

Filling The Position

Chapter 2--Highlights

Principles Of The Merit System.

The Components Of The Staffing Function.

How To Reduce The Time It Takes To Fill A Vacancy.

Your Role In The Staffing Function.

Relationships With The Civilian Personnel Office.

Questions and Answers.

Filling Positions

How well the Coast Guard performs depends most upon the quality of its workforce. Effective and efficient planning, on your part, will go far toward helping the Coast Guard achieve its goals and objectives.

Contrary to popular belief, the Federal personnel system allows a wide choice of methods to fill your positions. You can:

- Promote or reassign employees already working in the Coast Guard.
- Reinstatement former Federal employees.
- Convert persons currently employed under an "excepted authority" appointment.
- Hire new employees from outside the Government.
- Transfer current Federal employees from other agencies.

Depending upon current personnel policies, as administered by your servicing Civilian Personnel Office, you may be able to use more than one recruiting source at the same time, e.g., an internal promotion certificate and a certificate issued by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Principles Of The Merit System

The merit system principles for filling Federal jobs are written into law. In staffing, the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 requires that you:

- Recruit qualified people to achieve a workforce that fairly represents our diverse society.
- Select and promote on the basis of relative knowledge, skills, and abilities as they relate to the requirements of the Job to be filled.
- Use fair and open competition to assure equal opportunity.

Components Of The Function Of Staffing In The Coast Guard

The staffing function includes three principal programs. They are the:

Merit Promotion Program (COMDTINST 12335.4)

This program administers the Coast Guard policy of selecting the best-qualified candidates available to fill a vacant position. The merit promotion program must also ensure and document conformance with merit promotion practices, rights and procedures and equal opportunity laws and regulations. Included within this program are the following:

Internal Placement Program

The filling of positions from within by promotion, reassignment, etc. The objective of the Internal Placement Program is to make the best of available Coast Guard employees by placing them in positions which will take full advantage of their knowledge, skills, abilities, and other attributes.

Recruitment Program Strategy

The national recruitment strategy is a systematic approach to meeting short and long-range work force needs with the primary focus on hard to fill occupations and those that require special recruitment activities. Specific information may be obtained from the Civilian Recruiters Office, your servicing Civilian Personnel Office, the Office of Civil Rights, and the program managers for the occupations to be filled.

There are several subsidiary programs, as listed below, which complement the foregoing principal programs of the staffing function.

2-Filling The Position

Reduction-in-Force (RIF) Program. Used in conjunction with numerous federal laws and regulations regarding the conduct of Reduction-in-Force procedures are 3 separate commandant instructions.

**Assigning Performance Credit For Reduction-In-Force (RIF)
(COMDTINST 12351.1)**

Sets policy governing the assignment of performance-based retention service credit in a civilian reduction-in-force (RIF). It establishes a Coast Guard-wide method for crediting service where employees have been rated under different performance management systems

Career Transition and Placement Assistance Programs for Coast Guard and other Federal Employees. (COMDTINST 12330.3C)

Implements requirements setting policy and procedures governing career transition, re-promotion, and placement programs for Federal civilian employees displaced or made surplus as a result of a job abolishment or transfer of function.

Competitive Areas of the United States Coast Guard. (COMDTINST 12351.2B)

Establishes policy governing the establishment of pre-designated geographic and organizational competitive areas throughout the Coast Guard in which affected employees will compete with each other in the event of a reduction in force.

The Staffing function has important effects on practically all actions related to personnel within the Coast Guard. Staffing rules, regulations and procedures may at times appear cumbersome but they are in place to ensure and document that decisions made in the staffing process are fair and logical. A staffing decision that is discriminatory is illegal. Even a decision that only appears to be discriminatory, capricious, or unfair can have far reaching effects on employee morale, behavior, and perceptions and can lead to grievances and complaints under a labor/management agreement, or Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) procedures.

How To Reduce The Time Required To Fill A Vacancy

Recognizing the complexity of the recruitment process, as described above, it is easier to understand why it takes a little time to fill a position.

Some things you can do to help reduce that time requirement are:

- Whenever possible, anticipate vacancies so that staffing can begin well in advance of the actual vacancy.
- Provide your Civilian Personnel Office with a current position description (PD).
- Thoroughly discuss with your HR Specialist the knowledge, skills and abilities you want the applicants to possess.
- With your HR Specialist make sure you discuss and understand how your job is to be advertised; what methods are to be used to recruit; what will be the area of consideration; how long must the announcement be opened; and how to help them to identify and the most highly qualified.
- Keep in touch with your Civilian Personnel Office. Make yourself available to provide them with any information or help they may need.
- Participate in the recruitment process by visiting colleges and universities, job fairs, and otherwise spreading the word about Coast Guard job opportunities.

Your Role In The Staffing Function

If the position is in your work unit you are responsible for:

- The position description and its accuracy;
- Production of essential work by your people;
- Selection of the best qualified people from the candidates available to fill your vacancies;
- Providing your servicing Civilian Personnel Office with the information they need to do their jobs;
- Assisting your Civilian Personnel Office in developing rating and ranking criteria to be used in the selection process.
- For all of those reasons, you, the supervisor, are the key individual in the Staffing and Position Management functions. But remember, you are not alone. You are not expected to know the details of the many directives and policies applicable to those functions. You can, and are expected to, rely upon the advice and guidance of the Civilian Personnel Office whose job it is to provide to you all necessary support and advice you need to accomplish your job in this and all other personnel related activities.

Relationships With The Civilian Personnel Office

Recognizing that the Civilian Personnel Office covers a very broad scope of diverse activities and has on its staff individuals assigned to handle certain of those activities as "specialists," you should look upon those specialists almost as members of your own staff. They, and you, are there to accomplish some aspect of the Coast Guard mission. Their jobs relate to and support yours. As you help them do theirs, they will, to the best of their abilities and within policy and legal limitations, help you to do yours. Very importantly, they can point out the proper procedures (usually required by law) so you get the job done right the first time.

Questions and Answers

1. **Q. My staff of technicians requires some on-the-job training for the work expected of them. Yet, when one leaves, I can't get a replacement for months-and then it's several more months before the replacement is "up to speed." Is there any way I can hire an employee before an incumbent leaves?**

A. As soon as you know that one of your technicians will be leaving, notify your Civilian Personnel Office of that fact. You should submit a standard Form 52 (SF-52), Request for Personnel Action, to start the recruiting process for the anticipated vacancy. The job can be advertised and a certificate of eligibles requested from the examining office before the position is vacated. This procedure will speed the referral of candidates to you, and you may be able to select a new employee before the old one leaves.

2. **Q. I want to promote an employee whom, I think, is deserving but I can't convince the Civilian Personnel Office. If I am the best judge of my own staff's ability, how can I reward the good workers if Coast Guard won't let me?**

A. The grade of a position is determined by a comparison of the duties and responsibilities of the position to the comprehensive civilian grade level criteria published and monitored by the federal Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The federal position/grade classification process is not intended as a means for rewarding the good work of employees or for recognizing an employee's superior ability. The classification system is intended to provide an objective, government-wide, evaluation method for determining the grade level of duties and responsibilities of a position in support of Civil Service law requiring "equal pay for equal work" throughout the federal government. Generally, all promotions must be competitive unless an individual is being promoted up through a previously established career ladder for which they had initially competed. The Coast Guard Merit Promotion Plan describes procedures to be followed to ensure that competition is open and fair. An exception to the rule of competition is possible only when (1) there has been either a natural accretion or a directed management assignment of additional duties and responsibilities that results in the re-classification of a position to a higher grade and (2) when there are no other employees to which the higher level duties could have been accreted or assigned. Please discuss your particular situation with your servicing HR Specialist. You may find an alternative in the civilian awards process.

3. **Q. I have an employee who is capable-but in the wrong job. When I asked her to take another position, at the same grade and salary, she responded with, "It's a lower ranking job, and you can't force me to take it." Can I, or not? Especially if it is in the employee's best interest as well as the Coast Guard?**

A. The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 abolished the concept of "rank." As long as the grade and salary are the same, you're free to use your people where they are most needed.

2-Filling The Position

4. Q. May the Coast Guard reassign and relocate its employees?

- A. Yes, if the following provisions are met:
- The reassignment is in the best interest of the Coast Guard.
 - There is no loss to the employee in grade or salary.
 - The employee is fully informed of the reasons for the action.
 - The reassignment is not arbitrary, capricious, or unreasonable.
 - The employee's interests and desires are reasonably considered.

5. Q. Suppose the Employee does not consent to the reassignment?

A.If the action is properly in the best interests of the Coast Guard, the reassignment can be made with or without the employee's consent.

6. Q. What if the employee refuses to move?

A.The employee can be separated for failure to accept an administrative reassignment. This separation would be classed as an Adverse Action (COMDTINST M12750.4) and, therefore, may be appealed.

7. Q. What if the employee did not want to go so far as to refuse to move but still felt that the reassignment was unfair? What recourse does the employee have under those circumstances?

A.An administrative reassignment, properly justified, is not-in and of itself-an adverse action. Therefore, it is not appealable. However, if the employee believes the reassignment to be capricious or demonstrably unreasonable, a review may be requested through the Coast Guard grievance procedure.

8. Q. Why can't I fill my vacancies by detail of available personnel?

A. In some cases-and for very limited periods of time-you may be able to. There are specific authorizations for and restrictions against the use of details. Be sure to contact your Civilian Personnel Office for assistance.

9. Q.I have heard about, but never known, employees who had asked to be demoted. Does the Coast Guard consider such requests?

- A. Yes, under the following circumstances:
- The employee initiates the request without any pressure by the Coast Guard.
 - The request is clearly for personal reasons and in the employee's interest.
 - The request is in writing and submitted through channels.

2-Filling The Position

- The employee qualifies for the lower grade position.
- There is an available vacancy.

The action is likely to result in improved employee morale and productivity.

10. Q. Under what circumstances may the Coast Guard initiate demotion action?

A. There are very specific administrative, disciplinary, or legal policy circumstances where management initiated demotions are possible. Each circumstance entails a different set of complications and requires close coordination with your servicing HR Specialist. The situations where demotions are possible are listed below:

- The result of reclassification action.
- The return of an employee with Restoration and Return Rights.
- The result of a Reduction-In-Force action.
- Inability of the employee to perform assigned duties satisfactorily.
- Employee misconduct.

11. Q. What are the real differences among the several terms related to the qualification of candidates to fill a position?

A. That is a good question. There can be some confusion between what the word “qualified” means to a manager and what it means in the HR community. A clear understanding of the differences in meaning is essential to the selection process. In HR terms, for an applicant to be considered at all for a particular vacancy, the applicant must meet the minimal government-wide OPM qualification standards and the selective placement factors applicable to that position. When an applicant meets these prescribed OPM qualifications the HR community may refer to that person as being “qualified”. It is more accurate to say that such a person “meets minimum qualifications”. The next step in the referral process is for the HR Specialist to identify which of those who “qualified” “exceed the OPM qualification standard to the degree that they are likely to perform in the job in question in a superior manner.” This group is referred to as those who are “highly qualified”. The HR Specialist will then compare all the “highly qualified” applicants and refer those that rank at the top to the selecting official. You should work early in the process with your HR Specialist on how to identify the “highly qualified” from the “minimally qualified”.