



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT  
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Monday, July 15, 2002  
MSG-051a

**MEMORANDUM FOR: Directors Of Human Resources And Chief Information Officers**

FROM: Richard A. Whitford, Acting Associate Director for Employment

Subject: Improving Job Announcements

We continue to support the President's Management Agenda and are assisting agencies in their support of the President's human capital initiative. This initiative, along with others, will result in a Government that is more citizen-centered, results-oriented, and market-based.

Under the leadership of Director Kay Coles James, we are committed to improving the hiring process. A critical first step is to improve the vehicle that describes Federal employment opportunities - the job announcement. In March, the Director reminded agencies about some of their responsibilities for recruiting a high quality, diverse workforce, including the need for accurate qualification descriptions and correct contact information on job announcements. She also cautioned not to restrict individuals without Internet access from applying for Federal jobs.

There are a number of initiatives underway to improve Federal job announcements. The Recruitment One-Stop Project Team is looking to change how job announcements are displayed on USAJOBS. The project team is exploring a number of options that will make job announcements more visually appealing. The team is also seeking to ensure that the announcements provide clearer instructions to applicants.

In the meantime, we ask for your assistance to help create better, more applicant-focused job announcements that simplify the process for prospective candidates. The attached "Quick-Tips for Effective Job Announcements" are derived from a report developed by Words at Work International, following focus groups with Federal employees, human resource professionals and job applicants. Please share the tips with those who develop your job announcements. Remember that the announcement represents your agency - long, unedited documents that are full of bureaucratic terms and phrases don't reflect well. Try putting some excitement in recruitment!

[Quick-Tips for Effective Job Announcements](#)

cc: Directors of Operating Human Resources Offices

## Quick-Tips for Effective Job Announcements

- **Use Instructional Language.** Guide the candidate using familiar step-by-step language like this:

*"To apply for this position, you must have the following qualifications"*

- **Use Rhetorical Questions.** These are as familiar and engaging as Q&A's, but don't require an answer:

*"Do you have the right background to apply for this position? To find out, see if you have the following"*

- **Highlight the Value of the Job.** Accentuate what the position brings to co-workers, the agency, or the nation:

*"Your duties in this position are to help the office function more smoothly by taking on these responsibilities - among others"*

- **Use Familiar Language.** Make candidates feel that they belong. For instance, use language like:

*"You should address job-related competencies or Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities, on a separate sheet of paper."*

- **Use White Space and Bullets.** Candidates find densely formatted text difficult and unfriendly. Use white space and bullets, for example:

*Are you:*

- *A 30 percent compensable veteran;*
- *Eligible for a Veterans' Readjustment Appointment (VRA); or*
- *Severely handicapped?*

*If so, we may be able to consider you for special hiring authority.*

- **Use Interesting Headers.** Make sure headers guide the candidate to what they most need to know. Say:

*How to Apply for this Position or How Can I Apply for this Position?*

- **Put Results Where the Candidate Can See Them.** Focus on the beginning of a line or bullet:

*Assure a smooth workflow by receiving, recording, sorting, collecting, mailing, and distributing incoming and outgoing work*

- **Speak Directly to the Reader.** Use the second person "you" or imperative. For instance:

*Provide a copy of your college transcript when applying...*

- **Use Effective Structure.** Emphasize the most important information in the first paragraph and provide the least important information in the middle.

- **Provide Complete Information.** Either provide specifics or tell candidates where to find additional information.