

How Data-Driven Hiring Can Transform Federal Agencies

Lengthy time-to-hire cycles. Imprecise job descriptions that result in applicants who aren't a match. Difficult-to-track applicant data.

These are just a few of the obstacles federal agencies are facing today in the pursuit to hire top candidates.

“Now imagine experiencing these challenges at scale — say, if you're looking to fill a few thousand positions. The opportunity to infuse automation and intelligence into the talent acquisition and candidate experience is ripe for federal leaders,” said Dan Hopkins, VP, Applied AI and Public Sector at Eightfold AI. Eightfold's AI platform transforms recruiting, internal mobility, the candidate experience, diversity, workforce planning, and other processes so organizations can find, keep, and grow their talent.

No time to wait

The urgency to improve the hiring and talent-management process is at an all-time high with tightened labor supply. Organizations in the public and private sector alike often struggle to manage talent across the board — from finding, hiring, and then retaining employees. The issue is particularly acute within the technology and cybersecurity market, where competition for hyper-specialized and in-demand skills are fiercest, according to Hopkins.

The reality is that many hiring managers in the federal government are competing for talent with private sector organizations, who can move candidates through the hiring cycle at significantly faster rates.

Bad matches and lost treasures

Among the government's talent challenges:

Job descriptions: Overly generic job descriptions yield poor results in terms of turning up relevant, qualified applicants. In other cases, a job can be accurately described, but people have no guidance as to which positions they are actually a fit for based on their individual skill sets. Hopkins says that because federal job descriptions require significant levels of approvals, “what ends up happening, especially for positions that require digital skills, is you either take months to get a new job description approved, or just recycle an existing job description that is ‘close enough’ to what you're after.”

Lost talent: Over time, agencies can accumulate data on hundreds of thousands of skilled individuals who have applied for jobs within their departments but haven't been hired for one reason or another. Within that data are individuals who may not have been suitable for one position but are a perfect fit for another open role.

Unfortunately, agencies do not have a good way to match strong past applicants to new open roles. This results in countless missed opportunities to fill positions and engage top candidates.

Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Goals

Agencies must now abide by an executive order announced by the White House in June 2021 to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in the federal workforce.

The order establishes a government-wide initiative that takes a systematic approach to embedding DEIA in federal hiring and employment practices. It charges all agencies with assessing the current state of DEIA within their workforces and developing strategic plans to eliminate any barriers to success faced by underserved employees.

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DAN HOPKINS

VP, Applied AI and Public Sector
at Eightfold AI

Artificial intelligence is a powerful and proven tool for improving hiring diversity. Modern talent intelligence platforms can help agencies attract more diverse applicants, remove human bias from the hiring process, and advance DEIA goals. But agencies should tread cautiously, as not all AI technologies are created equal. Improving diversity outcomes requires fair and responsible AI.

The Eightfold Talent Intelligence Platform™ enhances human decision-making in hiring by providing intelligent metrics and facilitating inclusion to diverse candidates. The AI empowers hiring processes driven by equality and fairness, and never replaces the human in the loop. The recruiter always has the final say.

A better way to hire

Eightfold's Talent Intelligence Platform unifies internal, external, and contingent talent data to provide agencies with insights to make better-informed talent decisions. A single AI platform for all diverse talent, from recruiting to [upskilling and reskilling](#) and ultimately retention, can be used.

Here's a brief look at how the platform is deployed for hiring:

- Artificial Intelligence looks at data to determine exactly what the need is beyond the job description. It can then evaluate all of the skills from an applicant's resume which they may have from their previous experiences.
- AI can help evaluate if the candidate has the skills and capabilities for the role, as well as what their potential is within the agency or role.
- AI not only can optimize the match, but also help dramatically reduce the time to hire, particularly due to the time savings spent screening.
- Also, AI can help rediscover past applicants for alternative or new roles that may be a better skills match. Agencies can tap into a talent pool that might include thousands of people who have previously applied for jobs. The profiles of these past applicants are enriched, giving agencies insight into the skills and experience the applicants have added since applying. “We've reached the point with AI where a req should never start with zero prospects,” Hopkins says. “You'll find you always have a pipeline of potential candidates once you have a way to dig into your network.”

How it works

Eightfold's AI platform's deep-learning capabilities are possible partly because of the huge volume of data now available. The technology has learned from more than a billion global data points, and more than a million unique skills, to deliver insights while maintaining [high standards](#) of compliance, security, and accessibility.

The AI has analyzed so many people's careers that it can predict a person's next job and the job after that. It has a sense for the skills a job candidate has, even if that candidate left all the details off their resume.



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As an example, consider an agency looking to hire someone with data-science knowledge. The AI may bubble up to the surface a Navy veteran who doesn't have "data science" in their title, or even in their bio or resume. The technology has learned from so much data on so many people, that it knows with a high degree of likelihood that the veteran, based simply on their role in the military, has data-science knowledge.

Future-ready skills

Existing talent maps are static and out of date by the time they are analyzed by hiring managers. By comparison, the Eightfold platform relies on a self-refreshing neural network that enables organizations to identify the prevalence of skills on a global scale in real time. They can see which skills are increasing, which are diminishing, and where to find people with the desired skills and future capabilities.

Eightfold's platform features a capability dashboard that lets agencies benchmark their workforce, identify capability gaps in their organization, initiate targeted reskilling and upskilling efforts, and identify individuals with specific skills and demonstrated potential.

For employees, they use the platform through the Eightfold Career Hub. This is a portal where they can find projects, courses, mentors, and jobs, personalized to them. These personalized reskilling and upskilling opportunities help employees grow within their agency and help agencies reduce regrettable attrition.

Eightfold AI is built on the principles of fairness, accuracy, and robustness, and committed to ethical AI, which is embodied by the human-centered AI design and governance.

By deploying technologies to greatly improve the hiring process, federal agencies can find themselves effectively competing for diverse talent with private sector companies, reduce agency skill gaps, and optimize their agencies' missions.

Learn more at eightfold.ai

