

From Brain Drain to Brain Gain:

Fixing U.S. Government College Recruitment



Work Product for:



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Executive Summary

No matter the state of the economy, many Americans still view the United States federal government as an “employer of last resort” – including students from top-ranked American colleges and universities. Thus, in this report, I intend to address the following question:

How can federal agencies best recruit students from top-ranked colleges?

Background

On one hand, federal employment has probably never been more appealing to college students as it is now. With the election of President Obama inspiring millions and the economy’s current recession making the security of federal employment more attractive, those graduating in 2009 should be seeking these federal opportunities like never before. And at the same time that demand for these opportunities may be high, the supply is as well. With upwards of 530,000 “Baby Boomer” retirements and quits by 2012 – many of which in leadership positions – the federal government might become an “employer of first resort.”

On the other hand, the government’s unclear, drawn out, and late recruitment schedules may deter college students from pursuing and ultimately choosing federal employment. And at the same time, top candidates may not consider federal opportunities in the first place because of long-standing stigmas against government service. Effectively navigating through this dichotomy of opportunities and challenges is how the government can ensure a pipeline of top college talent.

Methodology and Data

The research for this report triangulates data from five different sources, including:

- *interviews* with top-ranked colleges’ career services offices
- *interviews* with top-ranked government agencies’ human resources departments
- diverse *literature review* of academic, business/industry, government, magazine, and newspaper articles
- *focus groups* with students from top-ranked colleges
- *website content analysis* of many popular websites including: facebook.com, twitter.com, digg.com, linkedin.com, and monster.com

Findings: Policies and Procedures, Operations, and Marketing

The report’s findings are established through the lens of multiple frameworks in operations and marketing, including effective management, improved processes, and strategic marketing. From these frameworks, I separate the findings into two topics: operations and marketing. Some highlights of these findings include:

Operations

- Unlike many private sector firms, federal agencies only collect feedback from those offered a position
- Federal agencies largely recruit in the spring while private firms recruit in the fall
- Neither OPM nor federal agencies regularly study web traffic for job postings (usajobs.gov or studentjobs.gov)
- The only consistent metric for return-on-investment for federal recruitment is “number of applications,” and yet agencies do not largely use this strategically
- While many mission-oriented employees participate in recruitment, they largely receive only basic training and gain no credit for doing so

Marketing

- The top private firms have a significantly greater presence than the top federal agencies to the upwards of 83% of college students using facebook and other social networking sites
- Monster.com, careerbuilder.com, and hotjobs.yahoo.com have 1350-1700% more unique visitors than usajobs.gov per month
- Students largely do not know what job they want but know what interests them
- Students comment that career fairs are “overwhelming” and “less valuable” because the lackluster recruiters largely direct them to the websites
- Parents, professors, friends, and recent graduates are the largest influencers on students; President Obama also has a significant effect on college students

Recommendations: Short-, Medium-, and Long-Term

This report offers recommendations to the federal government’s recruitment infrastructure (“critical parties”). They are categorized into three periods for implementation: short-term for a one-month window, medium-term for a one-year window, and long-term for a three-year window. These “critical parties” as well as external stakeholders can use the table on the following page as an implementation plan.

Recruitment Implementation Plan:

Short-Term	Critical Party	Medium-Term	Critical Party	Long-Term	Critical Party
Operations		Operations		Operations	
Increase regional involvement in recruitment	Agency HR, Reg. Offices	Implement web traffic feedback loops for job postings	OPM, Agency HR	Align recruiting tasks to performance evaluation	Agency HR, Execs
Solicit top leadership support for recruitment, including Obama	OPM	Calculate a "recruitment RoI" through web traffic and activity-based costing and use it strategically	OPM, Agency HR	Align recruitment processes with private sector's	Agency HR
Solicit feedback from all candidates at all stages of process	OPM, Agency HR	Formalize and diversify recruiter training to include "smile" and interpersonal training	OPM, Agency HR, reps		
Ensure consistency and succinctness of job listings	OPM, Agency HR	Allow for candidates to see their application status updates	OPM		
		Revise job sites to match student thought processes	OPM		
Marketing		Marketing		Marketing	
Increase presence on social networking sites	Agency HR, Gov. Relations	Market to candidate influencers, like professors and parents	Agency HR	Augment student career fairs with new technologies, formats	Agency HR, IT
Create promotional videos with Obama	OPM, Agency HR, Gov. Relations	Create on-campus paid "ambassadors"	Agency HR, interns	Include reciprocity in the next contract for student/usajobs maintenance	OPM
Connect alumni to candidates at all stages of process	Agency HR	Continuously promote opportunities	Agency HR		
Link government reports to social news sites	Agency HR, Gov. Relations	Strengthen connections to College Career Services	Agency HR		
		Post jobs on other job sites	Agency HR		

Introduction

No matter the state of the economy, many Americans still view the United States federal government as an “employer of last resort” – including students from top-ranked American colleges and universities.¹ However, while thousands may hold this far-reaching opinion, the government at the same time offers unprecedented opportunities and benefits that many students in the “millennial” generation have indicated as attractive for their first post-collegiate job.²

Even though the campaign and election of President Barack Obama invigorated millions of young people, including college students, to get involved politically, and his own inaugural address stressed the value of public service for all of America, it is too early to tell the results of his call to serve. While he may have inspired some to consider working in the public sector, the bulk of students he reached in 2008 have not even graduated from college yet. Thus, some lingering questions are “how enduring was the motivation of change in the minds of students from the time of his election?” and “will students equate federal employment with public service?” Even if the results are overwhelmingly positive to say that they are still inspired and equate federal employment with public service, it would be difficult to say that this sentiment would stay fresh for the next wave of students, class of 2010.

Although some students may know first-hand about federal employment, there is little doubt that a large portion of this student body either might not know that these opportunities exist, be misinformed about the opportunities, or be deterred by the process of getting the job. In this report, I intend to bridge this information gap between expectations and opportunity, and answer the following question:

How can federal agencies best recruit students from top-ranked colleges?

Client

The recipient of this report and its data is the Partnership for Public Service (“Partnership”). The Partnership is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works to revitalize the federal government by inspiring a new generation to serve and by transforming the way government works. They believe that building, energizing, and maintaining a high-quality workforce is the key to success for the federal government. And to accomplish this, the Partnership pursues three strategic goals: building communities of support, securing the right talent, and fueling innovation.³



Among other initiatives, they specifically develop and distribute government human resources literature, conduct advanced research, and hold human resources

¹ Light, Paul C. http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2002/0701governance_light.aspx

² YahooHOTJOBS Survey, “What Millennial Workers Want” and <http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Benefits.shtml>

³ www.ourpublicservice.org

summits to further their mission. Throughout this report’s data collection process, agencies and career services officers alike applauded the Partnership’s efforts that help them connect with all audiences, not just college students. With much of the Partnership’s recent work targeting college-level candidates for federal employment, this report can supplement these efforts.

Purpose, Objective, and Scope

Purpose

This report functions to a) develop key recommendations to augment and enhance the current federal recruitment efforts of students from top-ranked colleges and b) communicate these efforts to the Partnership for their use and distribution.

Objective

By answering the key question in the introduction, this report shall determine a set of “best-practice” tactical recommendations for government managers to recruit top-ranked college students, no matter the economic or political context. The intent of these recommendations is for agencies to retool with their current resources, rather than having to acquire new ones. Therefore, at the same time, these recommendations shall be considerate of cost to the agency.

Scope

Recruitment is just one of many components of human resources, so it bears explanation as to why this report specifically focuses on this aspect, among others.

I propose the value chain in figure 1 to show how recruitment fits in the scheme of good government. From its set of value propositions of inspiring young adults to federal service, which would smooth transition from the baby boom retirements while alleviating agency budgetary woes, the government can apply its resources into its recruitment activities. This activity can then create certain desired outputs, like attracting higher quality employees, and these employees then produce better work products, which influence larger outcomes of new ideas, efficiency, and greater participation. Ultimately, these outcomes can shape the final goal of having good government. While many activities may lead to the same impact, not all of them may strive for the same values. Simply put, effective recruitment of high-quality human capital sits at a vital crux between current resources and the long-run goal of good government.



Figure 1: Proposed Value Chain

While recruitment can have variable definitions, for the sake of this report, I shall define recruitment practices as the process of strategically bringing together

organizational representatives, messages, communication channels, and timing to attract candidates for either an internship or full-time employment.⁴ Moreover, since “top-ranked” schools can take many different definitions, I am defining this as top-50 schools from U.S. News & World Report’s 2008 list of top colleges and universities.

Lastly, this report only concentrates on federal recruitment of students from top-ranked colleges. It does not specifically address state or local governments, non-students, or students not from top-ranked colleges.

Document Organization

The document is organized into the following structure:

- **Background** – defines the context behind the findings and recommendations
- **Methodology and Data** – shows the theory and process of the research
- **Frameworks** – introduces the major filters that translated research into findings
- **Findings** – lists significant findings in two major categories: operations and marketing
- **Recommendations** – categorizes actions linked to the findings in three time periods: short-term, medium-term, and long-term
- **Conclusion** – closes the report and recommends future studies
- **Appendix 1** – details the data collection specifically in seven exhibits
- **Appendix 2** – provides a straightforward implementation plan from the recommendations

⁴ Modified by the author from Rynes, Sara L. and Alison E. Barber. “Applicant Attraction Strategies: An Organizational Perspective.” *The Academy of Management*; April, 1990.

Background

The context surrounding federal recruitment of students from top-ranked colleges now is mixed. Although many factors are aligned that would attract college students, the recruitment process has many obstacles that might simultaneously deter them.

Opportunities

On one hand, working in the federal government has never been more appealing to college students. With the election of President Obama inspiring millions to public service and the economy's current recession making the security of federal employment more attractive, those graduating in 2009 should be seeking these federal opportunities like never before. At the same time the demand for this opportunity may be high, the supply is as well. As the Partnership estimates, upwards of 530,000 "Baby Boomer" retirements and quits will occur by 2012 – many of which will be from leadership positions. Assuming that the target audience would mostly seek white-collar jobs, figure 2 suggests that there will be an approximate 20,000 excess jobs once the current younger generation takes over after the Baby Boomers retire.

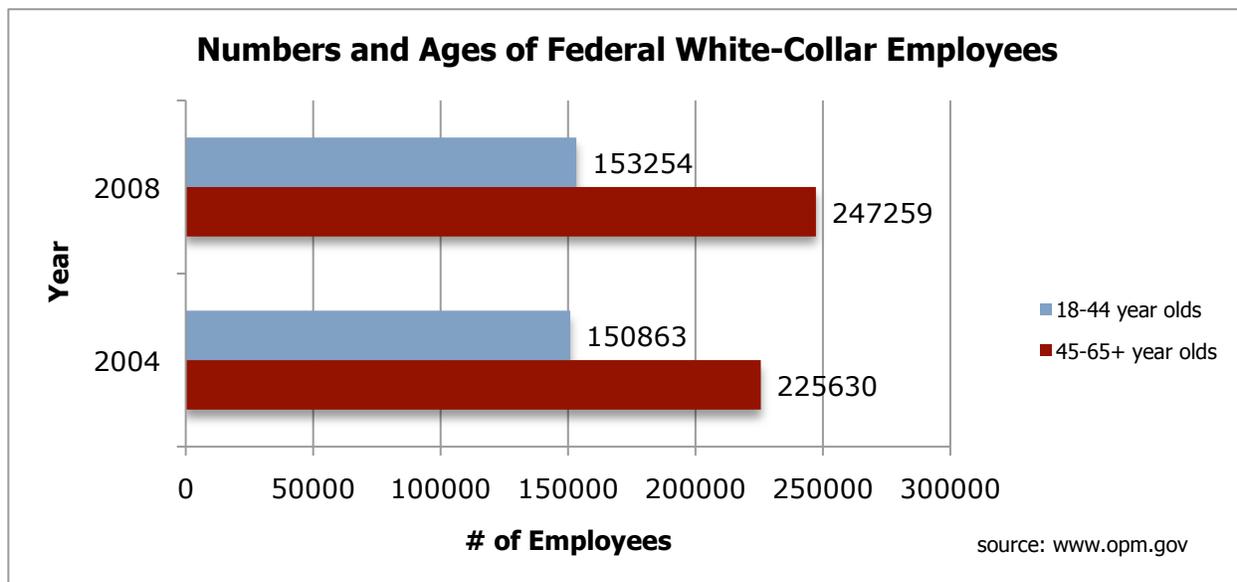


Figure 2: The Baby Boomers (ages 45-65+) will soon retire with fewer workers to backfill their positions

Moreover, hiring younger employees into the current salary system, which generally pays according to level of education and years of experience, can both balance the government's top-heaviness and consequently save money compared to hiring more experienced employees. Although total civilian salary expenditures were just a sliver of the entire budget (\$90 billion of the total \$2.9 trillion 2008 budget), this more affordable labor may still help toward fiscal objectives. All things considered, with the confluence of labor supply, labor demand, and cost savings, matching federal opportunities with top-college students might be mutually beneficial. In this case, the government might actually become an "employer of first resort."

Challenges

On the other hand, job markets have not been stagnant over the past decade, and opportunities to work internationally or in advanced technologies are more abundant than ever. Moreover, educational attainment and college admissions competitiveness are increasing rapidly,⁵ so the select few who get the privilege of attending top-ranked colleges will probably have more post-graduation options than most other college students.

What's more, the government's unclear, drawn out, and late recruitment schedules may discourage students from top-ranked colleges from pursuing and ultimately choosing federal employment. At the same time, top candidates may not consider federal opportunities in the first place because of long-standing stigmas against or lack of information about government service.

Thus, effectively navigating through this dichotomy of opportunities and challenges is how the government can ensure a pipeline of top college talent.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. "Educational Attainment in the United States: 2003." Issued June, 2004. and Cathy Shaw. "Navigating College Admissions" <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7535849>

Methodology and Data

Because federal recruitment does not have stores of data readily available, I used the following strategy to collect the required data.

Methodology

Given that this topic concerns determining “best practices,” which are inherently difficult to measure, I triangulated data by collecting different perspectives through different methods. As shown in figure 3, these efforts included interviews with college career service offices and government human resources (HR) departments from top-ranked agencies, a literature review, focus groups with students from top-ranked colleges, and lastly, resulting from these efforts, a website content analysis to assess the government’s presence on the internet compared to its private sector competition. Approaching this topic from multiple perspectives provided the

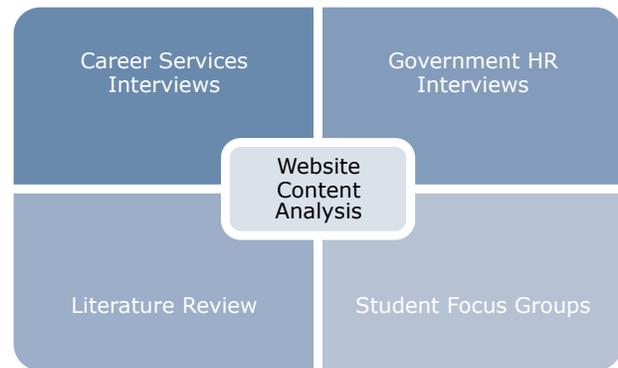


Figure 3: Methodology

necessary common ground among various stakeholders and research to glean these best practice recommendations.

While certain components of this methodology are standard for reports about recruitment, this methodology is unique in three ways. First, it includes interviews with college career services offices, an historically overlooked source that in many ways are the portals that control information between employers and students. Second, to give a broader perspective on the target audience, it uses students from top-ranked colleges who are not necessarily already interested in federal employment. Third, the website content analysis actually tracks federal government “presence” on popular social and jobs websites and compares it to top private sector firms. From my own literature review, I did not find any reports or articles that brought any of these data sources significantly into the recruitment debate.

Data

From this methodology, the Partnership and I identified a set of colleges from the U.S. News & World Report’s 2008 list of “Best Colleges and Universities” as well as a set of federal agencies from the Partnership’s 2007 list of “Best Places to Work” to interview about federal recruitment. The resulting lists demonstrated diversity along many dimensions that could provide compelling differences or commonalities to note.

For the literature review, I searched business databases, library catalogs, and the internet, while also seeking out recommendations from Deans and Professors. For the student focus groups, I held a series of college focus groups around Boston which

has three colleges in the top-50 of the U.S. News & World Report list. For the website content analysis, I browsed the set of websites that my previous data collection efforts discussed and compared the presence of the top-50 federal agencies to the top-50 companies on the Fortune Magazine 2009 list of “100 Best Companies to Work For.”⁶

Figure 4 below spells out the five data collection efforts, the criteria for selecting sources within those efforts, and simplified lists of the resulting groups.

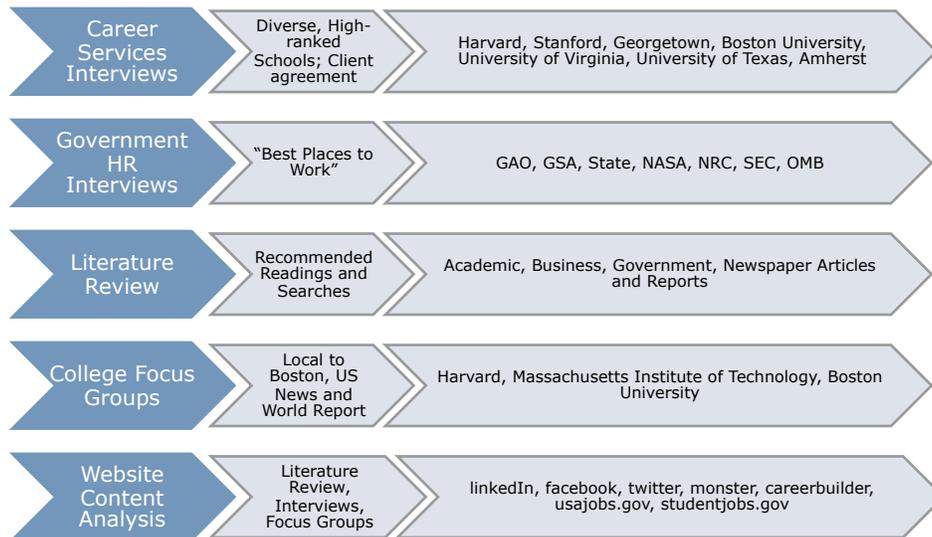


Figure 4: Five-pronged data collection effort

For more information on this methodology, the exhibits in Appendix 1 describe the diversity of colleges, federal agencies, literature, websites, and focus group locations more extensively. Moreover, Exhibits 1b, 2b, and 4b also show the protocols used to collect the data from the participants.

Assumptions and Limitations

While this methodology attempts to approach federal recruitment from different perspectives, it is by no means exhaustive. First of all, it does not incorporate randomized sampling in its selection of interviews and focus groups. Admittedly, this may produce some bias in the results. Secondly, beyond the website content analysis, it could not unearth quantitative data to make more concrete recommendations in terms of time, cost, or resources. Therefore, the recommendations are best estimates. Thirdly, a list of the best recruitment departments in the federal government or the private sector does not exist, so this report assumes that if an organization is on the “best places to work” or the “best companies to work for” lists, their HR and recruitment departments are major contributors to these rankings.

Despite these limitations, this report’s methodology still proposes new approaches, provides new data sources, and makes first-time recommendations that the federal government can use to improve its recruitment infrastructure.

⁶ <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/bestcompanies/2009/>

Frameworks

Since recruiters coordinate resources and manage processes, and yet still act as major liaisons between new applicants and their organization, their jobs engage major principles of operations and marketing, respectively. Therefore, to improve federal recruitment, the data collection efforts require frameworks for both operations and marketing. To fulfill these requirements, I abstracted models from previous research and constructed theoretical ones.

Operations

Figure 5 depicts my theoretical framework for operations. Within it, I delineate two required elements for optimizing operations: effective management and improved process. For operations to hit peak performance, these two elements are so consequently interrelated that an operation would not function without one or the other. Specifically, management needs process, and a process requires management.

Furthermore, within each of these elements, I also propose certain principles that are essential to the element's execution. Under the element of effective management, I define the principles as such:⁷

- *Customers Determine Quality*: In this case, the customer's satisfaction is the ultimate goal because customers are more likely to spread dissatisfaction.
- *Continuous Feedback and Communication*: At all stages in the process, the organization solicits feedback from customers. Through proper communication, this feedback will shape future improvements.
- *Contributors Rewarded for Efforts*: Aligning efforts with rewards for employees can induce superior performance.
- *Top Leadership Support*: With top leadership committed to and supporting the efforts, it increases all other employees' engagement in the process.



Figure 5: Operations comprises the interrelation between "management" and "process."

⁷ Elements taken from Martin, Lawrence L. Total Quality Management in Human Service Organizations. Sage Publications, 1993.

Likewise, under the element of improved process, I define the principles as such:⁸

- *Goal-setting*: Goal-setting will create a target and focus an organization's process to comply with its overall strategy.
- *Benchmarking*: Benchmarking assists an organization to discern if its process is functioning adequately or if it needs correction. Two major comparators for benchmarking are the organization's competition or its past performance.
- *Process Revision*: If the results of a process lag behind the competition, the organization must revise the process. If the organization does not redress the broken process, then it is likely that the organization will experience inefficiencies that will prevent it from reaching its higher potential.

Marketing

The act of recruiting someone for a job could be likened to the marketing of that opportunity to a new customer. Thus, for recruitment to be effective, the agents involved would benefit from thinking along a strategic marketing framework, from understanding one's organizational needs and identifying the right audience, to communicating with the audience and measuring if one's efforts are successful.

Strategic Marketing Planning Process

More specifically, figure 6 depicts the strategic marketing planning process I employ.⁹ It shows the steps from beginning to end and portrays the process as a cycle.

I define each box as such:

- *Workforce Analysis*: The first step involves assessing the organizations needs based on current and forecasted deficiencies. This will involve investigating current gaps and projecting how the organization will function in the future. Important in both cases is defining the organization's objectives.



Figure 6: Strategic Marketing Planning Process (modified by the author)

⁸ Luck, Jeff and John W. Peabody. "Improving the Public Sector." *Healthcare Management Review*, Spring 2000.

⁹ Andreasen, Alan R. and Philip Kotler. *Strategic Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations*. Prentice Hall Publishing, 7th Edition, 2008

- *Marketing Strategy*: This includes specifying the organization's goals, identifying which segments of the population to target, and understanding the organization's position against their competitors. Essential to positioning is cultivating and reinforcing a brand known to its customers and the general public.
- *Tactics*: Here, the organization develops details of how it will communicate with the target audience, what it will say, who will say it, and where it intends to have the target audience receive the communications.
- *Benchmarking*: To estimate success of the tactics, the organization must determine benchmarks. The definition is the same as benchmarking in the operations model.
- *Implementation*: As the tactics and benchmarks create the structure of the plan, it must be implemented.
- *Assess Performance*: Lastly, as the tactics are measured, the performance data should feed back into the start of the process for the organization to continue to fine-tune its services.

Findings

Applying the data to the frameworks explained above spawned two general topics for findings: operations and marketing.

While the following findings are bucketed into one of these topics, these topics are not mutually exclusive, as shown in figure 7 (i.e. marketing activities are part of a larger overall operational process, and vice-versa). Since some findings may be relevant to one or both topics, each finding should be applied more broadly than its classification. Moreover, driven by the findings, these categories will extend to the recommendations as well.

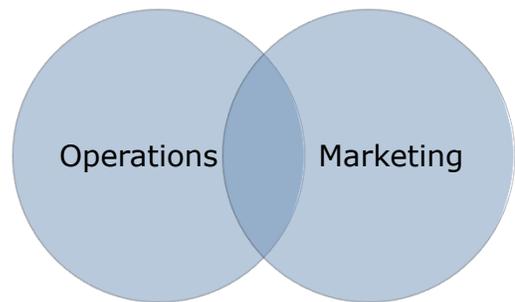


Figure 7: Overlapping Themes of the Findings and Recommendations

Operations

The following operations findings are divided into two separate groups which derive from the operations model in figure 5. They concern effective management (operations management gaps) and improved process (government recruitment process).

Operations Management Gaps

It is reasonable to assume that if students from top-ranked colleges are to be targets of federal recruitment, then their needs should largely determine the process toward employment. However, this has not been the case. At present, the “customers” of federal recruitment, students and career services have encountered some frustration with the current federal recruitment process.

Most of all, they want clarity in a system that has dense language and myriad paths into federal employment. These different paths confuse students and career services offices alike, not to mention many federal managers who have to navigate it as well, so much so that career services cannot fully guide and inform students. Moreover, to continue to provide the best opportunities to their students, career services also want clarity about changes within an agency whether they are objectives, goals, or points of contact. It was a consistent theme that career services officers were unaware of organizational changes in federal agencies that involved recruiting at their schools. Specifically, career services offices reported that they would try to contact agencies for fairs or job postings, but the points of contact changed, and they could not reach the new point of contact. The same was said for changes in objectives, where agencies might not return to campus, and career services were not informed of the rationale.

Beyond these frustrations from students and career services, agencies are also not collecting feedback comprehensively. Specifically, as shown in red in figure 8, the government has many opportunities to collect feedback from candidates throughout the recruitment process, but only do so from those who are on-boarded. Therefore, this feedback they do collect would be positively biased. To fine-tune the process to be most

effective, they would have to collect feedback from all candidates, similar to how many private firms that vie for these candidates do.



Figure 8: Simplified Government Recruitment Process¹⁰

One piece of feedback that the federal agencies have tracked consistently is the number of applications they receive from a college. They use this number as an imperfect measure of recruitment return on investment. However, beyond application numbers, agencies did not formally track application yields or final school outcomes so that they could use these data in their strategic recruitment decisions.

Last of all, some federal agencies have made strides in incorporating “institutional stewardship”¹¹ as part of certain employee performance evaluations, but this category has still yet to be applied to entry-level workers, who are the ones that students largely trust when it comes to recruitment. Thus, right now to get involved with recruitment, an employee is not receiving credit that he or she is an “institutional steward” even if they attract large numbers of recruits. One agency I spoke with eased this issue by offering financial incentives to employees for attracting recruits, but the other agencies were less inclined to support this or had not fully considered it.

Government Recruitment Process

A disconnect currently exists in the government recruitment process. While most federal agencies mentioned the private sector as their competition for top candidates, few of them actually benchmarked their recruitment and hiring processes against private sector firms. Most crucial to this benchmarking is timing – where private sector firms largely recruit and make offers in the fall, while agencies do so in the spring. Given the job pressures that students and career services reported, many students are unwilling to wait for government opportunities even if they may be interested in them.

Granted, this constraint can largely be budgetary, given the budget cycle, but at the same time, no federal regulation restricts fall recruitment.¹² Thus, if an agency could be somewhat assured about having some resources, they could recruit in the fall, or at least hold informational events at that time.

Another overlooked, but critical, benchmark comes from web traffic. Currently, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has not put significant resources into tracking user behavior on the major federal job portals, studentjobs.gov and usajobs.gov, and comparing to the private sector’s user behavior, not to mention

¹⁰ Derived from career services and federal government interviews.

¹¹ Paraphrased as “promoting and representing one’s organization rather than just performance on the job.”

¹² Title 5. Code of Federal Regulations. Sections 300, 317, 330, 332, 575.

against their own past performance. With the web portal being the predominant method to apply for jobs, especially in this target population, infrequent self-evaluation could lead to prolonged inefficiency and underperformance.

Lastly, internships can be critical talent pipelines that give agencies opportunities to inexpensively connect with possible future entry-level candidates. Putting energy into recruiting top interns and converting them into full-time entry-level employees post-graduation can therefore save on resources that are reserved for recruiting entry-level candidates. While agencies do currently set hiring goals for these interns, they broadly do not set goals or formalize activities to try to convert interns into employees.

Marketing

The following marketing findings are divided into three separate groups which concern the target audience (student perspectives), promotion of the opportunities (career fairs), and place or channel of the communication (career fairs, and internet presence and technology). These groups reflect the “marketing strategy” and “tactics” boxes from figure 6. The other boxes from figure 6 are chiefly reflected in the previous operations findings.

Student Perspectives

To potentially influence the target audience, the employer must understand the audience. Then, it must connect its marketing efforts and recruitment operations to the audience’s decision-making process. Figure 9 is a simplified version of a student’s decision-making process, which the federal government can link to their efforts.

Simply from the student’s perspective, the recruitment process from beginning to end is full of “moments of truth,”¹³ whereby the student either knows, learns, or interacts with the employer. Nonetheless, each of these impressions can influence the student’s behavior one way or the other. Therefore, to increase the chances of the federal government to motivate students to consider federal employment, they must connect their recruitment operation holistically to this decision-making process.

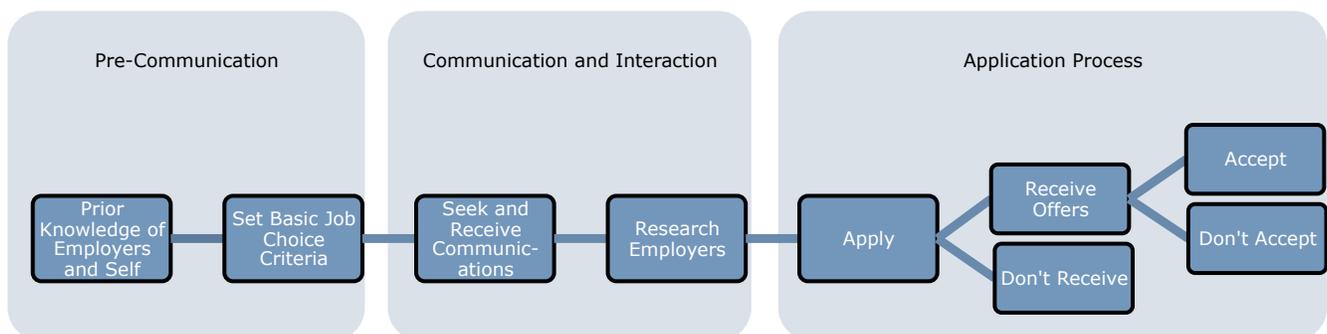


Figure 9: Target Audience Decision Making Process (modified by the author)¹⁴

¹³ Albrecht, Karl. *At America’s Service*. Grand Central Publishing, 1995.

¹⁴ For figures 8 and 9: Andreasen and Kotler. *Strategic Marketing*, and student focus groups.

I define each box as such:

- *Prior Knowledge*: having some external information and/or perception about an organization before any communications about jobs occur; also having internal information about self-awareness and limits.
- *Set Basic Job Choice Criteria*: determining what job characteristics are important and how they will be prioritized.
- *Seek and Receive Job Communications*: intentionally seeking or unintentionally receiving information about job opportunities.
- *Basic Research of Employers*: learning from public information or personal connections if the firm meets one's job choice criteria previously set.
- *Apply*: if a sufficient number of job criteria are met, submitting an application and going through the application process.
- *Receive/Don't Receive Offers*: receiving job offers to choose from.
- *Accept/Don't Accept Offers*: deciding on which offer to accept and communicating it back to the employer.

As mentioned in figure 9, much of their decision-making is determined by what they already know. As evidence, career services offices from non-East Coast schools report that their students may not be aware about federal government opportunities because the students largely do not originate from the East Coast where more people work for the government (e.g. in Washington, D.C.). Moreover, the career services offices observe that students principally look for jobs near the region of their school, so for students at Stanford, for example, many will want to stay in California. At the same time though, these non-East Coast career services offices also report that many federal opportunities that come to their career fairs do not consider this regional demand.

From focus groups and career service interviews, many students self-identify with their college major and will use that as a starting point to look for jobs. For example, one career services interview mentioned one of the most successful booths at their career fairs was an employer that advertised the majors they were looking for. In addition, students are flexible in the job they accept as long as it gives them a chance to use their field of study.

Beyond students' searches based on what they know from either their upbringing or their major, the messenger who informs the student about a job can influence his or her decision to apply for it. From my research, professors and recent graduates seem to be the messengers that students trusted most for job recommendations. From others' research, the top influencers have also been parents and friends.¹⁵ Beyond these personal connections, students and career service offices agreed that President Obama also had a significant effect on college students.

¹⁵ Chapman, David W. "A Model of Student College Choice." *The Journal of Higher Education*. Sept-Oct 1981.

Career Fairs

The career fair is typically a career services office's event to bring in dozens of employers and have students interact with them for job opportunities. Many will hold a major career fair in each semester typically with the fall semester for private sector firms and the spring semester, for government/non-profit organizations (however, each semester is open for federal agencies). From all accounts, whether the career fair is on campus or regional, any number from 30-100 organizations will attend.

For federal agencies, the career fair remains the most significant place to communicate their opportunities and interact with students. Every interviewed agency mentioned that their recruitment infrastructures attend these events. In fact, agencies will try to hold information sessions on campus either before or after these career fairs to reach students in more intimate settings. For both types of events, agencies say they try to staff their booths with an array of HR, mission-based, executive, and entry-level employees to answer all types of questions. These employees can also come from regional agency offices or headquarters (typically in Washington, D.C.). For most of these employees, attendance is voluntary where they are briefed beforehand on the hiring process and a handful of talking points, which include emphasizing the agency mission and personal anecdotes.

For students though, many commented that career fairs can be “overwhelming” and “less valuable” because the employers just “direct them to their websites.” Many also suggested that they can sense when an employee is not enthusiastic about attending and that this happens “more often than it should.”¹⁶ Due to these impressions, students in this study mentioned that they (as well as their friends) prefer attending career fairs not for the networking but rather for the trinkets that firms and agencies give away (highlighters, fans, magnets, etc.).

Internet Presence and Technology

Students and career services reported that electronic technology factors strongly in the job search. Many students mentioned that one of their preferred means of finding out about jobs was through email lists or email blasts from career services. Through these, students can then click to the employer's website, which might then influence them to apply for the job opportunity. From interviews, focus groups, and literature review, these first impressions can be crucial, and in federal job listings, they have too often been wordy, inconsistent, and stark.

Beyond these first impressions, survey research confirms the necessity for an employer to have a strong electronic presence. Specifically, it shows that the most preferred communication channel of “millennials” is online communities, also known as social networking sites (e.g., as of June, 2008, upwards of 83% of college students use facebook.com, one of the leading social networking sites). These sites, which are free to join, offer thousands of functional applications, allow users to create online affinity groups, and even encourage organizations to create profiles for users to research, become “fans” of, and track.

¹⁶ Student focus groups

These social networking sites are integral to the daily life of college students.¹⁷ With 58% of college students researching job opportunities online on a *monthly* basis, these sites can function as a powerful resource for their information gathering. However, as shown in figure 10 below, in two of the biggest and fastest growing social networking sites, facebook and twitter.com,¹⁸ there is a significant difference in the “presence” of the top-50 federal agencies and private firms.¹⁹

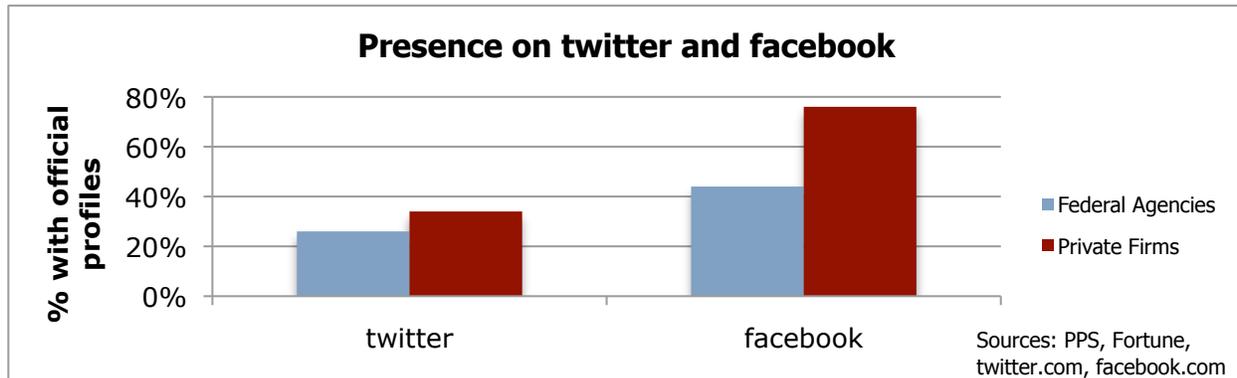


Figure 10: The private sector has a stronger presence on twitter.com and much stronger presence on facebook.com

Moreover, while twitter and facebook serve largely as social networking sites, another site, linkedin.com, focuses much more on connecting people through job opportunities. And while currently linkedin’s offerings may be more relevant to experienced employees, the site is free for anyone to use. At this point, students report little usage of linkedin, but career service offices have mentioned it as a growing tool in the job search.

Similar to the trends in facebook and twitter, the top private firms have a much stronger presence on linkedin, as shown in figure 11. Unlike the “presence” for twitter and facebook, this means that there are smaller percentages of federal agency workforces that have either signed up or list government employment in their profiles. Specifically, as of March, 2009, 105,000 employees in the top-50 federal agencies, or roughly 5% of their workforce, are on linkedin compared to nearly 300,000 for the top private firms, or 50% of theirs.²⁰ And with linkedin’s networking capability through friending mechanisms, this means that the greater presence of the private sector’s top firms makes them widely more available to linkedin’s 35 million users.²¹

Therefore, if and when college students start using linkedin, as career services offices predict, they will be less exposed to federal government opportunities. Specifically, their network will under-represent the presence of federal government jobs in the marketplace.

¹⁷ Student focus groups

¹⁸ Thompson, Clive. “Brave New World in Digital Intimacy.” *The New York Times*, Sept 7, 2008.

¹⁹ The imperfect measure of “presence” on facebook and twitter is having seemingly official profiles rather than affinity groups concerning the firm or agency. “Presence” on other sites is more tangible because they are either user-driven (linkedin) or company sponsored (monster). These numbers are from March, 2009.

²⁰ www.linkedin.com. Certain percentages may be over 100% because of job turnover.

²¹ LinkedIn is also growing at about one new user every second.

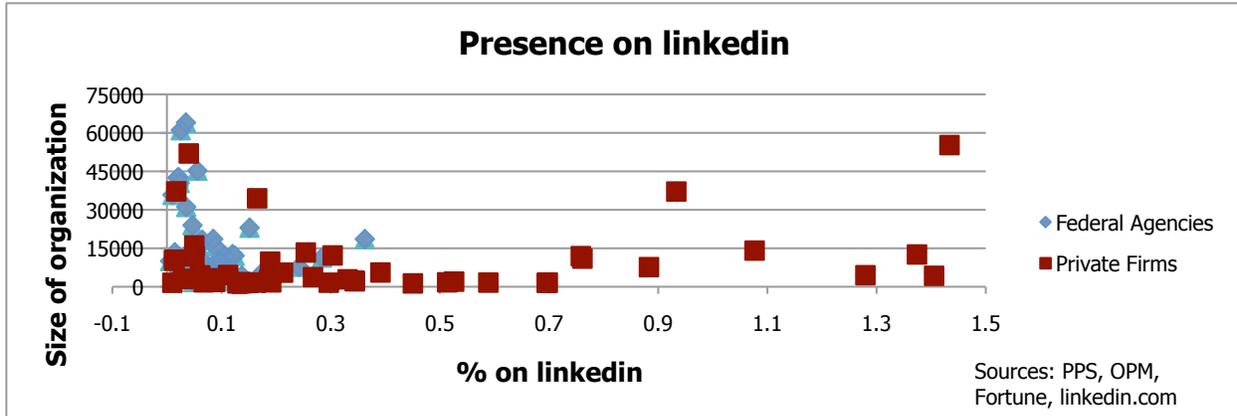


Figure 11: Private firms have a greater presence on linkedin (Note: I removed 12 points because of extremes).

Beyond the social networking and job sites, online job databases exist for users to browse and apply for employment opportunities. As of January, 2006, the jobs databases of monster.com, careerbuilder.com, and hotjobs.yahoo.com had 1350-1700% more unique visitors per month than the government’s job database, usajobs.²² And while there have been recent reports of doubled traffic for usajobs,²³ the other sites have also seen similar increases.²⁴ While this research does compare usajobs’ traffic to the other sites’, unfortunately it has not tracked different segmented users, such as college students, so these trends can only act as proxies for college student job browsing activity.

As shown in figure 12, by looking at the much more robust jobs database, monster, the top 50 private firms have a significantly stronger presence. Therefore, thousands of more users have more access to private sector jobs compared to public sector ones. It should be noted that in 2005, monster won the OPM contract to run the usajobs database for \$27.1 million over five years,²⁵ and yet despite this, no official hyperlink exists to usajobs from monster and, as figure 12 suggests, there is no reciprocity in posting on monster.

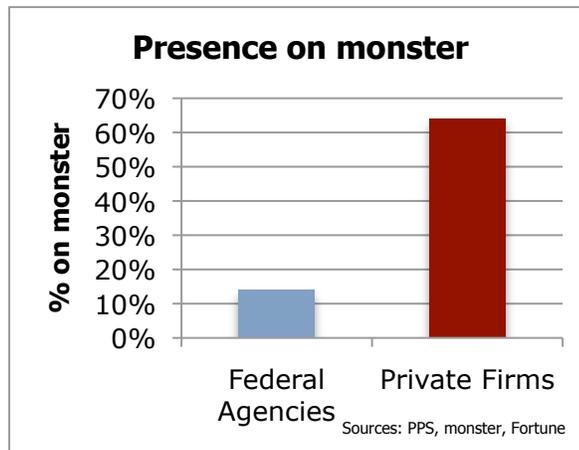


Figure 12: Private Firms have a greater presence on monster.com

Given that monster’s posting rates for over 100 jobs costs \$135 each, cost may be an

²² comScore Media Metrix survey of “Top 10 Job Search Websites...Ranked by Unique Visitors, Dec 2005-Jan 2006”

²³ Losey, Stephen. “Hard Times = Good News.” *Federal Times*, Dec 22, 2008. There is not similar research for the student federal jobs website, studentjobs.gov.

²⁴ comScore Media Metrix survey of “Top 10 Job Search Websites, Ranked by Unique Visitors, Dec 2007-Dec 2008”

²⁵ <http://www.opm.gov/news/opm-awards-contract-to-monster-government-solutions-to-maintain-and-upgrade-the-federal-governments-usajobs-website-and-employment-information-system,941.aspx>

issue, but this figure does not presume a large long-standing contractual agreement like OPM has.²⁶ Moreover, as figure 13 suggests there is no trend in the size of an organization influencing its likelihood of posting on monster.

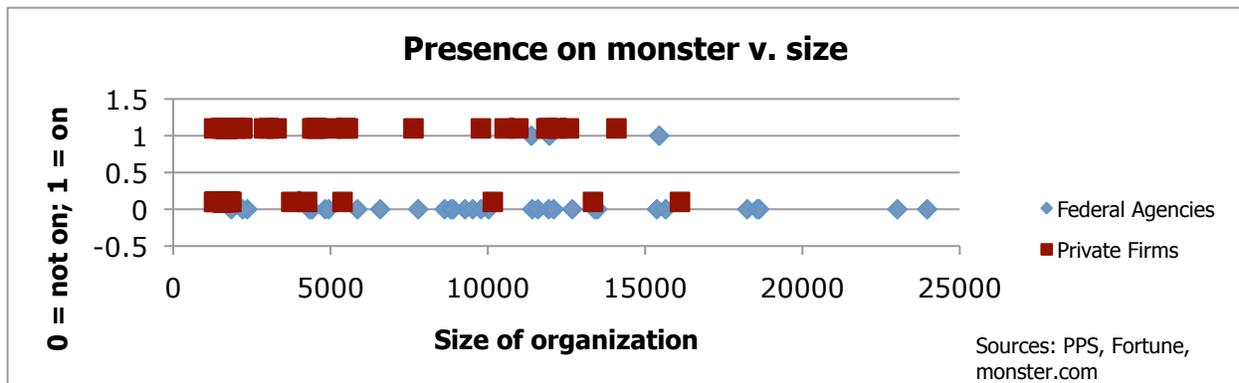


Figure 13: The private sector is significantly more present on monster (Note: I removed 20 data points because of extreme size)

Lastly, related to social networking sites are social news sites like digg.com and reddit.com. Here users post links to web-content for free and other users then view and vote on this web content to get tallied for its popularity. Students in focus groups mentioned that these social news sites are where they get a significant amount of their news. From further research into these sites, the only traces of the federal government came from news sources rather than straight from the content originator. By comparison, no private sector firms have posted on these sites either.

Beyond these data about internet presence, the federal agencies have also not yet fully embraced interactive technologies to reach more students. In fact, the basic infrastructure of attending career fairs and holding information sessions on campuses remains the same as before the introduction of electronic communication. For example, only one out of the seven agencies mentioned having online career fairs to connect with students all over the country. Moreover, while each agency has its own website to provide information and connect students to usajobs, these agency websites are relatively static and one-sided. For example, only one agency I interviewed mentioned working on a live-chat function for its site, and only one has a blog.²⁷

Although these data are a current snapshot that might suggest the federal government is lagging behind, the federal agencies in this study all recommended that internet presence and technology is where the federal recruitment infrastructure can improve most and stated that this is where they want to put their energies. Moreover, the federal government as a whole has recognized the importance of working on these issues. One major initiative is govloop.com, which federal web masters created as a social networking site to share best practices across agencies, departments, and levels of government. Specifically, one purpose of this site is to determine ways and locations to embed “web 2.0” technologies, including social networking, into government, and it has already attracted over 7,500 users.

²⁶ Rates are similar for other job sites

²⁷ From http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Reference_Shelf/News/blog.shtml there are officially 42 federal blogs, but OPM is not one, and none of these is job or career-oriented.

Recommendations

From the findings listed above, I have developed recommendations that can assist the federal government attract students from top-ranked schools. However, before implementing these recommendations, it should be noted that the federal government would most importantly benefit from considering recruitment a “critical business,”²⁸ specifically in regard to the “workforce analysis” box from figure 6. In some cases, federal agencies have begun to undergo such thinking through long-term strategic planning, but by no means is it consistent. It should regard its people as investments and assess its needs against its objectives periodically, then fill them with top performers. As the private sector proves its concern for its human capital pipeline through innovative and resourceful recruitment, the federal government should follow suit.

For ease of comprehension, I have separated the recommendations into three periods for implementation, and following the findings model, I further divided each period into operations and marketing. This breakdown should guide the federal government’s approach to reforming its recruitment infrastructure. For an abridged version of these recommendations in an implementation plan format, please consult Appendix 2.

Short-Term

The following recommendations should be implemented in the next month:

Operations

Increase regional involvement in recruitment: Since many students could be interested in local federal opportunities, regional employees should assume more authority. It is also likely that regional employees are alumni of the same local schools, which also appeals to students.

Solicit top leadership support for recruitment, including President Obama: To kickoff a new strategy of change, top leadership including federal Chief Human Capital Officers, Commissioners, Secretaries, and even the President should communicate the importance of these changes to the current employees and to the public at large through mass media.

Solicit feedback from all candidates at all stages of the recruitment process: Every candidate that goes through the process might share some insight into their experience or suggestions for improvement. Granted, those who do not get selected might not offer feedback as readily as those that are, but since feedback can be as easy as an online survey, instituting it is relatively cost-free.

Ensure consistency and succinctness of job listings: A consistent and succinct “feel” could induce users to apply from their first impressions of federal job postings. Simple, boilerplate language that “sell” the opportunity should be used where available.

²⁸ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board. “Reforming Federal Hiring: Beyond Faster and Cheaper.” Sept 1, 2006.

Marketing

Increase presence on social networking websites: Since students so frequently visit these sites (twitter, facebook, etc.), the federal government should also network in these channels. If HR or an agency's government relations department is unwilling or unable to undertake this, it should assign mission-based employees with setting it up, networking, and maintaining it. Also, since information is so easily networked, it should also encourage employees to list their employment on these sites.²⁹

Create promotional video messages with President Obama: Since President Obama has inspired many young people to get involved politically, the federal government should harness this effect. OPM and federal agencies should schedule a few hours of the President's time (or the first lady's time, as a surrogate) to make quick informational videos about agencies and post these on agency sites, student/usajobs, and public video sites.³⁰

Connect alumni to candidates at all stages of recruitment process: Because school alumni, especially younger ones, are one of the major influencers on students, their words may have more power than other messengers'. They should connect with students at their schools at all stages, including before recruitment begins, during the process, and afterwards.

Link government reports to social news websites: Like social networking sites, social news sites are popular among students. At present, they are "low-hanging fruit" where the government can post its documents for mass consumption for free, beyond their own websites. And this broader reach could enhance the agency "brand" which is a significant predictor of pursuing contact.³¹ Moreover, private firms have yet to use these sites to market themselves through this way.

Medium-Term

The following recommendations should be implemented within one year:

Operations

Implement web traffic feedback loops for job postings: Evidenced by the various news reports, OPM can access its student/usajobs web traffic numbers. Demonstrating customer behavior, these numbers can inform agencies about their postings, and agencies can subsequently use these data strategically to create their job descriptions and requirements. Thus, OPM should provide a system to allow federal agencies to track certain key web traffic data including visits, repeat visits, time, and geography.

Calculate a "recruitment return on investment" through web traffic and activity-based costing and use it strategically: Previous attempts to calculate return

²⁹ Necessary for this would be to allow facebook at the office, which is a frequent debate for many employers.

³⁰ Because all government computer systems need to be made accessible to the disabled, create captions for these videos and adapt other electronic recommendations accordingly.

³¹ Gatewood, Robert D. et al. "Corporate Image, Recruitment Image, and Initial Job Decisions." *The Academy of Management Journal*. April, 1993.

on investment have been relatively lackluster, but with information on web traffic and basic activity-based costing, agencies can get harder results for their recruitment efforts. They could use these calculations as baselines to decide if they should change, expand, or abandon certain recruitment efforts.

Formalize and diversify recruiter training to include “smile” and interpersonal training: Because the personal touch can be important in attracting candidates to apply, interview, and accept positions, those who participate in recruitment activities should receive more than just basic mission and process briefings. The first impression can be crucial, so therefore HR should focus training there. In fact, they can nominate employees to take the lead in developing these trainings.

Allow for candidates to see their application status updates: Students are willing to wait if they know progress is being made. Therefore, once students apply for jobs, they should be able to see what is happening to their application (“checked out,” “reviewed,” etc.) and typical turnaround times from that point forward.

Revise student/usajobs sites to match student thought processes: Since many students do not know what job they want but are self-aware about what they like, student/usajobs’ career interest guides and job interest matching should be more present on the homepage, as important as the “search for jobs” function. This functionality should also include questions that specifically ask about majors and direct students from there.

Marketing

Market to candidate influencers, like parents and professors: Since students do not make these job decisions alone, federal agencies should target external influencers as well. For example, federal agencies can supplement professors’ curricula with government documents and encourage them to promote job opportunities to students.

Create on-campus paid “ambassadors”: Former interns can be quick and easy champions on college campuses. Give them part-time jobs or hourly wages to target students and answer questions, and the federal agency gains instant credibility and campus insight that formal recruiters cannot attain.

Strengthen connections to college career services: Career Services are an important liaison between students and employers, so the stronger the connection between them and federal agencies, the more likely they will recommend federal jobs. Federal agencies should reinforce relationships with college career service offices by making it standard protocol to inform colleges when federal recruitment points of contact change and provide updated contact information. Federal agencies should also share recruitment numbers and goals with career services so that they can communicate as much to students.

Continuously promote opportunities: Because many government opportunities are available year-round, federal agencies should not cluster their school visits and activities. They should not only make themselves present more often (perhaps each semester) through recruitment, alumni, or skills-based offerings but also announce openings currently available and those open in the future.

Post jobs on other job websites: Although student/usajobs was a step forward to centralize the federal recruitment and hiring processes, federal agencies and OPM should broaden their reach to more popular job sites. While monster may be more expensive than usajobs per posting, the federal government would gain greater exposure and put its jobs more directly against the competition's. If cost is a deterrent, other popular sites like craigslist.org are free.

Long-Term

The following recommendations should be implemented within three years:

Operations

Align recruitment tasks to employee performance evaluation: At present, most employees who participate in recruiting are doing so voluntarily. Considering these efforts are not getting formally tracked into their performance evaluations, employees have less incentive to volunteer (besides the perquisite of getting out of the office) or to perform particularly well. At the same time though, recruitment is essential to furthering the mission of the agency, so federal agencies should incorporate "institutional stewardship" into all levels of employee evaluations. This will create higher expectations on employees and create better recruiters. Some recruitment examples to input into this stewardship could be event attendance, developing training, managing agency facebook or twitter accounts, or attracting applicants.

Align recruitment processes to private sector's: To secure the best applicants possible, the federal government needs to have opportunities available, communicated, and offered at the same time as the private sector. Although it may be difficult to match the private sector salaries, a concurrent offer would at least give the applicant the option to work for the public sector. In addition, this would prevent excessive waiting for federal job postings and could mitigate pressures to accept early job offers.

One way to accomplish this is to institute rolling acceptances, whereby all candidates are considered on the same timelines, but the timelines begin from varying points. For example, an agency could attend one school's career fair and begin a set timeline for those applicants, then attend another school's career fair the next month and begin the same timeline for those applicants. This system ensures that candidates from early visits are not disadvantaged with longer wait times from an agency's making multiple site visits prior to starting the process. Accomplishing this would require engaging regional recruiters, and intrinsic to this is thorough planning, consistent timeframes, and setting recruitment goals.

Marketing

Augment student career fairs with new technologies and formats: Since students find career fairs to be "overwhelming" and have encountered lackluster recruiters, federal agencies should move toward more intimate settings such as information sessions, resume reviews, or small group meetings for coffee. If this level of personal interaction is unfeasible, agencies should invest in virtual career fairs or

group chats which can be recorded and archived. At the same time, these more intimate meetings could be accomplished by having other agency employees set them up or lead them.

Include reciprocity in the next contract for student/usajobs maintenance: With major jobs sites having capability to maintain the student/usajobs sites as well as their own, OPM should capitalize on the demand for their multi-million dollar maintenance contract, up for re-bid in 2010. At a minimum, the contract should stipulate for the contractor to link student/usajobs to their job site. More appropriately though, the winner should include federal opportunities in their own job databases.

Conclusion

Considering the human capital issues that the federal government is now confronting, the “quiet crisis” in federal civil service is no longer quiet.³² With increasingly complex issues facing the United States, the federal government needs the best people with the best ideas. These preceding recommendations offer a series of ways for the federal government to improve its efforts to connect to students at the top-ranked schools to consider federal service. In addition, these recommendations do not aim to overhaul but rather improve the recruitment infrastructure. Therefore, most recommendations should not be not too costly, taxing, or obscure for the federal government to implement because they largely use existing technology and are familiar to millions.

Moreover, many of the recommendations if implemented could have significant spillover effects. These recommendations could also benefit target populations other than college students at top-ranked schools. For example, given the widespread presence of the internet, young people of all sorts, retirees, and mid-level employees would probably appreciate these efforts to connect to federal employment. Furthermore, despite having missions similar to the federal government, state and local governments may be experiencing the problem of attracting top student talent as intensely as the federal government. Thus, given their smaller budgets, a tighter set of policies, and less media exposure, state and local governments may benefit from these recommendations as much as, or more than, the federal government.

Lastly, these recommendations cannot stand alone. As the frameworks suggest, improving the recruitment process must be routine. For the federal government to stay on the cutting edge of recruitment, the recommendations should be taken iteratively; otherwise, they will perpetually be behind the private sector’s ability to snatch up the best students.

Major Considerations and Future Studies

Taken to its extreme, this report unlocks numerous matters for future consideration that are out of scope. However, at the same time, this report’s methodology and frameworks could be extended to address them.

First of all, with conventional wisdom stating that people change careers up to seven times (or potentially more, in the case of the millennials), these recommendations may better attract top candidates but they do not address retention issues. To address these issues, future areas of study would be enhanced knowledge management, better job opportunities, and stronger retention programs. If these areas were improved, the federal government could better mitigate this risk of increased job turnover.

Second, while attracting top talent from a wide diversity of candidates has always been a major consideration for the federal government, these recommendations do not differentiate any characteristics of the students. While this methodology approaches the

³² Taken from statement from Paul Volcker in Judith Havemann. “Addressing a ‘Quiet Crisis’ in the Civil Service” Washington Post. September 11, 1987.

topic of recruitment from many perspectives, the broad recommendations may not necessarily apply to certain segments of the student population. Therefore, this topic of how best to recruit certain students deserves further study so as to ensure the federal government continues to meet its goals of minority recruitment and employment.

Third, whereas these recommendations are intended to affect students' behavior to apply for federal jobs and internships, they may in the short term more effectively influence students' attitudes toward the federal government. Changing behaviors may be more difficult than attitudes, so these short-term recommendations could function as a public relations campaign as much as an outreach campaign. Thus, it would also be valuable to study these changes in attitudes.

Lastly, since the federal budget is susceptible to changing priorities and diverting spending, cost-effectiveness is key to government operations. From these recommendations, further studies of recruitment cost-effectiveness should be undertaken. If costs can be allocated for each activity, the federal government could track how much recruitment activity was invested in each type of student and can begin to see what it takes to attract certain students and induce them to work for the federal government.

Appendix 1: Methodology and Data

Exhibit 1a: School Descriptions for Career Service Interviews

School	Region	School Size	US News & World Report Rank: Top (1-25) or Bottom (25-50)	Private or Public
Amherst University	New England	Small	Top	Private – liberal arts
Boston University	New England	Medium to Large	Bottom	Private
Georgetown University	Mid-Atlantic	Small	Top	Private
Harvard University	New England	Small	Top	Private
Stanford University	West	Small	Top	Private
University of Texas	Midwest/ South	Large	Bottom	Public
University of Virginia	South	Medium	Top	Public

Small = < 5,000 undergraduates; Medium = 5,000-15,000; Large = 15,000+

Exhibit 1b: Career Services Interview Protocol

Background

1. What sorts of events or offerings do you provide to connect students and employers?
2. How do employers get to be part of your events? What steps do they have to take? Do you invite them? Is this the same for all sectors?
3. If applicable, how do you decide if a certain employer should return from year to year?
4. Do you have separate events or offerings for government, non-profit, and private sector employers? Why or why not?

Students

5. What job characteristics do you see your students caring about the most for their employment after school? Have these characteristics changed over time?
6. About what proportion of students go into government employment during their summers or post-graduation? How has this changed over time?
7. In reference to question 2, in general, do you know if more students are open to governmental employment? If there is a discrepancy, why do you think this occurs?
8. What comments or feedback do you get from students about government recruitment and hiring?

9. What comments or feedback do you get from students about private sector recruitment and hiring?

Employers

- 10. What percentage of recruiters at your school comes from each sector?
- 11. Which government agencies target your school for new hires or interns?
- 12. Which government agencies have been successful over time in recruitment? What do those agencies specifically do to recruit students? What sorts of employment do they offer?
- 13. How has this trend changed over time? Why do you think this has occurred?
- 14. What private sector firms are particularly successful in recruiting at your school? What do those firms specifically do to recruit students?
- 15. How much overlap occurs between these two sets' recruitment efforts? (i.e. Timeline, Targets, Proximity at fairs, Research, etc)
- 16. What differences in recruitment strategy or tactics exist between these sets? What is your impression of each sets' effectiveness of connecting with students?
- 17. Generally, in what ways are the *job application processes* of government and private sector recruiters similar and different?

Overall Evaluation

- 18. What have you found successful or effective in the recruitment of your students? For example, techniques, types of messages, frequency of contact, strategy?
- 19. How do you think government can improve its recruitment overall?
- 20. What can governmental agencies learn from the private sector in their recruitment efforts?
- 21. From your perspective, do you see government agencies ready and able to accept higher numbers of applicants from both a depressed economy and the new Obama administration's call to service?
- 22. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Exhibit 2a: Agency Characteristics for Government Interviews

Government Agency	Size	2007 "Best Places to Work" Rank
Department of State	33,000	6 (Large Agency)
General Services Administration	14,000	8 (Large Agency)
Government Accountability Office	3,200	2 (Large Agency)
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	18,500	4 (Large Agency)
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	3,500	1 (Large Agency)
Office of Management and Budget	500	3 (Small Agency)
Securities and Exchange Commission	3,600	3 (Large Agency)

Exhibit 2b: Government Human Resources Interview Protocol

Recruitment Strategy

1. Do you currently target college students for employment at your agency? If so, how?

2. What sorts of information do you provide in your recruitment? For example, structure, salary, benefits, typical work day, agency history, etc.
3. Where do you typically recruit? And how and why did you choose these locations/sites?
4. What do you look for in a recent college graduate applicant through the recruitment process? E.g., skills/experience/backgrounds/etc. What other factors go into choosing a recruit?
5. What strategies and tactics do you use to reach these college students to apply? For example, through your website, on-campus information sessions, personal communication, incentives, etc. What are your primary means?
6. How did you choose these techniques over other ones? Have you used other methods in the past, and why not use them anymore?
7. Where do you get your ideas on how to recruit? Do you look into what competing agencies/organizations do to attract recruits? Have you incorporated others' best practices? If so, whose and which?

Recruitment and Job Process

8. Please walk me through the job application process for a college student interested in working at your agency.
 - a. How does s/he find out about the job, learn about the job, apply for the job, interview, receive feedback or follow-up, etc.?
 - b. Along these lines, how long does each step take?
 - c. Is college recruitment specifically scheduled or is it on-going?
 - d. If the former, when does it begin?
9. Is this process unique compared to other types of recruits? If so, how are others different?

Recruitment Organization and Culture

10. What resources do you put behind recruitment, in terms of money, time, and staffing? Who participates in recruiting?
11. How confident are you year to year that these resources will be available?
12. What training or experience do the people involved in recruiting have or receive?
13. What criteria do you use to decide on whom to employ in recruitment efforts in your organization?
14. How involved are the executives and other managers in the recruitment process? How involved are HR staff and other non-managerial employees in the organization?
15. Are recruitment efforts assimilated into employee performance evaluation? If so, how? If not, why not?

Recruitment Measurement

16. How do you evaluate information provided from steps in your recruitment process?
17. How do you measure if your overall recruitment is effective? For example, market benchmarks, competitive information, historical comparison.
18. Does on-the-job performance of recent recruits affect current recruitment strategy? If so, have you ever changed your process or recruitment sites based on these results?
19. Do you solicit feedback from applicants about their recruitment experience? How? Do you gather information about how the college recruits found out about the job? Have you ever altered your process based on these data?

Overall Recruitment Evaluation

20. What have you found successful or effective in your recruitment of college students? For example, techniques, messages, frequency of contact, strategy?
21. What in your recruitment efforts needs improvement? How are you planning to improve this?
22. It is widely reported that the new Obama administration is garnering a lot of interest from college-age students towards public service. Do you agree and will your agency try to tap into this enthusiasm? How?

23. How do you think government can improve its recruitment overall?
 24. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Exhibit 3: Literature and Website Review

Type	Sources
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Exhibit 4a: School Descriptions for Student Focus Groups

School	Size	US News & World Report Rank: Top (1-25) or Bottom (25-50)	Private or Public
Boston University	Medium to Large	Bottom	Private
Harvard University	Small	Top	Private
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Small	Top	Private

Exhibit 4b: Student Focus Group Protocol

1. How do you find out or learn about internships/jobs? Is it the same for your friends?
2. How would you like to learn about an internship/job? What is the best application process for you?
3. How do career fairs/career services factor into your decision-making process?
4. What sorts of messages influence you to apply for an internship/job? Why?
5. What types of messengers influence you to apply for an internship/job? Why?

6. What sorts of things can an employer do or provide you to influence you to apply for an internship/job with them?
7. What sorts of things deter you from applying for an internship/job? Similarly, what things just don't affect your decision-making?
8. When in the year have you or your friends felt any pressure to determine your next step post graduation? Why?
9. What sorts of experiences have you had with the effectiveness of government recruitment?
10. Why do you or your friends want or not want to work for the federal government?
11. What is appealing about private sector employment that the government doesn't offer? Vice-versa?
12. How has the new current administration affected your attitude of government service? Has it influenced you to consider it? What about it has made that reaction or lack of reaction?
13. How can the government better recruit college students? What would it have to do to get you to work there post-graduation?

Appendix 2: Implementation Plan

The following table categorizes the report’s recommendations into short-, medium-, and long-term and identifies the “critical party” who could lead the implementation of each recommendation.

For the sake of this report, short-, medium-, and long-terms denote: “within a month,” “within a year,” and “within three years,” respectively.

Short-Term	Critical Party	Medium-Term	Critical Party	Long-Term	Critical Party
Operations		Operations		Operations	
Increase regional involvement in recruitment	Agency HR, Reg. Offices	Implement web traffic feedback loops for job postings	OPM, Agency HR	Align recruiting tasks to performance evaluation	Agency HR, Execs
Solicit top leadership support for recruitment, including Obama	OPM	Calculate a “recruitment RoI” through web traffic and activity-based costing and use it strategically	OPM, Agency HR	Align recruitment processes with private sector’s	Agency HR
Solicit feedback from all candidates at all stages of process	OPM, Agency HR	Formalize and diversify recruiter training to include “smile” and interpersonal training	OPM, Agency HR, reps		
Ensure consistency and succinctness of job listings	OPM, Agency HR	Allow for candidates to see their application status updates	OPM		
		Revise job sites to match student thought processes	OPM		
Marketing		Marketing		Marketing	
Increase presence on social networking sites	Agency HR, Gov. Relations	Market to candidate influencers, like professors and parents	Agency HR	Augment student career fairs with new technologies, formats	Agency HR, IT
Create promotional videos with Obama	OPM, Agency HR, Gov. Relations	Create on-campus paid “ambassadors”	Agency HR, interns	Include reciprocity in the next contract for student/usajobs maintenance	OPM
Connect alumni to candidates at all stages of process	Agency HR	Continuously promote opportunities	Agency HR		

Short-Term	Critical Party	Medium-Term	Critical Party	Long-Term	Critical Party
Link government reports to social news sites	Agency HR, Gov. Relations	Strengthen connections to College Career Services	Agency HR		
		Post jobs on other job sites	Agency HR		