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Community Management of the Civilian Professional Workforce

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Consolidating the management of the Navy’s professional civilian workforce is critical to ensuring its efficiency and effectiveness in the 21st century. Today’s evolving business environment features rapid technological advances, globalization, and increased competition for a limited pool of qualified workers who can meet the complexities and challenges confronting it. Recruiting, retaining, and developing a highly skilled and flexible professional civilian workforce is essential to successfully responding to these emerging trends.

Recognizing this changing environment, considerable attention concerning the future of the professional civilian workforce has highlighted numerous alarming trends. The near-term challenges include two major problems. First, workers who are rapidly approaching retirement dominate the professional civilian workforce in DoD. In April 2000, the median age of a civilian employee throughout DoD was 46. The Navy, in particular, is at risk of losing 30-40% of its civilian, professional workforce to retirement by 2005. Some communities, such as the acquisition workforce, will experience losses of as much as 50% during this same timeframe. Figures 1-1 and 1-2 provide a graphical representation of this information.

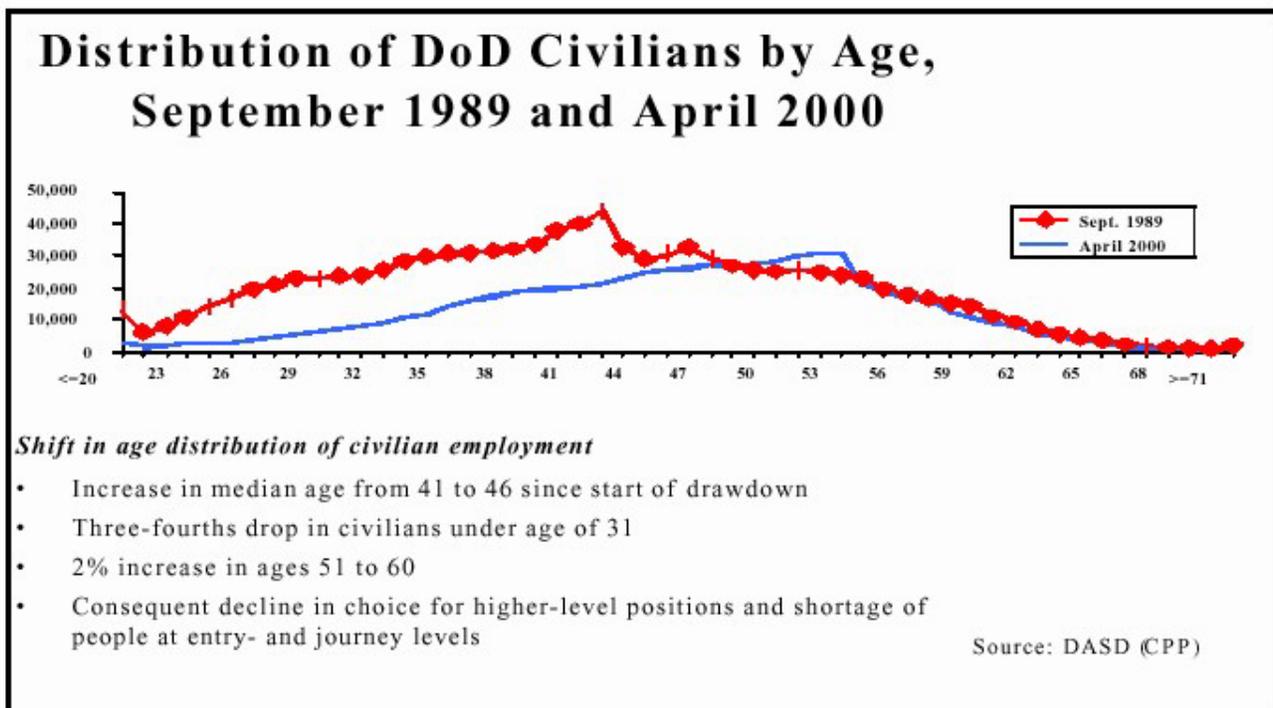


Figure 1-1. Distribution of DoD Civilians by Age, 1989 and 2000

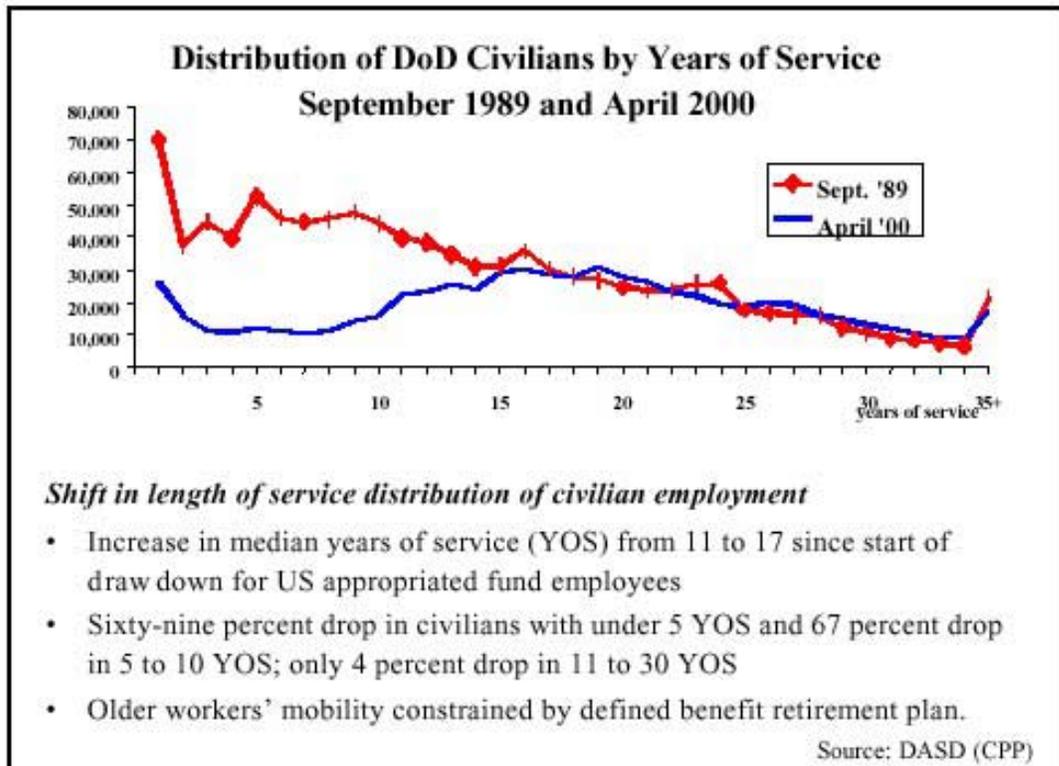


FIGURE 1-2. DISTRIBUTION OF DoD CIVILIANS BY YEARS OF SERVICE, 1989 AND 2000

Second, recruiting efforts for younger, educated, and motivated employees have not kept pace with those members retiring or leaving government to seek positions in the commercial sector. This situation is rapidly approaching a human capital crisis and is poised to profoundly change the Government's approach to managing personnel. The situation presents an opportunity for developing a new strategic vision towards community management.

Recognizing the constraints facing the acquisition workforce in the near future, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics established a task force to reshape and manage the acquisition workforce to meet future needs. The task force was charged with examining the anticipated challenges in recruiting, retaining, and developing the professionals working within the acquisition workforce. The findings of the Acquisition 2005 Task Force Report, titled *Shaping the Civilian Acquisition Workforce of the Future*, provide a useful assessment of current challenges as well as a numerous immediate, near-term, and long-term initiatives to better align the Department's human resources practices and address emerging challenges for providing seamless support in the future. Some of the Report's findings are listed below to highlight issues that extend beyond the acquisition workforce community and have relevance to non-acquisition related professional series. These findings are discussed in more detail later in the report.

- *Expand Public and Private Sector Recruiting Efforts, and Make It Easier to Apply for Positions.* A Human Resource Office centric initiative to improve access to information about professional opportunities and to promote greater interest both inside and outside government.
- *Maximize Use of the Student Educational Employment Program (SEEP) to Recruit from Colleges and Other Sources.* The initiative focuses on identifying promising students early in their college careers. Once identified, these select students would be provided internship opportunities to acquire the skills necessary for entering the federal workforce.
- *Provide More Career-Broadening Opportunities.* The initiative calls for establishing a rotational plan for select professionals who have attained a prescribed level of certification in their field. The rotation would be limited to one year and may include assignments within any federal department or agency.
- *Establish Career Development Plans for All Acquisition Career Fields.* The goal is to establish a structure outlining career milestones and educational requirements.

These recommendations, along with others included in the report, revolve around these central themes ... recruiting and retention, centralizing professional community management, and improving dissemination of information to current and prospective workers. These themes provide the basis for our plan for enhancing professional community management throughout the entire Navy; the cornerstone of which is creating a Community Manager (CM) within the Department of the Navy for each professional series supporting Navy operations.

Structure

Our plan creates a Community Management Office that will function in many ways like the Bureau of Naval Personnel for active duty military personnel. This office will focus on four major areas:

Managing all recruiting, retention, and developmental programs throughout DoN.

Today, Navy Systems Commands (SYSCOM) have training programs offering comprehensive study programs and developmental assignments focused on informing employees of current managerial, technical, and scientific advances. These programs also promote many of the college and graduate level educational opportunities available to most DoN employees. But while these programs succeed in developing more senior people within their specific SYSCOM,

they in no way address the needs of the younger employees who may miss out on career-enhancing opportunities available at other SYSCOMs or Activities.

Our plan takes "stovepipe" SYSCOM recruiting, retention and developmental programs and consolidates them into coordinated, series-specific, career development plans that stretch across the entire DoN network. By consolidating these functions, we would ensure employees received the greatest opportunities possible for upward mobility as well as giving DoN a more robust and flexible workforce.

Consolidation will also enhance training budget efficiencies by avoiding imprudent end-of-the-year spending. For example, an engineer employed at NAVAIR may be ready for an engineering management position now but one may not be available within NAVAIR. In our plan, the CM Office (with visibility of all DoN vacancies) will have the tools to find a managerial opening at another SYSCOM or Activity and create a winning solution...both for the loyal employee as well as the Navy.

Consolidated recruiting efforts will include multi-media advertising campaigns as well as active recruiting programs designed to attract college level students and seasoned professional into the federal workforce. A focused, consolidated approach will also make it easier for potential DON recruits to find out more about employment opportunities available in DoN.

Creating and maintaining a central civilian workforce database. Community Managers will develop and maintain a database that will provide visibility for all position vacancies in the respective professional series across DoN. This database will have the added advantage of being linked to Human Resource offices, allowing individual employees online access to their personnel record.

Policy Coordinators for respective professional communities. The CM office would provide the core staffing that would develop, hone, and execute the DoN-wide CM strategic plan for each professional career field. Further, they would establish educational, training, and core requirements for each career field. (Appendix 1 shows a notional career development path.) Included in these core requirements will be mandatory rotational assignments outside of the employee's normal working environment. This office will foster a greater degree of cross-activity assignment opportunity and experience. This office will be staffed by a GS-15 Director and GS-13/14 level Community Managers.

Coordination of community management issues with community management leadership at the Systems Command level and below. The CM office would oversee an aggressive mentoring program that will reach all the way down to the lowest levels of the DoN. Traditional mentoring, where a senior, experienced individual helps guide and develop the career of a junior employee, will be formalized and managed by the CM office. The senior professional in each community at each SYSCOM/Activity would be responsible (in addition to their normal duties) for managing an active mentoring program within their own work centers. It is expected other senior- and mid-level employees will become mentors for their juniors. Mentoring serves a valuable means of developing employees and keeping them focused on career-long goals. Mentoring also provides a means for those very senior professionals to impart as much of their knowledge and experience as possible to other members of the workforce.

Benefits

The long-term benefits of consolidating Navy personnel community management would be clear; improved retention and performance of the professional civilian workforce. This initiative will help produce a workforce that is well educated, cross-trained, and possessing the broad experience necessary to function effectively in DoD's changing environment. Within each community, DoN personnel will be provided the professional education and development skills required for assuming key leadership positions as well as mentoring programs to keep their career paths focused. One intangible benefit is the cost avoidance in recruiting and/or retaining replacements for mid and senior level professionals who decide to leave government service to pursue opportunities outside of government.

Currently, a fragmented effort in career development across activities limits the mobility of the workforce across SYSCOMs and Activities. A consolidated effort in career development will produce a more flexible workforce that has cross-functional experience applicable across all SYSCOMs and activities. Active community management would allow recruiting efforts to feed developmental programs and training opportunities. A centralized community management training division will allow efficiencies in developing and establishing training requirements and equitable distribution of training assignments.

Obstacles

Although the establishment of a Community Management Office for the professional series workforce offers tremendous opportunities, the change also presents some obstacles. On the surface, the funding for establishing and sustaining Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions to

staff the office appears to be costly. The reality is these benefits will be enormous, with additional costs being offset by reducing career management responsibilities at the SYSCOM level.

There will likely be some resistance to consolidating community management across all SYSCOMs in DoN. The efficiencies and synergies created by consolidating provide potential cost savings and alignment of personnel functions and strategy to support the professional series workforce. Consolidating of functions and career development will provide the workforce greater flexibility and mobility. This flexibility and mobility will provide the workforce with career progression and promotion opportunity.

Conclusion

Current management is fragmented and not consistent across the Navy. Where some communities, such as the acquisition work force, are managed very well, others are not. The Navy has a number of challenges in the near future including an aging workforce and an emerging competition with the commercial sector for qualified personnel. These conditions have reached a point where we must recognize our professional workforce as assets and plan, develop, and manage the civilian workforce as carefully as we manage our military workforce. This requires that we treat recruitment and development as investments rather than costs.

Appendix 1, Notional Career Development Path

GRADE	YRS EXP	TRAINING ASSIGNMENTS	DEVELOPMENTAL ASSIGNMENTS
GS-15	5-10	-STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TRAINING	-STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT -ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS
GS-14	5-10	↓	↓
GS-13	3-10	-ADVANCED DEGREE	-ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS
GS-12	3-10	-CERTIFICATION -LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT TRAINING	-HIGH LEVEL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING
GS-11	1-4	↑	-SUBSPECIALTY TRAINING
GS-9	1-3	-TRAINING COURSES -TRAINING ASSIGNMENTS	
GS-7	0-2	↓	