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Management buy-in is called critical to hiring reform, telework

By Emily Long | elong@govexec.com | July 8, 2010

Federal managers and agency leaders must step up and drive hiring reform efforts if government wants to see long-term change, a senior federal official said on Thursday.

The overhaul is 60 percent complete, but will require the continued investment of hiring managers and agency executives, said Angela Bailey, deputy associate director for recruitment and diversity at the Office of Personnel Management, during a panel discussion hosted by the Coalition for Effective Change, an association of federal executives.

"We're hitting the tipping point on things like streamlining [job announcements], but haven't crossed over to where we can claim success," she said. "We have to keep taking a constant temperature check to make sure agencies are making the kind of progress we'd like to see."

Bailey called on hiring managers to play a more active role in the recruiting process. For example, they should write their own position descriptions and job announcements rather than relying on human resources personnel who know little about the requirements for specific openings, she said.

Bill Bransford, general counsel for the Senior Executives Association, agreed, noting HR staffs can provide guidance on format and technical requirements for job postings. Human resources departments traditionally have been responsible for recruitment, but a hiring manager's involvement has a direct impact on the quality of a new employee, he said.

According to Bailey, manager satisfaction with job applicant quality, as well as applicant satisfaction with the hiring process, is an important measure of success. The long-term goal is to roll out a dashboard tool that allows applicants to see how long it takes agencies to notify and bring new hires on board. Expectations must be set high and in advance to speed the hiring process, she added.

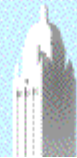
"This is not rocket science," she said. "This is not difficult. I'm not sure why it's become so difficult and controversial."

During a separate panel discussion, agency and union officials said the full support of federal managers also will be required to roll out telework programs governmentwide. Peer-to-peer discussions about the benefits of flexible work arrangements could change the minds of hesitant managers. For example, managers must be comfortable with telework initiatives and understand how they advance agency

goals, said Danette Campbell, senior telework adviser for the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, adding pilot programs allow officials to "try it before you buy it."

"It's really about managing people and products, not so much about where people are located," she said. "All the things we speak to in telework training are things we need to see in a bricks-and-mortar environment, and all the things taking place in a bricks-and-mortar environment need to take place in a remote environment."

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