



Mythbusters



CONNECTING with TOP TALENT

MYTHBUSTERS

Hiring

Hiring Mythbuster

Myth #1: Hiring managers should refrain from getting too involved in their hiring actions to avoid any appearance of impropriety in the hiring process.

***Fact:** There are many ways that hiring managers can and should be involved in the hiring process to help ensure a great outcome. This includes working closely with HR before the job opportunity announcement (JOA) is even posted to:*

- *ensure the position description is accurate and up-to-date;*
- *complete a [job analysis](#) to identify the critical competencies needed in the job;*
- *participate in identifying/developing the assessment tool (e.g., structured interviews, writing samples, tests) that will be used to evaluate candidates;*
- *develop a recruiting strategy; and*
- *ensure that the JOA accurately describes the duties of the job and competencies and experience required in an easy-to-understand and appealing manner.*

After the applicants are assessed and the referral list is issued, the hiring manager should actively engage in interviewing top candidates and making the selection.

Hiring Mythbuster

Myth #2: I am using a standard Position Description (PD) and I am not allowed to include specialized skills in my Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA).

Fact: *You can include specialized skills in your JOA. Position descriptions outline the major duties and other factors necessary to determine the occupational series and grade level of a position in accordance with OPM classification standards. It's the job analysis, however, that identifies the critical competencies and defines the specialized experience and any special skills needed to perform the work of the position. HR and the hiring manager should collaborate to conduct the job analysis, and use the results to develop the requirements in the JOA.*

Example: *HR in Agency A has classified a standard PD for Budget Analyst, GS-5019/14 and has recently updated the job analysis. When a hiring manager seeks to fill this position; using the updated job analysis, HR works with the hiring manager to determine the specialized experience needed for the job at the required grade level and defines it in the JOA.*

Hiring Mythbuster

Myth #3: Hiring managers are not allowed to engage in active, strategic recruitment for their open positions.

***Fact:** Managers **are permitted and encouraged** to actively recruit for their open positions. Public notice, or simply posting a job announcement, is not a substitute for more focused recruiting. Strategic recruitment focuses your resources in areas most likely to yield results and does NOT violate Merit System Principles.*

***Fact:** You can invite individuals to apply for job openings.*

***Fact:** When using competitive examining, as a hiring manager, you may notify HR when you have identified a specific candidate through active recruiting. This is called a “named request.” (note: Veterans’ preference still applies.)*

Example: At a college job fair focused on computer science jobs, you provide a job opportunity announcement for an open position to interested candidates, inviting them to apply for the position upon graduation.

Hiring Mythbuster

Myth #4: Referral lists (certificates) cannot be shared within an agency.

Fact:

In most agencies, HR can share certificates of qualified applicants with other managers in their agency when filling similar jobs. [TIP: JOAs should include language that gives candidates an opportunity to opt out of the sharing of their application for other positions.]

For example, add a statement near the end of the JOA to notify the applicants that applying to the JOA certifies that the applicants give permission for the agency to share their applications with others in their agency for other similar positions. Also, add a check-box that applicants can check to authorize the sharing of their applications for other similar positions within the agency. Consult with your HR Office for more information.

Hiring Mythbuster

Myth #5: When using a Direct Hire Authority (DHA), an agency does not have to post a job announcement on USAJOBS.

Fact:

When using DHA agencies still must, at a minimum, post a job announcement on USAJOBS prior to filling a job. DHA waives veterans' preference and the rating and ranking process – it does not waive public notice requirements.

Hiring Mythbuster

Myth #6: When making any appointment under Schedule A of the excepted service, veterans' preference is applied as far as administratively feasible (i.e., apply preference if it makes sense to do so).

Fact:

Veterans' preference must be applied fully when making Schedule A appointments, in accordance with the provisions of 5 CFR part 302. Veterans' preference applies as administratively feasible (i.e., using a methodology not prescribed in 5 CFR 302) only for certain positions filled under Schedule A (e.g., attorney positions), or when OPM and an agency with a specific Schedule A hiring authority agree (through written agreement).

MYTHBUSTERS

Assessment

Assessment Mythbuster

Myth #1: Rating and ranking applicants can only be done by qualified HR staff.

Fact: *It is entirely appropriate (and encouraged!) to use Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) outside of HR to rate and rank applicants and determine the most highly qualified candidates for a position. The use of SME's can be particularly helpful when evaluating candidates for highly technical or uncommon positions. A Subject Matter Expert often has experience, technical insights and understanding about a job that can help HR specialists more effectively assess an applicant's qualifications and experience. Note that hiring managers shouldn't serve as SME's to rate and rank candidates for jobs within their organization (to preserve objectivity in the process), the decision to use SMEs and how they will be used must be made before the announcement is opened, as part of the assessment development stage for the announcement, and SME reviews should be coordinated and overseen by the HR specialist to ensure that agency procedural and policy requirements are met.*

Assessment Mythbuster

Examples for Hiring Myth #1:

Agency “A” has established a standard operating procedure for technical and professional positions in order to maintain trust between HR and hiring managers as well as to ensure the highest quality applicants are referred. HR requires the hiring manager to designate an SME(s) to help with rating and ranking all applicants.

Agency “B” has identified a financial analyst vacancy in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO). The CFO has designated a senior financial analyst to serve as an SME. The SME provides critical information to the HR Specialist developing the job analysis including critical tasks and the competencies needed to successfully perform the tasks. With this information, the HR Specialist builds the occupational questionnaire that will be used to rate and rank candidates.

Assessment Mythbuster

Myth #2: A Subject Matter Expert (SME) may not review applications until after an HR Specialist has performed a minimum qualifications review.

***Fact:** An SME may work with the HR Specialist during the minimum qualifications review, so long as the HR Specialist has the final authority and responsibility for signing off on the minimum qualifications determination. This is especially helpful when the position is highly technical. SMEs may advise the HR Specialist, and to make recommendations. However, agencies must ensure that HR Specialists remain empowered to make the final minimum qualifications determination without fear of undue influence by SMEs.*

Assessment Mythbuster

Myth #3: After Knowledge, Skill and Ability (KSA) essays were eliminated in 2010, it became really difficult to accurately assess an applicant's qualifications during the initial application process.

***Fact:** While it's true that agencies may not request KSA narratives as part of the initial application process, writing samples or other written accomplishment records can be required later in the process after an applicant applies for a position. In addition to written essays/narratives, there are a variety of other ways agencies can assess an applicant's qualifications.*

***Example:** Agency "A" worked with HR to implement a process where applicants were required to provide a writing sample answering a question related to the position in addition to a structured interview process with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). Based on that process, the SMEs and HR staff determined who was qualified for the position.*

Assessment Mythbuster

Myth #4: Agencies are required to use the OPM-developed rating schedules or written exam for Administrative Careers With America (ACWA) positions.

Fact:

- *OPM released a memo on March 6, 2009 specifying that “agencies are not required to use ACWA and may use an alternative assessment tool” provided it is validated (i.e., job-related), complies with the Delegated Examining Operations Handbook (DEOH) and uniform guidelines.*
- *Agencies are permitted to develop or procure a custom assessment for ACWA positions.*

Assessment Mythbuster

Myth #5: The only way to rank large numbers of eligible applicants quickly and efficiently is with a self-report occupational questionnaire (OQ).

Fact:

Although OQs are widely used due to the relative ease with which they can be developed, administered and scored, there are other assessment options that can be used to rank large numbers of eligible applicants efficiently and effectively - and that do not rely on self-report ratings!

MYTHBUSTERS

Pathways

Pathways Mythbuster

Myth #1: Agencies must post a separate JOA for every Internship or Recent Graduate position they are filling.

Fact

While public notice is needed for Internships, one job opportunity announcement (JOA) or notice can be used to advertise all of the Internship or Recent Graduate job opportunities for which an agency is hiring at a given time. The JOA must include information about the position titles, series and grade, geographic locations, and how to apply or express interest in each position.

Pathways Mythbuster

Myth #2: Agencies can't accept applications at career fairs or other on-campus recruiting events.

Fact:

Prior to filling Pathways positions, agencies must, at a minimum, provide public notification on USAJOBS/Students and Graduates. However, agencies are encouraged to actively recruit talent from a variety of sources, including participation in career fairs or other on-campus events. If agencies choose to participate in on-campus recruiting events, agencies must also provide alternative methods of applying for candidates who are unable to attend the career fair or other event.

Pathways Mythbuster

Myth #3: Agencies cannot accept applications for Recent Graduate positions from students who are still in school and have yet to complete their degrees.

Fact:

Agencies can accept applications for Recent Graduates positions from these students, provided that they are scheduled to complete their degrees prior to the start dates for the jobs being advertised.

Pathways Mythbuster

Myth #4: Agencies must use OPM qualification standards to fill Internship positions.

Fact:

Agencies may establish OPM-approved, agency-specific qualification requirements, or use the OPM qualification requirements for the competitive service.

Pathways Mythbuster

Myth #5: When soliciting applications for Internship and Recent Graduate positions, agencies have no way of distinguishing among the candidates and must consider any applicant who meets minimum qualifications.

Fact:

Not only are valid job-related assessments a great way to evaluate candidates and determine their qualifications relative to each other, the use of an assessment is required. Agencies may use a variety of assessment approaches, including occupational questionnaires, structured interviews, USAHire competency batteries, etc. Using an effective assessment is a great way to narrow the field of candidates and hone in on those who are best qualified to do the job.

Pathways Mythbuster

Myth #6:

Students who participated in volunteer or third-party internship programs cannot apply any of their hours of experience towards the 640-hour minimum service requirement for noncompetitive conversion once they apply and are accepted into the Internship Program.

Fact:

Agencies may grant credit for up to half of the 640-hour minimum service requirement, or 320 hours, to students who participated in certain volunteer or third-party internship programs once they apply and are accepted into the Internship Program.