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ICYMI: OPM Director Scott Kuper on Ruthless

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Director Scott Kuper joined the Ruthless Podcast to discuss a number of wide-ranging topics including OPM's ongoing efforts to bring top talent into the federal workforce and enhance operational efficiency across government.



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On bringing top talent into government:

We want to bring great talent into the government, right? So, we want to find ways to figure out okay can we find the best and the brightest particularly in areas that we know the government's behind. So, tech is an obvious one, right? So, you know, we've got an enormous opportunity with AI to do some really good stuff in government, but quite frankly, we just don't have that talent. And some of that is, you know, a technical problem.

On prioritizing operational efficiency:

And then thing number two, which you referenced is how do we improve our operational efficiency, which you know means also probably there are some things where we maybe need fewer people than we did in the past or there are ways to use technology to actually increase the efficiency of the organization. So, we're trying to do both those things. So far, we've done a little bit more on the latter. So, you all may know these numbers, but we started the year with about 2.4 million civilian employees. We expect to end the year closer to 2.1 million. So, the President set out this big goal, which is could we do four to one? Basically, could we basically hire one person for every four people that left government? And the good news is like we will meet or exceed that target.

On being good stewards of taxpayer dollars:

But it's just basic common sense, right? I'm not saying, you know, the objective is to maximize profit. We're not trying to maximize profit, but the objective is look, every time we spend a dollar, that's someone else's dollar. It's yours and mine and everyone else's. Are we spending it in a way that makes sense? And if we're not, then let's actually ask that question and do something differently.

On the Merit Hiring Plan:

We're eliminating what I would call shortcuts in the hiring process. Right? So, we have a lot of well I wouldn't say a lot. We have almost every job has a degree requirement, or it has a minimum tenure requirement. And the reality is look those are just shorthands for like we don't know how else to evaluate you so we're going to give you credit for having a degree. But look, the reality is you know, if you're a young engineer, for example, you might be able to perform 10 times better than a more senior engineer in the government, but because you haven't met the tenure requirement or maybe you didn't graduate from college, we can only bring you in at the like most junior level of the organization, which is exactly why those people won't come to the government basically. So, things of that sort that create artificial barriers to actually get real skills in the government as opposed to saying hey everybody must have a bachelor's degree which I mean look if you're there's very few things where a bachelor's degree actually makes you any better for a job particularly saying as someone who spent a lot of money on my education yeah like I'm pretty confident like very little of that actually changed the nature of my career.

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