Accenture Federal Services
Rethink Recruiting
Go digital to win over tomorrow’s federal workforce

High performance. Delivered.
Attracting new talent remains a top challenge federal agencies face in achieving their vision, according to federal executives in a recent Accenture survey.¹ Traditional talent sourcing and acquisition approaches used by federal agencies are being challenged by competitive and attractive offers² from the private sector, hard-to-find talent, and new expectations from recruits. In recent years, forward-thinking commercial enterprises have borrowed from marketers’ digital toolbox used for attracting customers and applied their approaches to attracting and engaging recruits. Now federal agencies should do the same.

Digital tools empower businesses to recruit talent in entirely different ways than traditional methods. The availability of numerous digital channels makes it easier to reach recruits, starting the conversation with them earlier and building the relationship with high-frequency interaction. In the federal sector, talent acquisition is shifting away from reactive postings to more strategic, need-driven practices. But to compete with the private sector, federal agencies must up their digital game to drive recruiting.

Digital: The name of the game

Digital tools can move federal agencies to where the candidates are, increasing the number and type of recruits in an agency’s pool—especially millennials. Using various digital channels to reach and attract new and differing talent types enables agencies to maintain relationships throughout the recruiting life cycle. Digital tools facilitate personalized outreach and messaging and support consistent, frequent engagement with recruits. Moreover, mining and analyzing the data generated from these tools can help agencies focus their recruiting on high-probability candidates with the desired skills, interests, and behaviors. Three areas of digital technology offer agencies big impact: social media, mobile, and gamification.
Social media
Recruits have many more ways to explore job opportunities today. The most common are through word of mouth and social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogger, and LinkedIn. For federal agencies, this means moving beyond primary reliance on websites to the social channels where candidates spend their time. While social media may only be a small "direct" sourcing channel for federal agencies, its pervasiveness influences all channels and should be taken seriously. Federal executives support the use of social media, ranking its use among the top three actions they should take to help attract and retain millennials.

Recognizing that social media reaches larger audiences, more frequently and without time constraints, federal agencies should leverage these channels to spread their employee value proposition and messaging to differentiate the benefits of working for their organization. Federal C-suite executives stated that articulating the employee value proposition is necessary for easier and faster recruiting and promotion of talent across the federal government. And social media is the number one channel for communicating employer brand—and the most effective activity for enhancing it.

Social networks allow organizations to proactively engage with recruits, gain mindshare, and establish relationships based on the organization’s values before an actual need or position is available—providing a larger pool of ready candidates. They can also help federal organizations target underrepresented areas of their workforces.

Mobile
Mobile is a growing trend in recruiting. More than 85 percent of active candidates use their smartphone to begin a job search, and 70 percent of active candidates want to apply via mobile. More specifically, almost three-fourths of US millennials search for jobs on their mobile devices. Clearly, mobile-friendly job search and application processes are becoming increasingly commonplace and expected by recruits.

While every federal agency has mobile-enabled at least two priority customer-facing services in the past 12 months, only five federal agencies currently have career websites or apps optimized for mobile devices. Federal agencies should prioritize optimizing their career websites, enabling recruits to connect with them anywhere at any time. Agencies might also consider developing a smartphone app to allow recruits to search for jobs, learn about the agency, access interactive tools and videos, and link to the agency’s social media sites.

Enabling mobile access enhances agencies’ ability to be in the digital game and better compete for desired and scarce talent.

Gamification
Through gamification, federal agencies can apply gaming mechanics to the recruiting experience in a variety of ways. Candidates can participate and engage in brand-oriented games, educating them about an agency and its services in a fun, light-touch way. This helps keep the brand and mission top of mind. A game or interactive element can help a recruit determine whether an agency is a good fit for them, based on the roles available.

Gamification can also be used to assess candidates across a wide variety of dimensions, helping to build out a more complete candidate profile. Recruiters can tailor their candidate outreach based on the game responses or behaviors, refining more personalized communications and helping establish the connection between the candidate and agency. Cognitive and behavioral testing helps to identify “fit” for a specific role based on the profile of someone successful in that role.

The Department of State has developed a mobile application, DOSCareers, designed to increase awareness among U.S. citizens about the Department and its Foreign Service career opportunities. The app provides a career quiz to help users determine which career track is right for them and access to more than 500 questions from previous Foreign Service Officer Tests that users can use to practice and prepare.

Commercial organizations use gamification to up the ante in their recruiting methods. Google bolsters its search for new software-writing talent with an innovative gamification approach. For 12 years, the company has been holding a Google Code Jam software-writing competition. Developers and engineers who enter the contest compete in a game to win monetary prizes up to $50,000. Google, however, uses it as a way to attract potential hires with the right skills for the job and company.
Accenture uses various games as engagement tools to educate recruits about our organization, build our brand image, and encourage people to consider a career with Accenture:

• To help prospects experience the types of challenges they may encounter in their careers at Accenture, three open source games test strategic-thinking, problem-solving, and game-changing skills. See https://gamechanger.acn-data2.com.

• Our social media scanner game helps students discover the importance of understanding what people, including potential employers, can see on their social sites. Scanner results illustrate how personal posts can reflect negatively when applying for jobs and helps recruits build a positive digital footprint. See www.accenture.com/socialscanner.

Competing in the digital recruiting game

Using digital tools holds the potential to help address federal executives' concerns around attracting and retaining talent. They can help target talent with the desired skills, increase engagement and response rates, and establish a more personalized, individual relationship with each recruit. Additionally, data captured from these tools can empower recruiters with valuable insights about desired candidates and about the effectiveness of their digital strategies. Incorporating tools such as mobile, social media, and gamification into recruiting and sourcing strategies can help federal agencies up their digital game.

Federal executives view the prospect of one-third of federal employees being eligible for retirement as a positive impact on their ability to recruit tomorrow’s federal workforce. The perceived benefit is the opportunity to attract and promote new talent with much-needed skill sets. The private sector is already using digital tools to attract younger workers with in-demand skills. If federal agencies are to capitalize on the retirement wave and retool their organizations, they must win in the talent market. Federal agencies must rethink recruiting and accelerate use of the same digital tools and channels to compete for top talent.

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References

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.

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