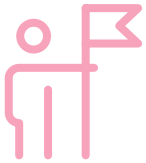
Case Study

govloop Microsoft Adobe

Digital Onboarding: A Lasting First Impression



Challenge: Outdated Systems, Processes Hinder HR

The federal government has historically been in a losing battle with the private sector to attract and recruit employees. Although public-sector work comes with many benefits such as pensions and job stability, it can't compete with commercial pay scales. Federal workers make almost 23% less money than their counterparts in similar private-sector jobs. Now, legacy technology is increasingly problematic, too.

No federal agency is immune to these challenges. In fact, strategic human capital is so problematic that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has had it on its High Risk List since 2001.

Here are three reasons why the federal government struggles with hiring and onboarding:

Legacy IT is cumbersome and expensive to upgrade. Each year, the U.S. government spends more than $100 billion on IT, but most of that goes to operating and maintaining existing systems, which can be as many as five decades old. In some cases, support in the form of skilled technologists and hardware or software for those technologies may be tough to find. Despite calls and even funding for technology modernization from government's top levels, legacy systems are expensive to upgrade, leading agencies to seek out cloud-based and software-as-a-service solutions — as long as they comply with Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program guidelines.

The HR department still relies heavily on manual and paper-based process. Continued reliance on procedures such as wet signatures on paper forms hinders hiring and onboarding because they stretch out the time it takes HR managers to complete their processes. Additionally, complications arise from having too many workflows and tools to accomplish critical onboarding tasks, which also complicates productivity. All of this opens the doors for potential or new hires to seek opportunities elsewhere.

Budgetary pressures make it difficult to meet expectations to operate more efficiently and effectively, and with better employee experience. But varying rates of adoption and disparate, poorly integrated systems make it hard for agencies to streamline their processes. They rely on touch points across locations and organizations that require in-person visits, couriers, faxes and digital resources. Legacy HR systems can't keep up with new onboarding needs, so managers develop stopgaps that add to the complexity. Agencies make their first impression on potential or new hires during hiring and onboarding. If that impression is one of outdated tech and slow processes, that impacts recruiting and retention and makes internal teams less effective.

106 billion

forms were processed by federal agencies in 2021–2022

70 years

is the age of the government's pay and job classification system

Solution: Digital Processes Raise the Employee Experience

Improving the employee experience and bringing fresh talent to federal agencies is a priority, based on goals the President's Management Agenda sets out and the fiscal 2024 budget proposal. Both call for simplifying hiring processes to create more diverse talent pipelines, provide flexibility and enhance benefits. To do that, agencies need an all-digital HR experience.

Those are some of the results that one agency saw when it modernized its employee exit clearance, IT asset clearance, removal of information form and telework termination form. Some of the technologies that helped include those available through a partnership between Adobe and Microsoft. Here are three examples:

Adobe Acrobat Sign for Government is a FedRAMP Moderate-authorized product that gives the agency a safe, compliant way to manage digital documents and e-signatures. This reduces, if not eliminates, the need for wet signatures, saving time, money and resources while giving HR managers the right tools for securely collaborating through one system. Everybody gets more done in less time — and with less pen and paper, and less hassle. This reduces the paperwork burden and increases productivity, making the experience better for everyone involved.

Microsoft Power Automate now integrates with Adobe Acrobat Sign for Government, enabling the agency to automate many time-consuming, tedious processes such as circulating documents for signatures and archiving completed agreements. Paperless experiences are critical in today's hybrid work environment, plus by automating rote tasks, a digital HR system lets managers focus on meaningful work that requires human insight.

Automations are easy for the agency to create because of the no-code, point-and-click interface the technology uses. Non-developers can use the intuitive design to create custom workflows that route digital onboarding documents through the proper steps in the correct order — increasing accuracy. Additionally, agencies can create customized packets of PDFs with document templates that allow for e-signatures.

The agency's employees knew what digital fixes would lead to meaningful change in their processes and workflows. They required secure, interlocking components anyone could build with. In addition to streamlining HR processes and improving the employee's experience, the agency has laid a foundation for future improvements because it can more easily attract and retain the new generation of digitally savvy government workers. They expect technologically seamless experiences, and with digital onboarding, agencies can provide them.

70% is the amount by which e-signatures can increase employee productivity

84% of HR leaders believe generative AI will make existing activities more productive

Best Practices

Change is hard — but it doesn't have to be. Here are five ways to make the process run smoothly:

1. Be strategic and intentional about people, priorities and related strategies. Make sure that intelligent investments drive a customer-obsessed, transformative culture focused on growth.
2. Become a more data-driven organization, using the data available to gain insights about your workforce and make strategic decisions.
3. Drive self-service tools and simplified processes for HR that standardize routine procedures and create new delivery systems and models for HR services.
4. Transform competencies by guiding investments in new skill development and training. This can involve integrating digital learning systems into the flow of work to grow and develop your employees' knowledge base.
5. Establish comprehensive approaches that support employee well-being and mindfulness throughout the employee journey.

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