



Using Technology to Provide Better Support for the Federal Workforce

By Sandra J. Smith

The world of e-Government is full of exciting possibilities for how the U.S. Government can improve its interactions with its citizens. Concepts like one-stop shopping, online town hall meetings for direct contact with officials, or "OurTown.Gov" (which helps local leaders to coordinate community services) give new meaning to the phrase "of the people, by the people, and for the people." In the future, it seems almost inevitable that citizens and businesses will conduct more and more government interactions online. The transformations resulting from e-Government will continue to impact every facet of our lives, especially those of government employees. Training, recruitment, clearances, payroll, enterprise human resource system integration, and career planning are areas that are changing to provide better service and resources to government employees.

The nearly ubiquitous nature of the Internet affords a tremendous opportunity for agencies and communities alike to leverage and transform their operational procedures and processes. One such community benefiting from the Internet is the Federal Human Resources (HR) Community. As the Internet and Web-based services continue to marshal efficiencies and improve organizational processes, government employees will become the beneficiaries of the transformational power of e-Government.

The mandate of the President's Management Agenda to strategically manage human capital has helped to serve as a catalyst for the HR Community to examine how they conduct business and highlights them as a model for other agencies as they pave inroads into e-Government. A few key HR-related e-Government initiatives (shown in Figure 1) being led by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) currently underway are:

e-Training

The Government Online Learning Center or, GoLearn is a Government-wide resource that supports developmental opportunities of the Federal workforce through simplified and one-stop access to high quality e-Training products and services. The creation of this center is the first phase of the President's Management Agenda e-Training Initiative and will continue to grow with the addition of products and services that meet the common needs of the workforce, including a competency-based individual career planning tool called the Information Technology (IT) Roadmap. The IT Roadmap will be a valuable tool for IT professionals and their managers to identify the right skills for optimal job performance and at the same time target professional development needed to obtain those skills. This site is designed as a virtual campus that houses free training courses and knowledge resources in each of its rooms. You can explore the center and all that GoLearn has to offer by going to www.golearn.gov.

e-Clearance

Security has taken on a greater significance since 9-11; now more than ever information security is crucial. The e-Clearance initia-

tive will improve the processing of investigations for personnel who must have security clearances. The elimination of paper-based security applications will permit sharing of clearance information among other agencies, and accelerate the clearance process. The OPM e-Clearance project team expects the e-Government initiative to meet its next milestone early.

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director, Mitchell E. Daniels Jr., recently sent a memo to agencies requiring them to automate their security clearance systems and transfer employee files to OPM's Security/Suitability Investigations Index (SII) by Jan. 3, 2003. The memo is the latest in a recent series of letters invoking OMB's authorities under the Clinger-Cohen Act to prompt agencies to work together on e-Government initiatives.

Recruitment One-Stop

A significant challenge for government agencies is the difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled IT professionals. Despite the recent economic downturn, the private sector demand for IT workers — fueled by the Internet "gold rush" — continues to grow at a rate faster than the supply of newly educated IT professionals. In an attempt to simplify the government recruiting process and provide a one-stop approach to federal employment applications and job postings, OPM conducted a virtual IT fair for individuals interested in working in the Federal Government. The job fair was intended for positions in the GS-2210 IT Management Specialist series at the GS-7 through 13 grade levels. Approximately 20 Federal agencies participated in this first of its kind event which was held in April 2002. The entire application and assessment process was administered via the Internet at www.usajobs.opm.gov.

EHRI

The goals of the e-Government Enterprise Human Resources Initiative (EHRI) are to provide timely and accurate access to human resources data and deliver accurate, current data on all Federal employees — active and separated. EHRI will eliminate the need for a paper employee record through the creation of an electronic Official Personnel Folder that will eliminate more than 100 multiple forms that are currently maintained for a minimum of 65 years after employee separation. This initiative will enable the management of reporting benefits and electronic transfer of HR data throughout a Federal employee's career life cycle. These enhancements will fundamentally change the way in which employees, managers, and HR officers retrieve and use Official Personnel Folder data for transaction processing, workforce reporting and analysis. The Department of Defense has funded the Modern Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) to achieve the majority of the EHRI goals, and will eventually be funded to develop an interface with the EHRI.

The Modern DCPDS currently supports multiple HR applications and is designed to replace a number of information systems used today, throughout the Department, to manage civilian human

Recruitment, Employment and Retirement Initiatives

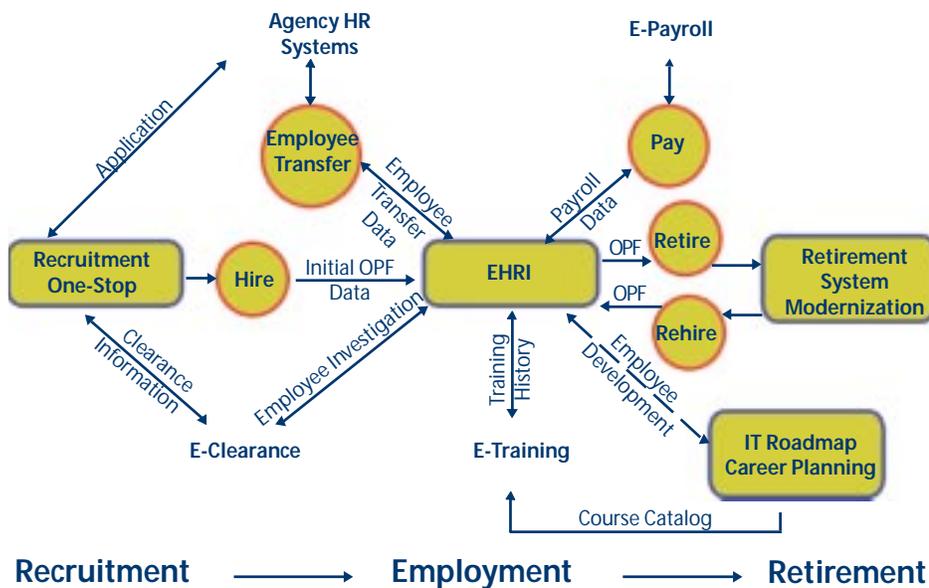


Figure 1.

resources. The Modern DCPDS will move the Department away from multiple systems to a single information system for civilian employees.

e-Payroll

OPM has established a Standardization Action Team, with officials from various Departments. The team's goal is to provide simple, easy-to-use, cost-effective, standardized, integrated HR/Payroll services to support the mission and employees of the Federal Government. The team developed a modernization plan using agency and industry best practices to identify data fields needed for payroll processing. The group also is identifying the methods for making changes, whether legislatively or through the regulatory process.

The Federal IT Roadmap

Recognizing the criticality of a skilled IT workforce, the Federal Chief Information Officer Council (CIOC) engaged OPM in the development of the Information Technology Group, GS-2200. Under this standard, the GS-2210, Information Technology Management Specialist series with 10 parenthetical titles was developed. As a follow-on thrust, the Federal CIOC, Workforce and Human Capital for IT Committee, sponsored the IT Roadmap initiative as a means to engage and provide a developmental resource for the Federal IT Workforce. The IT Roadmap Team spent several months exploring best practices within private and public sector products and recommended a way ahead in developing such a tool. After extensive review, the Roadmap Team recommended adopting the Department of the Navy Chief Information Officer (DON CIO) Career Planning Tool as a best practice.

The Committee adopted the recommendation and launched an effort to develop the IT Roadmap — a Federal career planning tool for current and prospective Federal IT employees. The tool is a Web-enabled, database-driven career planning tool that outlines general and technical competencies relevant to the various parenthetical titles (Policy & Planning; Information Security; Systems Analysis; Application Software; Operating Systems; Network

Services; Data Management; Internet; Systems Administration; and Customer Support) associated with the GS-2210, IT Management Specialist Series.

The GS-2210 series is designed to cover all positions currently assigned to the Computer Specialist Series, GS-334, as well as positions classified in other series (e.g., the Telecommunications Series, GS-391, and the Miscellaneous Administrative and Program Series, GS-301), where IT knowledge is paramount. The tool will assist individuals in performing self-assessment of their proficiency in those competencies. Based on identified proficiency gaps, the IT Roadmap will assist users in developing career-long training and development plans to achieve their career goals. The career development plan will be derived from the user's self-assessment of competencies and the selection of professional development opportunities. Professional development opportunities

will come from a compendium of federal training sources that are directly linked to one or more specific competencies. The IT Roadmap will provide an integrated approach toward training and career development, identify competencies required for successful job performance, and be flexible enough to support a variety of IT career development planning strategies and customization. The tool will include feedback from employees on courses and provide a source of aggregate statistics for agency planning. The prototype of the tool was released early December 2002 and initial operational capability is projected by spring 2003.

A Winning Proposition

An exciting future awaits the workforce of the future. Not only will systems and procedures be greatly enhanced by technology but the people who manage and implement those systems and procedures will be better equipped and more competent to do their jobs. President Bush has said that he will expand the use of the Internet to empower citizens by allowing them to request customized information from Washington when they need it, not just when Washington wants to give it to them. The President believes true reform involves not just giving people information, but giving citizens the freedom to act upon it. The DON CIO supports e-Government initiatives and believes they are winning propositions for using technology to gain efficiencies and provide better support for the DON and Federal Workforce of the future.

To learn more about e-Government go to:

www.gcn.com/egovernment

www.golearn.gov

www.egov.gov

www.senate.gov

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