

Agency Human Resource Services

AHRS Periodical



Virginia Department of
**HUMAN RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT**

Leading the Emergent Workforce – Challenges and Opportunities

A recent article* in the journal *Public Personnel Management* proposed that leaders in public sector organizations will need to adapt and change their leadership style as millennial and generation x (gen-x) workers emerge as a greater part of the public sector workforce. While the article focused on the federal government workforce, several of the ideas presented may also be applicable in state government. The authors contend that, as baby boomers retire and the numbers of millennial and gen-x workers grow within an organization, both challenges and opportunities for leaders will arise. In this article, we will look at both a key leadership challenge and a key opportunity that the authors identified.



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Of the approximately 67,000 classified employees in the Commonwealth of Virginia’s workforce, one in three will be eligible for unreduced retirement benefits by 2020. This statistic indicates that over the next decade Virginia will see an expanding influx of millennial and gen-x workers into its workforce. Recent studies indicate that as followers, millennial and gen-x individuals do not thrive in organizations where highly authoritative or directive leadership styles are the norm. These millennial or gen-x workers, or “emergent” workers, struggle to perform well under leadership that is highly directive, bureaucratic, or transactional in nature. Leaders who use transformational leadership styles must be cautious not to be perceived as being manipulative if they promote a specific narrow vision that is not open to the views of others. Emergent workers thrive in a work environment and under leadership that is:

- highly authentic;
- tolerant of ambiguity and change;
- entrepreneurial and participatory in nature;
- performance and service focused;

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- values life-long learning and personal development; and
- focused strongly on relationships and mutual accountability.

Recent studies have identified providing frequent performance feedback as a key challenge in leading emergent workers. Emergent generation workers prefer shorter and more frequent performance feedback than baby-boomer generation workers. Along with the more traditional annual or even quarterly formal performance evaluations, leaders should provide frequent informal performance feedback to help guide and motivate emergent workers. Millennial and gen-x individuals have become accustomed to quick and frequent feedback from those around them. They prefer, and thrive on, the constant feedback that texting, Twitter, and other forms of “always-on” technology-enabled communications provide. Leaders of emerging workers will be challenged to integrate more frequent feedback into their already packed workdays and should look to adopt tools and processes that facilitate delivery of short bursts of frequent feedback to their emergent workers.

While emergent workers bring some challenges to the workplace, they also bring some great opportunities to organizations. Many millennial and gen-x individuals have highly adept and competent technology skills. Technology has been a constant companion of these “net-generation” individuals, and they are very good at using technology to get things done. This provides organizations with the opportunity to use their emergent workers as “reverse” mentors for older generation workers who may be struggling with adopting or using technology in the workplace. This type of reverse mentoring is a win-win situation; organizations can improve their overall technical competence while allowing emergent workers to become more visible and valued by the older generation workers they mentor. Utilizing reverse mentoring is a great opportunity for leaders to help all the members of their workgroup become more proficient, connected, and appreciative of the unique and diverse skills of their millennial and gen-x coworkers.

The next decade will be a time of change and transition in both the public and private sector workforces in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Leaders in both sectors will need to adapt and change to overcome challenges and must be smart enough to seize and take advantage of the opportunities presented in this time of transition. Peter Senge said, "People don't resist change. They resist being changed!" For leaders in our increasingly multi-generational state agencies and organizations, it appears that the next decade will be more and more a time of *change*.

*Green, D. D., & Roberts, G. E. (2012). Impact of Postmodernism on Public Sector Leadership Practices: Federal Government Human Capital Development Implications. *Public Personnel Management*, 41(1), 79-96.

Revision to Policy 2.10 - Hiring and Policy Guidance on Additional Hiring Preferences

During the 2012 session, the General Assembly passed legislation providing two additional categories of hiring preference for the family members of veterans and active members of the Virginia National Guard. [HB 253](#) amended [Code of Virginia §2.2-2903](#) to require that state agencies give a hiring preference to the surviving spouse, or child, of a veteran killed in the line of duty. [HB 384](#) amended [Code of Virginia §2.2-2903](#) to require that state agencies give a hiring preference to members of the Virginia National Guard. These changes became effective on July 1, 2012. DHRM has published three Policy Guides to help you administer the categories of hiring preference. A fourth Policy Guide provides information regarding when preference should be given and what documentation may be required to verify that the applicant is eligible for the preference.

Important items to note:

- The preference given to the surviving spouse, or child, of a veteran killed in the line of duty is equal to the preference given to a veteran.
- There is no limit to the number of surviving children, or step-children, who may be given preference.
- There is no Virginia residency requirement for any of the veteran-related hiring preferences.
- Preference shall not be given to members of the Virginia National Guard for positions posted as agency internal only or state employee only.
- Preference shall not be given to members of the Virginia National Guard if any other applicant for the same position is a veteran or former prisoner of war.
- Active member status in the Virginia National Guard can only be verified by contacting the Department of Military Affairs. See the Policy Guide titled [“Treatment and Verification of Veteran Related Questions”](#) for more information.
- An applicant shall only be given credit for a preference in one category. For example, if an applicant is both a veteran and the spouse of a veteran who was killed in the line of duty, the applicant shall only be treated as having one additional preferred qualification.



The updated version of [DHRM Policy 2.10 - Hiring](#), as well as the Policy Guides, can be found on the DHRM website [Human Resource Policy](#) page.

This article continues our series geared toward the interests of managers and supervisors. We encourage you to share this article, tailoring it as you need to satisfy your agency's goals and culture.

Prioritization: An Old Concept with a New Twist

The Brain Series—Part 2



When the word “prioritization” is mentioned, you often see people’s eyes glaze over and they get that “deer in the headlights” look. It is often a dreaded word that people understand but do not really know how to address. Many have likely taken a Franklin Covey time management or similar class at some point, only to eventually forget or lose any new approaches they have learned. Let’s face it—prioritization is very hard to do when you feel like you are bombarded with more and more requests all the time! So, let’s take a different approach and, rather than start with the latest priority setting technique, start at the beginning. Specifically, let’s focus on what happens with our brains when prioritizing.

Businessdictionary.com defines “prioritization” this way:

“As a principle, it means doing 'first things first;' as a process, it means evaluating a group of items and ranking them in their order of importance or urgency.”

Basically, prioritization is about arranging things in a specific sequence based on importance or urgency in order to accomplish them. Sounds easy, right? We all know this definition may sound easy, but the actual process of prioritizing and working by our priorities is much more difficult.

Now that we understand the definition, let’s focus on our brains. A key area of the brain that is involved in priority setting is the pre-frontal cortex (PFC). The PFC is a part of the cortex (this is the grayish matter that covers the brain) and sits right behind the forehead. It is a relatively small area of the brain—about 4-5% of the volume of the rest of the brain. Despite its size, the PFC performs many critical thinking processes, particularly around decision making and problem solving. The PFC requires significant amounts of glucose and oxygen to help it power these energy intensive thinking processes.

So, now that you understand what occurs in the brain, what can you do to help your brain better perform priority setting?

1. Use visuals – When you use visuals, such as to-do lists, you allow your brain to interact with the information rather than trying to have it store this information. By not storing the information, you reduce the load in the PFC. Our brains have a long history with mental imagery, much longer than with other functions such as speech, and can easily respond to visual cues. A few examples of visual approaches include to-do lists, the urgent-important matrix ([Urgent-Important Matrix](#)), and daily work themes as practiced by Jack Dorsey, Executive Chairman, Twitter & CEO, Square ([Jack Dorsey Daily Work Themes](#)).
2. Schedule attention-rich tasks – Schedule attention-rich tasks when you are fresh and alert as you will have higher levels of glucose and oxygen to allow your brain to work most effectively. For some, this will be first thing in the morning; for others, it may be another time of the day. Priority setting requires significant amounts of energy in the PFC and if you attempt it when your energy levels are low, you will likely struggle with the activity.
3. Learn to say “no” – Be cautious about over-committing; when you do so, you are over-committing your brain,

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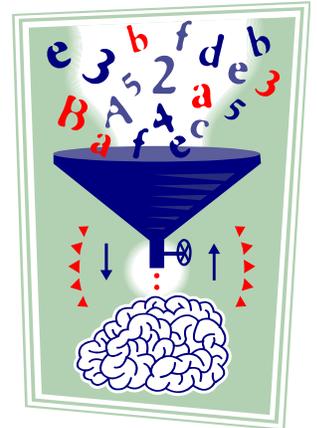
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which is limited in its capacity to perform many tasks at the same time. Over-committing makes it more difficult to set priorities.

One special note regarding email – for those who jump into email before doing anything else, what typically happens? Do you anticipate spending 15 minutes reading and responding to email from the prior day or night? Do those 15 minutes turn into hours? Does one email get you sidetracked into a whole new topic? After handling your email, do you feel drained?

When it comes to priority setting, email is perilous! Reading and responding to email is also an energy intensive process for the brain. When you tackle email first, chances are you either will not get to your other planned activities and/or you will not have the energy to engage in priority setting. The recommendation is to engage in prioritization first and then tackle email. This way, you will have your priorities established and can always alter them after addressing email. By creating your priorities first, you have the highest brain energy levels available to you for this activity.

As a manager, understanding prioritization applies both to you as an individual and to your team. If you want your team to successfully engage in prioritization, be a role model and practice these and other techniques. Share these understandings of the brain with your team and help them learn to better manage the multiple expectations and requests facing them every day!



Transferring and Resigning - Impact on Continuous Service

Employees often don't realize that movement to another state agency is a **transfer** and that, if their departure and start dates are appropriately coordinated, their state service may continue without a break. DHRM has recently seen a number of situations in which employees have resigned from their positions but have not informed their human resource office that they were moving to another state agency. In some cases, these employees have experienced a break in service simply because they were unaware of the implications of such resignations. In some cases we've been able to retract the separations and process the transactions as transfers, making the employee whole. Such changes require tremendous effort on the part of managers, HR, and payroll and needless concern for the impacted employees.

All employees who submit resignations should be informed of the implications of breaking state service. Those who separate from one state agency and are **rehired** into another state agency must serve new probationary periods, may enter a different retirement program, and may have issues with benefits continuation. Layoff policies assess seniority based on **continuous** state service, so a break in service impacts seniority as well. Often agencies are willing to permit the employee to use leave time if needed for the transition from one job to the next. Advising employees when they submit their resignations, rather than after they move to the new agency, makes the transition easier for all.

Statewide Pay Action Summary Report for April – June 2012

Reason	All Actions	Salary Changes	Average % Change
Agency Special Rate	49	49	3.88
Change of Duties Salary	323	323	7.03
Competitive Salary Offer	43	43	13.37
Competitive Voluntary Transfer	531	383	9.55
Disciplinary Demotion	7	7	-8.31
Downward Role Change	13	5	-15.30
End Temp Pay: Acting Status	105	105	-8.40
End Temp Pay: Additional Duties	92	92	-7.93
End Temp Pay: Special Assgmnmt	3	3	-9.20
Field Change	18	16	21.94
Internal Alignment Salary	1467	1463	5.53
Lateral Role Change	141	45	7.78
New Knowledge/Skills/Abilities	451	451	6.76
Non-Competitive Voluntry Trans	263	82	3.46
Non-Routine	157	157	4.43
Promotion	403	400	14.94
Reassignment	70		
Retention Salary Increase	978	978	6.59
Temp Pay: Additional Duties	72	72	8.81
Temp Pay: Special Assignment	17	17	7.09
Temporary Pay: Acting Status	108	108	8.55
Upward Role Change	174	128	8.74
Voluntary Demotion	59	34	-10.55
Change of Duties Bonus	22	22	2.29
New Knowledge/Skills/Abilities	212	212	3.24
Project Bonus Pay Out	1	1	0.09
Recognition Award Leave Hours	14565		
Recognition Award Monetary	1826	1826	1.27
Recognition Award Non-Monetary	169	169	0.18
Referral Bonus Pay Out	14	14	0.72
Retention Additional Leave	5		
Retention Advanced Leave	1		
Retention Bonus	5	5	4.78
Retention Bonus Pay Out	11	11	1.63
Sign-On Additional Leave	5		
Sign-On Advanced Leave	1		
Sign-On Bonus Pay-Out	19	19	2.34
Suggestion Award Monetary	26	26	0.45
Total Actions	22426	7266	4.93

For the second quarter, there were 4,649 base salary increases averaging 7.59%; 324 base salary decreases averaging -8.29%; and 2305 bonus actions, averaging 1.39%.

Workforce Planning and the Periodical's Pay Action Summary data may vary within the same reporting period based on the timing of data runs, agency retraction requests, and the manual review and extraction of erroneous PMIS entries.

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