

# HR NEWS



## Performance Management



# What Is Workforce Analytics and Why Should You Use This Tool?

By Guy DiMemmo

Public sector agencies face unique challenges due to the fact the basic duties of their employees involve serving citizens and protecting the safety and well-being of all people. In order to improve external operations, human resources leaders in government must solidify internal processes to ensure agencies have the best team members in place to get the most important jobs done.

Workforce analytics describes the process of, first, collecting data on labor patterns and employees, then conducting analyses that identify ways to improve key metrics. The proper application of workforce analytics can help public sector agencies improve internal processes and compliance, boost employee productivity and performance, uncover trends and find opportunities to make positive changes.

Doing workforce analytics relies on adhering to strict protocols for reporting facts and figures. Without this, HR leaders cannot gain better insights into their agency's workforce and its behaviors. When high-quality data is available for skillful analysis, HR leaders have the ability to know what is currently happening with their staff and, more importantly, what is going to happen.

In short, using workforce analytics can arm an agency with a comprehensive and granular view of the data needed to best manage and develop the workforce. The tool is particularly valuable for guiding recruitment, optimizing talent and planning senior personnel needs.

## Recruit the Right Candidates

The recruitment process is tedious for any organization. Getting it right is especially crucial for agencies that must form strong, dependable teams to serve their communities. Workforce analytics lends the recruitment process a helping hand by using data on past hires to reshape methods and increase efficiency.



Analytics can help recruiters and hiring managers pinpoint strong hires for vacant roles, make faster and more appealing offers to candidates, and, ultimately, enhance the overall candidate experience. Instead of relying on resume screening and interviews to bring new talent onboard, workforce analytics enables predictive hiring by using data on existing employees to create a model of which candidates are good fits and poised for success on the job. Recruiters and hiring managers can rank candidates before moving to the interview stage, thereby ensuring only the top matches receive serious consideration.

Using analytics can also further the achievement of diversity and inclusion goals by significantly decreasing bias in selecting candidates. Looking at data instead of individuals makes it easier to align applicants' work histories to role requirements, which leads hiring managers to make more objective decisions. While no system will ever be perfect, analytics allows public sector employers to transform talent selection by developing and implementing hiring processes that are more effective and impartial.

## Utilize Talent More Effectively

For public sector agencies, retaining the best employee is as important as recruiting strong candidates for open positions. Meeting the goal of bringing great talent onboard does little for an organization when hires do not stay for the long haul.

Many agencies are falling short on employee retention. The U.S. Government Accountability Office reported in 2020 that between 2011 and 2017, about 60 percent of all new federal employees left for different jobs within two years. Using workforce analytics can help reverse this talent loss while providing guidance on how to develop good hires into great talent.

Managers and supervisors typically find it difficult to identify and assess employees' leadership potential. Applying insights from data analytics makes decisions about which individuals to cultivate more accurate and consistent.

Traditionally, personal biases have factored heavily into decisions regarding who receives professional development opportunities. Managers, often unknowingly, have given preference to those employees who were most aligned with their own approach. This inevitably led to a large set of employees being overlooked for leadership roles.

Deploying analytics solves this problem by revealing top performers across ranks and departments, and by highlighting dominant characteristics of successful leaders. Such insights can shape a better understanding of which employees possess the strengths and skills to get on the fast track to enhanced roles and greater responsibilities.

Workforce analytics can also be used to identify employees' weaknesses while suggesting productive training and coaching solutions. Identifying opportunities for improving employee performance and how to intervene at the right moment will help public sector agencies build a solid bench of future leaders.

## Prepare for the Future

It is no secret that the public sector is currently facing workforce challenges that will impact its future. The long-predicted Silver Tsunami, a multiyear period during which large percentages of baby boomers will retire and shrink the public sector, will not hold back forever. And when older workers leave, they will take essential knowledge and skills with them. Agencies must act quickly to fill the gaps created by expected retirements.

Workforce analytics can produce predictions of which employees of any age are most likely to leave their jobs voluntarily. Analyzing employee data can also reveal the impacts departures will have and facilitate the creation of targeted succession plans.

Using workforce analytics to mitigate the impact of employee turnover happens in three phases. The first phase involves predicting which employees are most likely to leave. When top performers resign or retire, they take their knowledge, experience and commitment with them, which can put their former employers at a disadvantage.

Analyzing employee data reveals who, exactly, is most likely to leave and when that is most likely to happen. This allows the agency to prepare for the coming absence and get ahead of possible adverse consequences.

Next, the organization must understand the reasons employees have for resigning and retiring. Analytics can help agencies dig deep into which factors increase and decrease resignations. Doing the deep dive allows managers and supervisors to fine-tune retention strategies.

Last, the agency must build a succession plan. There is no avoiding employee turnover, especially as people reach retirement age. Engaging in succession planning informed by workforce analytics protects a public sector agency by revealing how many vacancies will need to be filled, when vacancies will occur and which skills and abilities will need to be replaced.

Coupling leadership development efforts with succession planning make it easier to select and develop key talent to ensure continuity in critical roles. Preparing existing employees to fill senior positions also reduces complications related to recruiting and hiring the next generation of successful leaders.

Analyzing data plugs actual people into the succession plan by predicting the most suitable candidates while accounting for diversity and equity. The data can also be cited to support decisions to recruit external candidates for critical positions when no internal candidates would make suitable replacements for exiting employees. When succession planning is done well, senior roles will always be occupied by employees who are well prepared and ready to take on the job.

Public sector HR leaders must explore how workforce analytics can benefit their agencies. Using workforce analytics makes building a strong team destined for success more possible than ever before. It is a predictive tool, and also one that easily yields data visualizations such as charts and graphs that inform and support decision making. When asking how to move a workforce forward, analyzing data provides answers.

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