delegation

Delegation of HRM authority varies greatly among and even within agencies, and delegations of authority have occurred in some areas of HRM but not others. As with deregulation, the delegation of authorities by OPM to agencies does not necessarily imply that these authorities should in all cases be further delegated within the organization. Clearly, though, agencies have in many cases chosen not to make these delegations to the extent they could have.

- The lack of more extensive delegation of HRM authorities to managers and supervisors has several causes, beginning with the nature of the authorities being delegated. The most progress has occurred in areas such as performance management and training, where real deregulation and increased flexibility have been introduced governmentwide. By contrast, areas such as classification and employee discipline that remain as complex and prescriptive as ever have seen little or no increase in delegations. Focus group participants suggest that some managers may be reluctant to take on the more complex authorities even if offered.
- Those authorities being delegated are generally rudimentary and fundamental to the role of a supervisor, and often do not require extensive technical knowledge of personnel processes and requirements. In some agencies, even these rudimentary delegations are not being granted to supervisors. Meanwhile, the more significant authorities managers and supervisors say they would like have not been delegated to them in most agencies. For example, most first-line supervisors can write a position description and certify its accuracy, but they cannot actually classify a position. Supervisors can identify training needs but cannot approve payment for the training. However, though some managers appear to want these additional authorities, others indicate that they do not want the additional work load and responsibility.
- Even when the delegations are made and managers embrace them willingly, lack of information about them and of guidance for their use remains a concern of managers and supervisors. This concern has been exacerbated by the downsizing and centralization of personnel staffs across the agencies. To a greater extent now than before, managers lack the safety net of support and advice from the personnel staff that would give them more confidence to embrace and exercise new HRM authorities.
- A disparity appears to exist between Defense-related agencies and non-Defense agencies as to the degree of delegation of HRM authority. Defense-related agencies lead the way in delegating to first-line supervisors while non-Defense agencies lag behind.

Accountability

With additional authority and responsibility should also come accountability. Although it is not as extensive as sometimes thought, increased authority is coming into the hands of managers and supervisors in certain areas of HRM. It should follow, then, that there would be increased interest and attention paid to how these line managers are held accountable for how they use these authorities. The focus group participants, however, believe that the personnel office still has primary responsibility for HRM accountability, with line management playing a lesser role.

- Although some focus group participants indicate that they are held accountable for results within their organizations, it was not an overwhelming response. Personnelists are still seen as the gatekeepers to hold managers and supervisors accountable, and managers themselves are not generally held accountable for HRM.
- It may be that, until the deregulation and delegation of HRM authorities in the Federal Government becomes more complete and managers receive the information and guidance they need to fully execute these authorities, managers and supervisors will continue to consider HRM decisionmaking -- and accountability for decisions made -- to be primarily the special province of the personnel office.

Recommendations

The results of this study indicate that the road to deregulation and delegation in Federal human resources management will be a long and arduous one. Although there have been some successes both governmentwide and in individual agencies, much remains to be done before the NPR goal of placing primary authority in the hands of line managers can be realized. In support of this effort, the following recommendations are offered:

- OPM should continue to press for deregulation and delegation of authority as appropriate and where it can be done within the parameters of the merit system principles, law, and public policy. OPM should encourage agencies to begin or to continue to deregulate and delegate authority internally in appropriate HR program areas to the lowest level possible, and to provide the kind of training and ongoing guidance that managers need in order to know the HRM authorities they possess and how to exercise them confidently.
- OPM oversight reviews should focus more frequently on agency deregulation and delegation of HRM authorities, particularly for the purpose of assessing whether more deregulation and delegations might make the HR system more efficient and effective.

- As managers and supervisors obtain more authority, agencies need to place more emphasis on the managers' accountability -- both for exercising the authorities properly in an ethical and legal sense and for using it to achieve the best possible results.
- Further study of the topics of deregulation and delegation may be appropriate to pick up where this study left off. As noted, there are considerable differences among agencies in the degree of HRM deregulation and delegation, and a major difference between Defense-related and non-Defense agencies in the area of delegation. It might be very instructive to explore in more depth how specific agencies have been able to assume leadership in this area, what barriers they overcame, and what difference it has made. This kind of "best practice" review might prove highly useful to other agencies, as they attempt to empower their managers to make HRM decisions in support of the agency's mission.

APPENDIX A

Agencies Responding to the Questionnaire

U.S. Department of the Air Force
U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Department of the Army
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Department of Defense
U.S. Department of Education
U.S. Department of Energy
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
Environment Protections Agency
Federal Communications Commission
Federal Emergency Management Agency
General Service Administration
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Interior
U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Department of Labor
National Archives and Records Administration
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
U.S. Department of the Navy
National Labor Relations Board
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Railroad Retirement Board
U.S. Department of State
Small Business Administration
Securities Exchange Commission
Social Security Administration
U.S. Department of the Treasury
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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APPENDIX B

Delegation and Deregulation Questionnaire Table of Results

As you review the data, keep the following points in mind:

- ◆ Percentages have been rounded by accepted rules of practice. Therefore, on occasion, rounding error will result in a total percentage of less than or more than 100 percent.
- ◆ The percentages provided for each item are based only on those who responded to the item. Missing cases are excluded.

The definitions for the response categories are as follows:

Complete Supervisory Authority: First level supervisors have complete and final authority for all, or substantially all, personnel actions and decisions of this type. Such actions and decisions are not reviewed or approved by anyone else.

Limited Supervisory: First level supervisors have complete and final authority for personnel actions and decisions in this area *IN ONLY SOME CIRCUMSTANCES*. Limitations are imposed by factors such as grade level, dollar amounts, or duration of the personnel action or decision involved.

Supervisory Authority to Recommend: First level supervisors have *SUPERVISORY AUTHORITY TO RECOMMEND* virtually all personnel decisions of this type, but *FORMAL APPROVAL* rests with a higher level manager.

No Supervisory Authority: First level supervisors *HAVE NO* Supervisory Authority *IN THIS AREA TO TAKE OR RECOMMEND* personnel actions or decisions. *ONLY HIGHER LEVEL MANAGERS* have authority to take personnel actions and make decisions in this area.

Not Delegated: Authority to take personnel actions and make decisions in this area *HAS NOT BEEN DELEGATED* to first level supervisors or managers. Authority to take personnel actions and make decisions in this area is retained by top management or the Personnel Officer.

TABLE OF RESULTS

Survey Item		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1. In the past 4 years, to what extent has OPM reduced personnel rules and regulations.		
Not at All	0	0%
A Little	4	14%
To Some Extent	15	52%
Great Extent	5	17%
Very Great Extent	5	17%
2. In the past 4 years, to what extent has your agency reduced personnel rules and regulations.		
Not at All	0	0%
A Little	1	3%
To Some Extent	17	59%
Great Extent	9	31%
Very Great Extent	2	7%
3. Which are Personnelists more likely to turn to for guidance when making personnel-related decisions and giving advice?		
Title V, CFR	21	48%
Agency Policy	12	28%
Subject Matter Expert	8	19%
Federal Personnel Manual (FPM)	1	2%
Other _____	1	2%
4. Agency rules, policies, and practices have been created to replace those eliminated by OPM.		
Strongly Agree	0	0%
Agree	6	21%
Neither Agree or Disagree	3	11%
Disagree	16	57%
Strongly Disagree	3	11%

Survey Item		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage
5. A reduction of personnel rules and regulations has made the personnel system more flexible to managers' needs.		
Strongly Agree	1	3%
Agree	10	34%
Neither Agree or Disagree	7	24%
Disagree	11	38%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
6. A reduction in personnel rules and regulations has made the personnel system less cumbersome.		
Strongly Agree	1	3%
Agree	5	17%
Neither Agree or Disagree	8	28%
Disagree	14	48%
Strongly Disagree	1	3%
7. Currently, unnecessary rules and regulations interfere with the timely completion of work.		
Strongly Agree	0	0%
Agree	16	55%
Neither Agree or Disagree	6	21%
Disagree	6	21%
Strongly Disagree	1	3%
8. To what extent do each of the following make personnelists' job difficult?		
A. OPM Personnel rules and regs		
Not at All	1	3%
A Little	6	21%
To Some Extent	15	52%
Great Extent	6	21%
Very Great Extent	1	3%

Survey Item		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage
B. Agency personnel rules and regs.		
Not at All	3	10%
A Little	8	28%
To Some Extent	18	62%
Great Extent	0	0%
Very Great Extent	0	0%
C. Organizational layers		
Not at All	2	7%
A Little	5	17%
To Some Extent	15	52%
Great Extent	7	24%
Very Great Extent	0	0%

Survey Item		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Position Classification		
1. Determine duties and responsibilities of position in the organizational unit, i.e., by writing position descriptions.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	15	52%
Limited Supervisory Authority	7	24%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	7	24%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	0	0%
2. Sign position descriptions certifying that they (PD's) accurately describe the duties and responsibilities of the positions.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	16	55%
Limited Supervisory Authority	6	21%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	6	21%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	1	3%
3. Classify positions, i.e., actually determine title, series, and grades of positions.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	1	3%
Limited Supervisory Authority	5	17%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	3	10%
No Supervisory Authority	4	14%
Not Delegated	16	55%
4. Determine position sensitivity (i.e., sensitive/non-sensitive, critical/non-critical designations).		
Complete Supervisory Authority	3	10%
Limited Supervisory Authority	9	31%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	8	28%
No Supervisory Authority	2	7%
Not Delegated	7	24%

Survey Item		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage
STAFFING		
5. Make final selections of employees for vacancy using certificates of eligibles from the Personnel office or OPM.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	8	28%
Limited Supervisory Authority	9	31%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	12	41%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	0	0%
6. Approve or disapprove of employees' completion of probationary periods.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	13	45%
Limited Supervisory Authority	11	38%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	4	14%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	1	3%
7. Approve or disapprove of employees' within grade increases.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	16	55%
Limited Supervisory Authority	8	28%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	3	10%
No Supervisory Authority	1	3%
Not Delegated	1	3%
8. Permanently reassign employees.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	3	10%
Limited Supervisory Authority	9	31%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	15	52%
No Supervisory Authority	1	3%
Not Delegated	1	3%

Survey Item		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage
9. Temporarily detail employees.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	4	14%
Limited Supervisory Authority	11	42%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	13	45%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	0	0%
10. Modify X-118 basic qualification standards for in-service placement of employees.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	4	14%
Limited Supervisory Authority	2	7%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	10	34%
No Supervisory Authority	1	3%
Not Delegated	12	41%
11. Establish selective placement factors (screening factors) for merit promotion actions.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	10	38%
Limited Supervisory Authority	7	27%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	8	31%
No Supervisory Authority	1	4%
Not Delegated	0	0%
12. Determine employees' work schedules (e.g., flexitime, AWS, part-time schedules, intermittent schedules).		
Complete Supervisory Authority	12	41%
Limited Supervisory Authority	12	41%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	5	17%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	0	0%
13. Approve official travel.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	5	17%

Survey Item		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Limited Supervisory Authority	11	38%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	12	41%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	1	3%
14. Authorize official overtime.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	5	17%
Limited Supervisory Authority	10	34%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	13	45%
No Supervisory Authority	1	3%
Not Delegated	0	0%
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT		
15. Determine performance elements of employee performance plans.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	13	45%
Limited Supervisory Authority	8	28%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	6	21%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	2	7%
16. Determine whether performance elements are critical or non-critical.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	14	50%
Limited Supervisory Authority	6	21%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	6	21%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	2	7%
17. Determine performance standards for employees.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	12	41%
Limited Supervisory Authority	9	31%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	8	28%

Survey Item		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	0	0%
18. Rate employees' performance.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	12	41%
Limited Supervisory Authority	8	29%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	9	31%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	0	0%
19. Take personnel actions based on less than fully successful performance (e.g., reassignments, changes to lower grade, and removal).		
Complete Supervisory Authority	3	10%
Limited Supervisory Authority	8	28%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	17	59%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	1	3%
20. Give performance awards, (e.g., special act or service awards and quality step increases).		
Complete Supervisory Authority	2	7%
Limited Supervisory Authority	9	31%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	18	62%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	0	0%
TRAINING		
21. Determine employees' training needs.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	19	66%
Limited Supervisory Authority	5	17%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	5	17%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	0	0%

Survey Item		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage
22. Select employees for training.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	14	48%
Limited Supervisory Authority	6	21%
Supvry Authority to Recommend	8	28%
No Supervisory Authority	1	3%
Not Delegated	0	0%
23. Approve payment of training employees.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	4	14%
Limited Supervisory Authority	5	17%
Supvry Authority to Recommend	14	48%
No Supervisory Authority	3	10%
Not Delegated	3	10
LEAVE		
24. Approve requests for annual leave.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	26	90%
Limited Supervisory Authority	3	10%
Supvry Authority to Recommend	0	0%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	0	0%
25. Approve requests for sick leave.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	26	90%
Limited Supervisory Authority	3	10%
Supvry Authority to Recommend	0	0%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	0	0%
26. Approve requests for leave without pay.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	6	21%
Limited Supervisory Authority	20	70%

Survey Item		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	3	10%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	0	0%
27. Approve excused absences.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	9	32%
Limited Supervisory Authority	16	57%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	1	4%
No Supervisory Authority	2	7%
Not Delegated	0	0%
DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS		
28. Orally admonish employee (officially).		
Complete Supervisory Authority	22	79%
Limited Supervisory Authority	3	11%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	3	11%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	0	0%
29. Formally reprimand employees (i.e., issue written reprimands).		
Complete Supervisory Authority	18	62%
Limited Supervisory Authority	3	10%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	7	24%
No Supervisory Authority	0	0%
Not Delegated	1	3%
30. Suspend employees for 14 days or less.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	4	15%
Limited Supervisory Authority	1	4%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	20	74%

Survey Item		
	Number of Respondents	Percentage
No Supervisory Authority	1	4%
Not Delegated	1	4%
31. Suspend employees for more than 14 days.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	2	7%
Limited Supervisory Authority	2	7%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	20	71%
No Supervisory Authority	1	4%
Not Delegated	3	11%
32. Remove employees for cause.		
Complete Supervisory Authority	2	7%
Limited Supervisory Authority	2	7%
Suprvy Authority to Recommend	21	72%
No Supervisory Authority	1	3%
Not Delegated	3	10%

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Questions for First-Line Supervisors and Managers

Please go around the table and tell us your name, the agency for which you work, and what you most like about being a supervisor/manager.

Deregulation

1. What is your understanding of what the term deregulation means? Provide participants with our definition for discussion's sake
2. To what extent do you believe your agencies' internal personnel regulations have decreased, increased, or stayed the same?
3. In what ways, if any, have the changes in your agencies' internal regulations given you more personnel authority and flexibility?
 - a. How have these regulatory changes helped you do your job better?
 - b. How have these regulatory changes hindered your ability to do your job?

Delegation

4. What is your understanding of what "delegation of personnel management authority" means?
Provide participants with our definition for discussion's sake
5. To what extent do you believe delegation of personnel authority has occurred within your agencies and in what program areas?
6. Do you feel these delegations afford you more authority and flexibility when taking personnel-related actions? If so, how?
 - a. In what program areas would you like more authority? Less authority?
7. When you need personnel assistance, to whom do you go?
 - a. What guidance, if any, has been issued to help you carry out these delegations of personnel authority?
 - b. Do you feel the guidance you receive has been sufficient to help you carry out your responsibilities? If not, what additional guidance would you like?
8. As the Government moves toward increased deregulation, greater delegation of personnel authority, and more flexibility for managers, how are you being held accountable for making personnel-related decisions that comply with the Merit System Principles?

Summary: Does that accurately reflect what we discussed today? Are there any other deregulation or delegation issues that we did not cover?

Focus Group Questions for Personnelists

Please go around the table and tell us your name, the agency for which you work, and what you most like about being a personnelist.

Deregulation

1. What is your understanding of what the term deregulation means?
Provide participants with our definition for discussion's sake
2. To what extent do you believe your agencies' internal personnel regulations have decreased, increased, or stayed the same?
3. Does your agency write HRM policy? If so, where and at what level is HRM policy done?
 - a. Is this different from what was done before NPR and the FPM's abolition?
 - b. Is this policy binding, i.e., are managers required to follow it, or is it just guidance?
4. What changes have there been in the guidance you use for doing your job as personnelists?
 - a. Do you still use the FPM, agency policies, agencies issued replacement guidance?
 - b. What written guidance, if any, do you share with managers when they have personnel related questions?
 - c. Is the guidance you have sufficient to do your jobs?
5. To what extent do you believe OPM has decreased or increased personnel regulations and policy?
 - a. Does your agency have more flexibility because of these regulatory changes?
 - b. Which areas of personnel have been deregulated the most? The least?

Delegation

6. What is your understanding of what the term delegation means?
Provide participants with our definition for discussion's sake
7. To what extent has OPM delegated personnel authorities to your agency?
8. To what extent has delegation of personnel authority occurred *within* your agencies and in what program areas?
 - a. Which authorities do you like? Don't like?
 - b. Which authorities would you like to have?
9. In what ways, if any, do you feel these delegations of personnel authority give managers more authority?
 - a. In what program areas do you believe managers would like more authority?
 - b. In what program areas do you believe managers would like less authority?
10. Have deregulation and delegation helped supervisors and managers do their jobs better?

11. What guidance has been issued to help managers carry out these delegations of personnel authority?
- a. When they need assistance, who do they go to?
 - b. Do you feel the guidance they receive has been sufficient to help them carry out their responsibilities? In a perfect world with full staff, what additional guidance would you like to give managers?
12. As the Government moves toward greater delegation of personnel authority and more flexibility for managers, how are managers being held accountable for making personnel-related decisions that comply with the Merit System Principles?
- a. Do you feel managers are handling these delegations responsibly?

Summary

Does this accurately reflect what we have discussed today?

Are there any other deregulation or delegation issues that we did not cover?

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APPENDIX D

CHECKLIST OF DELEGATED PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Position Classification

Determine duties and responsibilities of position in the organizational unit, i.e., by writing position descriptions.

Sign position descriptions certifying that they (PD's) accurately describe the duties and responsibilities of the positions.

Classify positions, i.e., actually determine title, series, and grades of positions.

Determine position sensitivity (i.e., sensitive/non-sensitive, critical/non-critical designations).

Staffing

Make final selections of employees for vacancies using certificates of eligibles from the Personnel office or OPM.

Approve or disapprove of employees' completion of probationary periods.

Approve or disapprove of employees' within grade increases.

Permanently reassign employees.

Temporarily detail employees.

Modify X-118 basic qualification standards for in-service placement of employees.

Establish selective placement factors (screening factors) for merit promotion actions.

Determine employees' work schedules (e.g., flexitime, AWS, part-time schedules, intermittent schedules).

Approve official travel.

Authorize official overtime.

Performance Management

Determine performance elements of employee performance plans.

Determine whether performance elements are critical or non-critical.

Determine performance standards for employees.

Rate employee's performance.

Take personnel actions based on less than fully successful performance (e.g., reassignments, changes to lower grade, and removal).

Make performance awards, (e.g., special act or service awards and quality step increases).

Training

Determine employee' training needs.

Select employees for training.

Approve payment of training employees.

Leave

Approve requests for annual leave

Approve requests for sick leave.

Approve requests for leave without pay.

Approve excused absences.

Disciplinary Actions

Orally admonish employee (officially).

Formally reprimand employees (i.e., issue written reprimands).

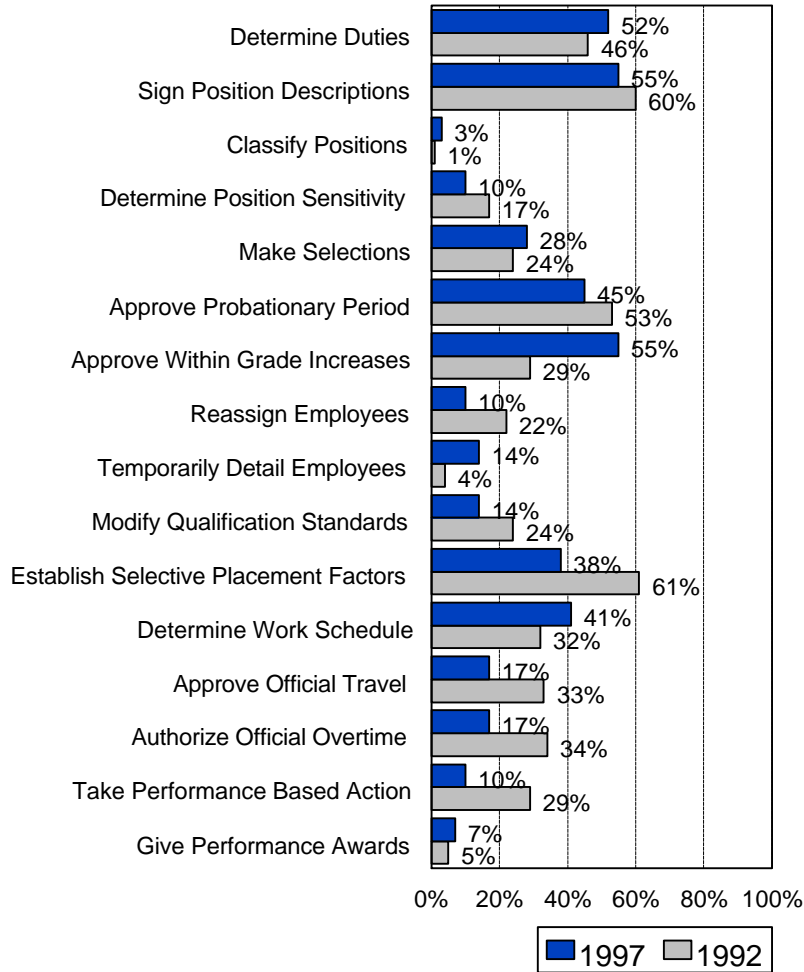
Suspend employees for 14 days or less.

Suspend employees for more than 14 days.

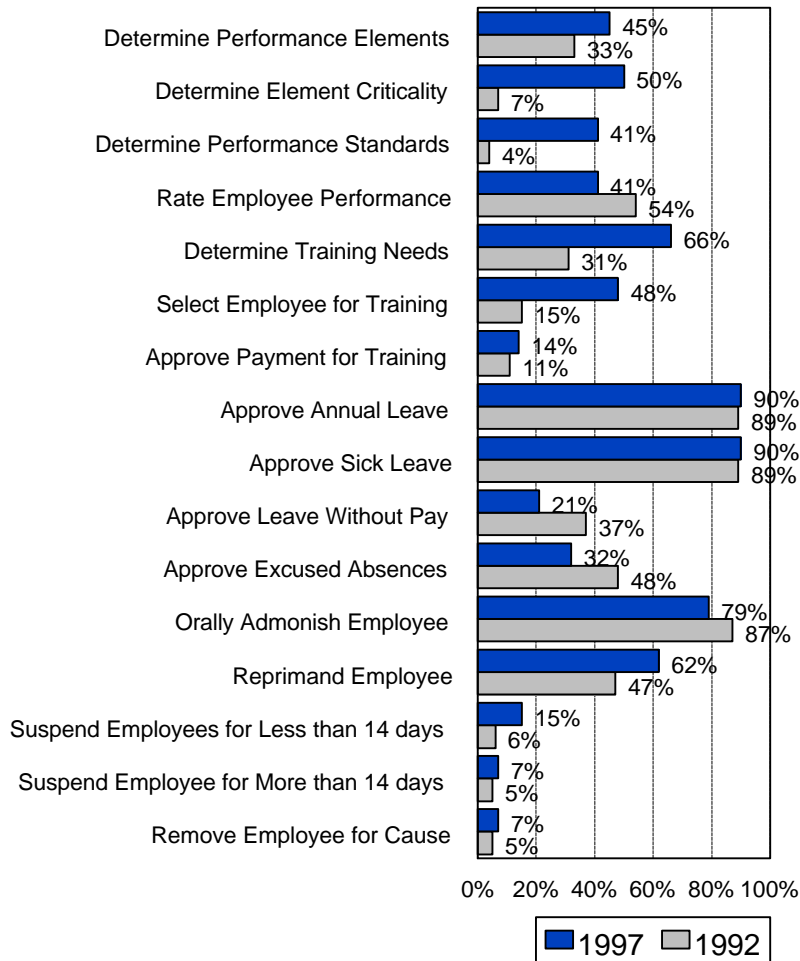
Remove employees for cause.

APPENDIX E
 Comparison of 1992 and 1997 Questionnaire Results

Comparison of Delegations



Comparison of Delegations (Cont.)



Appendix F

Acknowledgments

Special acknowledgment goes to the study leaders and co-authors of this report, Kamaron P. Kellum and Laura E. Shugrue.

Many thanks also to members of the Office of Merit System Oversight and Effectiveness staff who helped and supported the co-authors in completing this report:

Shonda Adams - Washington, DC
Linda Bauer - Chicago, IL
Mario Caviglia - Washington, DC
Charles Cranford - Chicago, IL
Selma Dalton - Newark, NJ
Merle Dickhans - Chicago, IL
Stephanie Fontenot - Washington, DC
Andrea Lewis - Washington, DC
Neldean Monroe - Denver, CO
Wes Shimamura - San Francisco, CA
Dana Sitnick - Washington, DC
Paul Thompson - Washington, DC
Tony Williams - Atlanta, GA