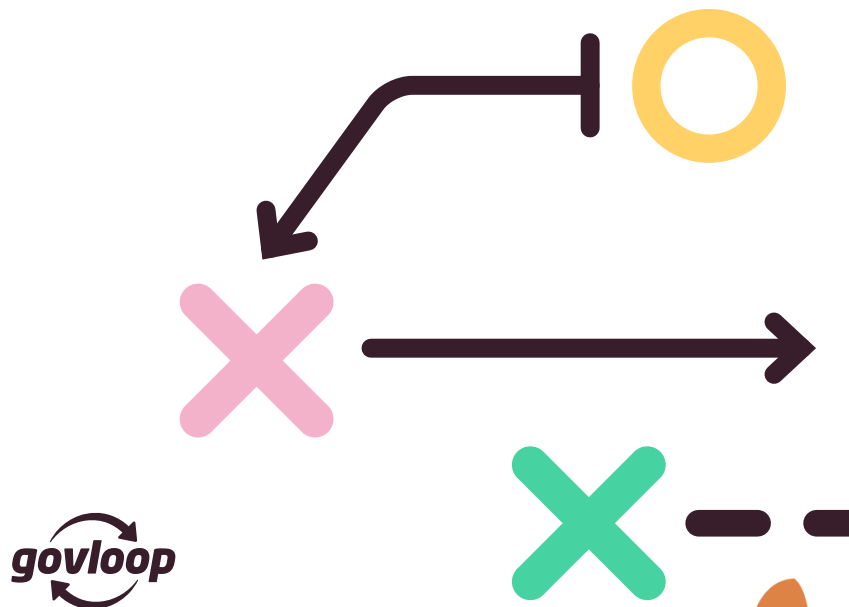


Professional Development Playbook for Government



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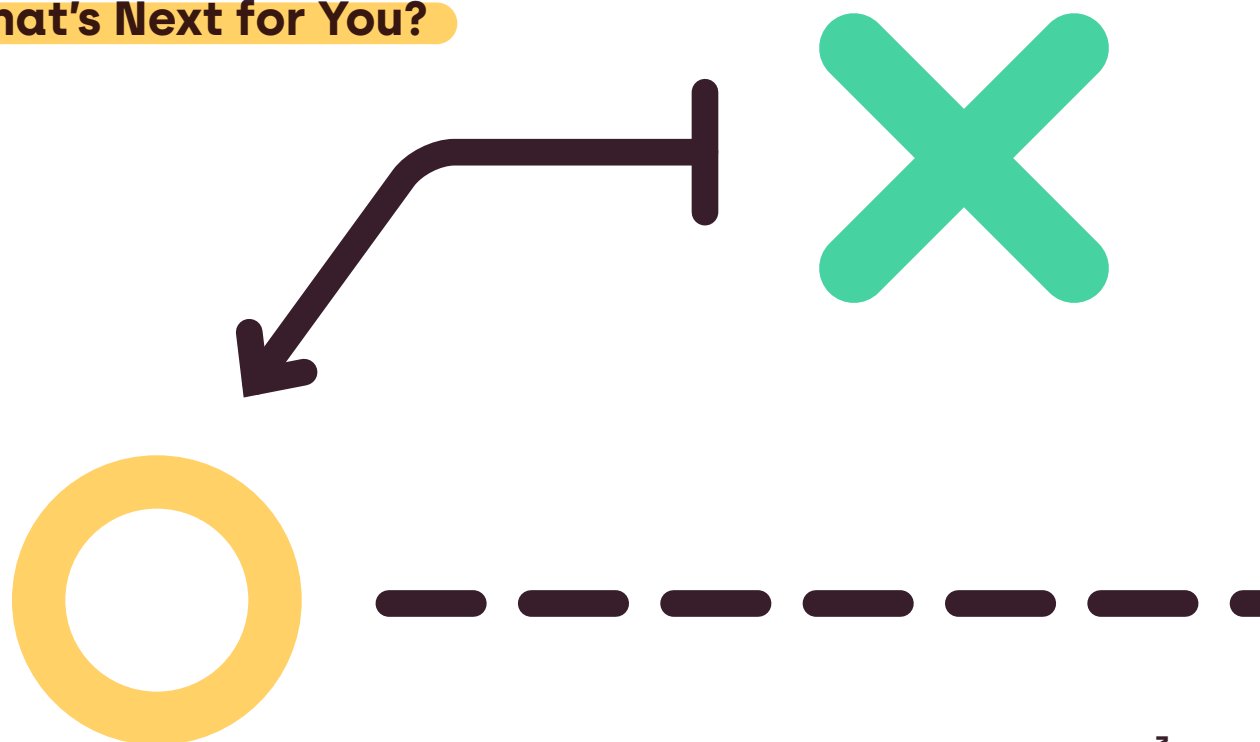
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Executive Summary

Since we can't all be together in a room sharing professional development tips and tricks, I figure the next best thing is to start with a virtual icebreaker.

I want you to take a moment and cross your arms. Don't give it too much thought, just naturally fold your arms the way you would if you were standing and doing a crossed-arm pose for a headshot.

Now, uncross your arms but try folding them again in the opposite direction. For example, if you had the right arm crossed on top, put it on the bottom this time. How did you do? Was it easy, or did you struggle?

Full disclosure: I failed miserably when a moderator at our recent NextGen Government Training Summit had us try this exercise. Tina Erzen, a faculty member at the Center for Leadership Development at the Office of Personnel Management, was leading a session on embracing change management.

Her point in starting with that exercise was to make the case that change is hard, and we all experience it in different ways. Some of you quickly crossed your arms and were fine. Others, like myself, really thought about it and struggled. And that is OK. We are all different.

Adapting to change is a critical part of our professional development. So is improving how we communicate, especially in this virtual environment, and managing our own career growth while investing in others. We will touch on all of these topics and more in this guide.

Maybe COVID-19 forced you to scrap your training plans, or maybe you're feeling a range of emotions about how and when to fit professional development into a packed schedule. Well, we want to make things simple.

GovLoop's "Professional Development Playbook for Government" is designed to help employees and their managers navigate workforce relationships and dynamics in today's environment.

We've compiled some of our most insightful and actionable content into a consumable format. Our goal is to make this guide easy to skim, glean from and put into action today. To help you on your professional development journey, we've focused on these key areas:

- **Leading and managing a virtual workforce**
- **Navigating change management with tools, technology and empathy**
- **Improving communication**
- **Embracing diversity and inclusion as a core value**
- **Mapping career goals**
- **Workforce culture and retention**

Toward the end of the guide, we highlight key workforce changes taking place across government, such as the presidential executive order to prioritize skills over degrees. We also include tidbits on how the training resources in this guide can help you prepare for these changes.

But before you dive into the content, take a minute to review our tips for getting the most out of this guide and how you can use it as a knowledge-sharing tool in your organization.



-Nicole Blake Johnson
Managing Editor, GovLoop

How to Use This Guide

Now more than ever, public servants need practical resources for leading in difficult times, building culture across a virtual workforce and balancing technical and soft skills to achieve mission outcomes.

View this guide as a playbook that you and your colleagues can reference regularly. For each section, you'll find an intro that explains the topic, followed by actionable tips and insights, plus activities you can put into practice to reinforce learning.

You will hear from hiring managers, frontline employees and senior leaders who represent all levels of government. Regardless of where you are in your career, there's something for everyone in this guide.

Aspiring leaders



Whether you aspire to step into a new role or set stretch goals for yourself, this resource is a good addition for your professional development toolkit. Consider how the tips in this guide map to your individual development plan at work. Also consider using virtual brown-bag sessions to share what you've learned with your colleagues.

Managers



Use this resource as a conversation starter to connect with your staff during team meetings and individual check-ins. Invite your team to take this knowledge-sharing journey with you by being vulnerable and sharing what you've learned and areas where you'd like to improve as a leader.

Individuals new to government



Welcome! Learning the nuances of your agency's mission, government lingo and workplace dynamics is tough. But this guide is a great resource to help you settle in. We include insights from leaders across government who have been where you are and want to share their knowledge with you.

Leading and Managing a Virtual Workforce

We used to count on small talk in the hallways to connect with team members. Or we'd swing by someone's desk to check in. But how can we still make meaningful connections in the virtual world?

Whether you're a leader managing a remote team, or an employee navigating meaningful interactions with your supervisor, these resources can help. We share eight ways that managers can foster kindness, respect and a sense of belonging among employees. On the flip side, we also share practical ways for employees to "manage up" and make the most out of virtual performance evaluations.

Simple Ways to Foster Kindness, Respect and a Sense of Belonging

1. Show that you care.

Show that you care about your employees by authentically checking in on all of them. Right now, during this relentless pandemic, everyone needs to be asked how they are doing and if they need any help or support. These simple check-ins can make a big difference in someone's day, as they show them that you care.

2. Make everyone feel visible.

Get out of the habit of chatting with only a few members of your workforce. Consider who in your office might be getting overlooked or even worse, might be feeling invisible. Think of small ways you can build a better relationship with these employees. This could be as simple as learning one new thing about each of them.

3. Respect their expertise.

One way to show your employees that you respect their expertise is by asking for their advice. For example, perhaps one of your employees just gave a top-notch presentation. Go beyond praising their work by asking them if they could share with you some of their presentation tips.

4. Compliment their resiliency.

If you know someone who has experienced a difficult time and has managed it well, compliment them for their resiliency. Honor the strength they have shown during this challenging time by sharing this observation with them.



Tips from **Tessie Davenport**, a leader in the Defense Department [DoD] for the past 10 years and former GovLoop Featured Contributor

5. Be receptive.

Look for ways to show you are approachable and receptive. Go out of your way to communicate with each employee. You want them to feel comfortable talking to you and bringing things to your attention. When someone asks for a minute of your time, take five minutes at some point in your day to talk to them.

6. Enrich them professionally.

Think of a few ways you could start professionally enriching your staff through informal development. Brainstorm some topics your team would benefit from and hold a few development sessions. Helping your employees in their development shows that you take their professional growth seriously.

7. Establish a valuable career connection.

Help employees get closer to their career aspirations by making a valuable connection for them. Introduce your employees with someone in your network who can help advance their career development. Making this valuable link shows your employees you want them to succeed in their careers.

8. Have meaningful conversations.

Posing thoughtful questions and having meaningful conversations can help employees feel admired. Ask your team something like, "What has been one of your biggest challenges and how did you overcome it?" or "What is your proudest accomplishment?" Asking these kinds of questions and allowing everyone to share creates special moments among team members as they learn more about one another.

Try This Today!

Creating a sense of belonging is key to leading and managing virtual teams. GovLoop Sales Specialist Blake Martin offers five ways to do just that. He's a fan of virtual icebreakers and shared some of his personal favorites.

- Complete the sentence with words, a photo or both: My weekend was great because ...
- What's the worst movie you've ever seen?
- What's your favorite conspiracy theory?
- If you were the protagonist of a novel, what would the title of the book be?
- Post a song that gets you going in the morning.

Dig Deeper

Do you want to connect with your team in a deeper way?

Lead with compassion.

Looking to build strong relationships across your organization? Skip-level meetings can help.

Get started.

Planning Performance Appraisal Success in a Virtual World

For many, this year started with face-to-face collaboration and delivery of services and goods. Things have definitely changed. Many organizations have shifted work because of the coronavirus and stay-at-home orders.

Has your assigned work changed from the beginning of the performance period? Regardless, it is never too early to think about how to plan for performance appraisal success, especially in a virtual world.



Tips from **Adelle J. Dantzler**, a Federal Job Search Trainer/Career Coach and former GovLoop Featured Contributor

Know the Standards

- What is the description of the highest rating standard in your performance appraisal system?
- Does your assigned work still align with the standards in a virtual world?
- Do regulations allow for flexibility in doing your work?
- Can you streamline delivery processes?
- What technology does your IT department have now that can assist you?
- Use brainstorming apps like ideaboardz, realtimeboard or Bubbl.s to generate ideas and innovate to meet the highest rating standard.



Over-communicate and get things done sooner than promised. And, most importantly, request a meeting with your supervisor to review your ideas. Bring a variety of suggestions to update your work and meet the highest standards of performance in a virtual world.

Get Feedback

- What level of performance is the supervisor expecting?
- Share [this outline](#) with them to ensure you get effective performance feedback.
- Create questions using the keywords in the performance standards to gather feedback about your work.
- Ask how you can improve your performance to meet the highest rating while working virtually.

Set up video meetings to identify visual cues that indicate agreement or confusion. Document the feedback and send a thank-you email. In the email, summarize what you heard. Emphasize how you will continue to do what you do well, and how you will work to do better. And reference the keywords in the highest rating when you mention your accomplishments and what you are confident you will improve.



Make a Plan

- A great way to plan the alignment of your work with the highest-level performance standard is to create a matrix.
- Insert the performance standards at the top, and include work that meets each standard in a corresponding cell below.
- Start today by scheduling 15 minutes to work on the matrix each day. This way, when you have to complete your performance write-up, you have everything you need.



Try This Today!

Use the tips in "[Ready, Set, Go! Performance Management Olympics](#)" to help you prepare to document your accomplishments. Also, use these five tips from "[How to Ace Your Performance Evaluation](#)." Preview your accomplishments in update meetings with supervisors. Planning previews of your work now is a great way to prepare for performance appraisal success in a virtual world.



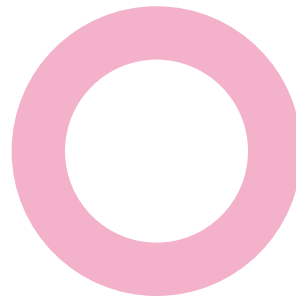
Dig Deeper


Ensuring a successful and productive relationship with your boss is a two-way street.

Learn to manage up.

What's the difference between good and bad bosses?

Know the difference.





You've got
the people.
We've got
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3 Ways to Support Your Remote Workforce

An interview with Steve Dobberowsky, Senior Principal Consultant, Cornerstone OnDemand, Inc.

Agencies have long assumed allowing employees to work remotely would require lowering workloads, but it wasn't until recently that they really recognized the value of a remote workforce. In 2020, predominantly virtual government workforces are not the exception — but the rule.

As employees settle into long-term remote work, some may struggle. HR leaders at every level need engaging, supportive ways to manage and develop their geographically dispersed talent.

Guiding virtual workforces does not have to be difficult, but employees need the right environment and support from their agencies, according to Steve Dobberowsky, Senior Principal Consultant at Cornerstone OnDemand. Cornerstone is a cloud-based people development software provider.

Dobberowsky shared three ways agencies can steer their virtual talent in the right direction.

1. Drive Professional Development

At home or in the office, employees crave fulfilling work that expands their skillsets. Engaged workers are more dedicated, productive and satisfied.

As a result, finding and closing skills gaps becomes critical for agencies. Skills gaps emerge when employees are unable to achieve their agency's goals. According to Dobberowsky, remedying skills gaps requires a dynamic, intelligent talent management system targeting the specific skills agencies need.

"This is bubbling up to a priority level where you should be intervening and doing something in a way that makes sense for whatever efforts the organization is trying to accomplish," he said of skills gaps.

Talent management platforms such as Cornerstone's can help agencies locate skills gaps present in their current workforce and predict future needs. These tools also enable the targeted development and assessments necessary to fill those skill gaps.

2. Curate Engagement.

Remote work upends workflows such as HR management. For instance, activities such as meetings and trainings dramatically transform when shifted to online only. Dobberowsky said agencies must meet their workforces using the structure and content that fits their current needs.

"If we go all online, the danger is we just convert everything that we want into our learning management system with no thought or concern about the user experience. We lose key opportunities to engage and develop our workforce," he said.

In today's post-COVID-19 reality, remote workers might ignore content that is not easily accessible or visually stimulating. Strong talent management platforms overcome these obstacles with features such as user polling, chat and gaming functionality that make virtual meetings more compelling.

3. Pick the Right Fix

HR managers have many options in their talent management toolkits. Recruiting draws fresh talent; reskilling gives existing talent new skills; upskilling teaches employees to use their old skills in novel ways. According to Dobberowsky, healthy talent management initiatives thrive when a platform can help agencies grow and develop the future talent they need now.

"All the pieces of talent management need to be dealt with collectively and holistically to create the kindling for creativity to flourish," he said.

Embracing cloud's flexible, scalable and on-demand features, agencies can foster innovation and meet the unexpected head on.

Navigating Change Management With Tools, Technology and Empathy

"The reality is that the organization only changes when the people within it change," wrote former GovLoop Featured Contributor Michelle Malloy. "Each individual has to adjust and adapt to change in order for the organization to change."

COVID-19 has forced people to rethink how they work — with employees experiencing those changes in different ways. Those changes could be new technology, work arrangements, processes or leadership. What change is taking place isn't the only question you should be asking. How that change will affect employees and how you're preparing them for change are critical. We explore the questions you should ask as your agency undergoes continuous change.

Your Change Management Checklist

Change management is a collective term for all approaches to prepare and support individuals, teams and organizations in making organizational change. The underlying principle is that change does not happen in isolation. Change management requires the following six conditions:

- 1. Sponsorship:** Ensuring senior executives encourage the change
- 2. Buy-In:** Gaining support for the changes from those involved and affected, directly or indirectly
- 3. Involvement:** Involving the right people in the design and implementation of changes
- 4. Impact:** Assessing and addressing how the changes will affect people

5. Communication: Telling everyone who's affected about the changes

6. Readiness: Ensuring people have the right information, training and help to adapt to change

Try This Today!

One approach we use at GovLoop to discuss change is PIN updates. Using this approach allows you to share positive updates (P), interesting updates (I) and negative or need-to-know issues (N). Try this format at your next team meeting or individual check-ins.

The Four P's

Purpose [Thinking] — Explain the logic behind the change [WHY]

Picture [Intuitive] — Paint a picture of the outcome [video, floor plan, organizational chart, etc.] [WHAT]

Plan [Sensate] — Step-by-step plan [ceremonies, training, deadlines, brainstorming sessions, etc.]; transition/change plan [HOW]

Part [Feeling] — The part they will play in the change or transition; everyone should be involved in problem-solving and decision-making [WHO]

Tips from **Tina Erzen**, a faculty member at the Center for Leadership Development, Office of Personnel Management



7 Reasons People Resist Change

- 1. I'm too full of emotion and fear to think about what you're talking about [big one].*
- 2. This has all come as a total shock [thanks for the heads-up].*
- 3. I'm scared of the transition, not the idea/change.*
- 4. I don't know how big a deal this change really is.*
- 5. I don't see how I fit into any of this.*
- 6. I feel like I have no say in what happens.*
- 7. I'm fed up with phony change and want something I can believe in [you fooled me last time].*

Identify Aspects of Change That Are:

Positive

Interesting

Negative

How Organizational Change Management Drives Employee Engagement

What we are changing is not nearly as important as *how* we are changing it. *How* change is introduced, deployed and implemented is vital to avoid the loss of engagement from those being impacted.

- If we don't concern ourselves with the how, we will end up with disengaged employees. And beyond the loss of productivity and decrease in quality, the risk of flight is real.
- Have you ever witnessed or been a part of a sudden increase in voluntary departures in an organization? You can't put a price tag on the loss of knowledge and experience that walks out the door.



Tips from **Michelle Malloy**
a devoted Colorado state
employee for 13 years, and
a former GovLoop Featured
Contributor

At work, we routinely experience more than **one change at a time**. Let's say, for example, an individual is currently adjusting to five or 10 changes at work. And let's say this individual has not been trained in their role during times of change. Also, let's assume the project teams creating these changes failed to integrate change management into their project plans.

- How frustrated, overwhelmed, awkward and clumsy do you believe this individual is feeling while doing their work? The consequence of poorly managed change is disengagement.
- To increase employee engagement, change management needs to be applied at organizational and project levels.
- Developing and deploying an organizational change management program will not only have a positive impact on the associated costs of a disengaged workforce, it will create the foundation for a healthy and positive culture.



Everybody Plays a Role in Change

Executives

- Do the executives understand that they need to be active and visible during the life of the change?
- Do they understand that they need to build a coalition and communicate often about the change?

Managers and Supervisors

- Are they expected to ensure their employees are successful with the changes impacting them?
- Do they understand that they need to advocate for these changes?
- Do they know that they should act as a resistance manager, a coach and a liaison?
- Managers and supervisors should be having two-way conversations with their employees regularly about the changes impacting them.

Employees

- Do the employees in the organization feel empowered to understand the changes?
- Have we taught them how not to be a victim of change?
- Providing our employees an environment where they are free to ask questions and provide feedback is essential.
- Employees are often the ones impacted by the changes, and we should ensure they have a framework that allows them to engage in the change so they can succeed.

Try This Today!

Take out a piece of paper and a pen. Using your dominant hand, write a two- to five-word phrase you write all the time, doodle a doodle you draw consistently or simply write your name. Easy, right? Now do the same thing using your non-dominant hand. If you did this exercise, and are not ambidextrous, I am guessing you felt awkward and clumsy.

You felt like you weren't good at using your non-dominant hand or that you were not successful with the task, which means it was harder for you to be engaged in the work. The same can be said when experiencing change at work. Use this exercise to start a dialogue about change in your workplace and how others are processing it.

Dig Deeper

Leadership is about helping people deal with change. Management deals with things that need to get done.

You need both – here's why.

Here are practical tips from change management experts that you can start using. **Try them today.**



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A Simpler Way to Support and Manage Remote Employees

An interview with Linda Misegadis, Public Sector Business Consulting Director, UKG (Ultimate Kronos Group)

In the early weeks and months of agencies transitioning to remote work, many saw it as a temporary work arrangement to quickly adapt to the global pandemic.

"But now that remote work has become more common, it's no longer an event," said Linda Misegadis, Public Sector Business Consulting Director at UKG. **"It's the way that we are doing work, and adapting to this shift requires a new mindset and clear policies to support this change."**

Misegadis, who previously worked in local government, personally knows the balancing act that public servants are juggling — from compliance and cybersecurity standards to new challenges as employees manage professional and personal responsibilities in light of COVID-19.

Part of what makes government unique is public scrutiny. Every government has transparency and accountability requirements.

Misegadis' work sits at the intersection of IT and human resources — currently two of the busiest departments at many agencies. Her team's focus is providing digital workforce management solutions for government agencies at all levels, and Misegadis sees a demand for these cloud-based options.

So what should agencies prioritize when using software to simplify managing a remote workforce? She highlighted three areas:

1. Ease of Access

Many organizations had to rethink their continuity of business plans, including onboarding and offboarding employees, performance reviews, employee benefits, time and attendance, and other routine activities.

In many cases, paper dominated these tasks, but agencies don't have the luxury of physically pushing paper anymore. Making documents and processes accessible to all employees, regardless of location, must be a priority.

In response to the pandemic, Misegadis has seen a greater interest in automated human capital management solutions that she's hopeful will take root.

2. Compliance

Compliance requirements aren't confined to office walls.

For example, policies that govern how employees dispose of documents, handle sensitive information, protect access to their laptops and track work hours are especially critical in a remote environment. Even employees with the best intentions can find themselves out of compliance.

"When working from home, suddenly that responsibility shifts to the employee, and employees need to be educated on proper processes and have documented policies in place," Misegadis said. Having an automated way to track, enforce and educate the workforce around these policies helps take the guesswork out of managing a remote workforce.

3. Education and Training

As software-based services become more commonplace, so will the need for training. That's true whether employees are using new applications or accessing the same technology outside the office.

"You have to decide how that remote training is going to occur and on which platform," Misegadis said. "The other side of this discussion is training and educating supervisors on how to manage a remote workforce that they can't see regularly."

Remote work is unlikely to completely go away any time soon. Technology is what enables government organizations to continue serving the public without interruption.

Improving Communication

Communication is a two-way street, filled with nuances, plenty of hazard signs and, too often, a lack of clarity. But communication is essential to our jobs. When done right, it can ease tensions, unite teams and even boost morale. It's one of the top issues community members come to GovLoop.com to read about.

In this section, we highlight actionable steps for improving communication with individuals or across teams. We also include tips to effectively use your voice in the workplace.

How to Improve Communication

Effective communication is essential for an organization to be resilient and therefore able to respond to change and disruption in a flexible and innovative manner. When offices have open and honest communication at all levels and in all directions, they will be more likely to maintain productivity when a crisis hits.

Here are some tips for improving communication:

Err on the side of over-communicating.

Although most leaders think they are communicating enough with their teams, most employees wish they had more information and report not feeling well-informed.

- Recognize this disconnect and try to communicate more than you think is necessary.
- Don't assume that everyone will get your message with just one announcement or email.
- Ensure that important information is communicated in several ways and in various forums to make sure it is heard.

Tips from **Beth Payne**, former U.S. Diplomat and resilience training expert



Restructure staff meetings.

Many staff meetings start with the head of the office reporting out, and then each team member giving his or her report. This one-way communication has limited benefits.

- Instead, consider focusing staff meetings on a theme or problem and then have a discussion that engages everyone. You want dialogue, not monologue.
- Ask questions. One of the best ways to improve communication is to ask probing and thoughtful questions. And then shut up and listen.

Communicate bad news.

Failure to communicate bad news leaves a vacuum that will almost always be filled by gossip and stories far worse than reality.

- If you have bad news, don't hesitate to pass it on.
- Communicate what you can early and often.
- If you don't have the full story yet, it is OK to tell people that you don't know everything but that you will say what you can. If you cannot tell a full story because of privacy issues, say so.

Talk in person, if possible.

COVID-19 has made this challenging, but email is not the only alternative. Email is a limited form of communication best used to confirm information, clarify tasks or deliver non-complex details. It is a terrible tool for resolving conflict, negotiating or discussing complex issues.

- Pick up the phone, schedule a video meeting to communicate and have a more robust and effective conversation.

Be clear and concise.

- Think elevator briefing every time you communicate.
- Writing a concise message or giving a quick, simple explanation will mean you're better understood.

Have an open mind.

- Suppress your opinions and solicit input with a genuine desire to learn from others.
- If you're the boss, this is even more important because employees will often tell you what they think you want to hear instead of their true thoughts.
- Avoid this by speaking last and valuing the opinions of others.

Try This Today!

Take five minutes to ask yourself this question and provide honest feedback:
What have you done to improve communication in your workplace?

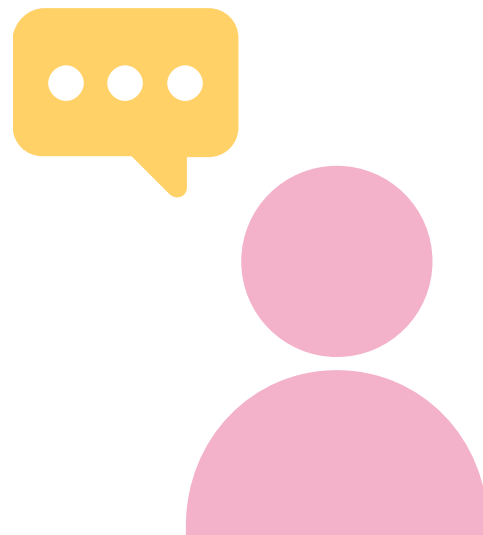
Dig Deeper

Five resources to improve your [digital] communication skills.

Get started.

What can you do when your manager won't listen?

Try this.



Make Your Voice Work for You

Tips from **Casey Erin Clark**, Co-founder of Vital Voice Training



During GovLoop's NextGen online training, "How to Find Your Professional Voice," speaking coach Casey Erin Clark took a deep dive into the realities of speaking in public — whether to an audience of one or 1,000.

Clark encouraged listeners to think about their voices as having four parts, each with its own attendant areas for practice, awareness and refinement. Those four parts are physical, mental, emotional and social.

The physical aspect of your voice is perhaps the most obvious; it is the actual sound you make and the processes by which you make it. It is affected, of course, by many physiological factors that are beyond your control.

Clark focused on the importance of proper breathing and an awareness of how variables such as nerves or strong emotions affect the physical nature of your voice.

The mental aspect is all about what your voice is going to express, including your thoughts and ideas. Some people, Clark noted, might want to plan out exactly what they want to say, or at least formulate it in their head before putting it into words. Others may find thinking out loud easier and more natural.

There is no right or wrong way; it's just important to think consciously about what works best for you and how you can set yourself up for success.

The emotional aspect of your voice can be attractive or unattractive, helpful or harmful, and the line between the two can be very fine. A voice shaking with anger may be off-putting, while a voice thundering in righteous conviction can captivate an audience.

One need not hide their emotions, but it is important to recognize them, how they affect your voice and how to regulate them.

The final aspect of your voice is social. As Clark put it, every interaction you've been a part of, every interaction you've witnessed and even what you've seen on TV or in the movies has had an impact on the development of the social aspect of our voice.

Based on what you're exposed to, you make conscious and unconscious decisions about modulating your voice to either fit in or stand out.

Try This Today!

Doing something physical is the best way to manage the physical reactions that come with nerves. If you're feeling especially on edge before a meeting or a speech, knock out a few jumping jacks. Or, "instead of trying to lower our energy level to a calm state, **consider shifting the focus**," according to a former GovLoop featured contributor.

Dig Deeper

Avoid being the invisible introvert. **Do this instead.**

Tips for Communicating Virtually With Employees

For many leaders, communicating virtually with employees is a new way of doing business.

To help leaders thrive in this new environment, Beth McLeod shared some practical tips for communicating with employees virtually. McLeod is an online instructor and program director with more than five years of experience in virtual communications.

Set guidelines for proper interactions

Setting clear protocols for proper online interactions will help enforce professional exchanges. McLeod has established a set of specific guidelines that she calls her “netiquette policy.” These protocols can help guide managers and employees as they communicate online. Here are some of her rules:

- Think before you write, just as you would before you speak.
- Inappropriate language, insults, sarcasm, harassment, and cultural insensitivity will not be tolerated.
- Respect diverse and varying opinions from your own.
- Properly address others by taking the time to learn their preferred names.

Schedule frequent and routine engagements

Managers should plan and prepare thoughtful virtual engagements with their employees. These sessions need to occur frequently to provide space for employees to collaborate on mission outcomes. They should also take place routinely so that everyone receives consistent updates in a timely manner.

Use different communication methods

Ask your employees what communication methods they prefer, then tailor your methods to meet their needs. You likely cannot meet everyone’s preference, but you might be pleased to find out that your folks would like a short daily video sync to get everyone on the same page.

Don’t overwhelm your employees with too many emails

Be thoughtful and organized in your emails. Don’t send five different emails on the same topic when one email with more information would do the trick. Sending multiple emails on the same topic makes it hard for people to find all the information they need on a subject. Also, let your employees know that they should do the same, as this will help to streamline communications for the team.

Outline the appropriate way to format emails

To help facilitate clear messages, define how emails should be formatted. Establish requirements for the subject of the email so that the person receiving it can quickly assess what the message contains. This also helps ensure a faster response time. For teams that work on multiple projects, it might be helpful to require a link to the webpage of the project that is being discussed in the body of the email.

Tips from
Beth McLeod,
an Online
Instructor
and Program
Director





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What Data Can Tell You About Current and Future Employees

An interview with Marcus Mossberger, Industry and Solution Strategy Director, Infor

No matter how massive, minute or complex an agency's mission, each one has a common purpose: They're in the business of people.

But the nature of that business has drastically changed in response to COVID-19. Many agencies are operating in a virtual environment and can't rely on instincts or in-person interactions to manage a workforce they can't physically see.

Especially now, they need a data-driven, technology-enabled approach to matching people with government priorities, said Marcus Mossberger, Industry and Solution Strategy Director at Infor.

"We look at the cognitive, cultural and behavioral data of individuals to make better decisions for and about our people."

Infor specializes in talent management software that uses behavioral and performance data to select, develop and retain the right people — a space that government leaders are increasingly tapping into.

Mossberger explained how behavioral data, which can be used to analyze individual characteristics such as humility and acceptance of authority, can help agencies better understand employees, their needs and how their talents align with the mission. Behavioral data can help agencies:

1. Respond to the short and long-term implications of remote work on employees.

"We're in a bit of a new world," Mossberger said. "Candidly, I don't think we're going back to any degree of normalcy for the near future."

Operating under this assumption, how might you use data to better understand employees' adaptiveness to remote work for an extended period or indefinitely?

"There are certain behavioral characteristics that predict people may be a better fit for the remote work lifestyle," he said. "Think of things like self-discipline, pace and need for recognition."

Technology can help agencies think through these scenarios and make suggestions for interventions and positive reinforcements when needed.

2. Strategically plan for workforce reskilling and future jobs.

There's no question that the federal workforce will be doing a lot more around reskilling in the future. Reskilling involves learning a completely new skill set based on a demonstrated aptitude.

"When you look at the future, we're preparing generations for jobs that don't even exist yet," Mossberger said. "In today's environment, having to do it virtually adds another factor to consider."

Behavioral analytics can help agencies identify transferable skills across the workforce. Although it's difficult to predict every skill that will be required, employees who exude emotional intelligence and are good at problem-solving are often ideal candidates for reskilling.

3. Understand various teams and how they operate most efficiently.

How teams functioned in the office isn't an absolute indication of how they will operate in a remote environment. Having behavioral data to support or refute assumptions about team dynamics is key.

Understanding what variables, such as skill sets and environment, impact team dynamics is crucial for hiring as well.

COVID-19 has made widely dispersed workforces the future of agencies, Mossberger said. Behavioral data can help agencies understand what's best for their employees and more readily adapt to change.

Embracing Diversity and Inclusion as a Core Value

Diversity, equity and inclusion fit nicely on PowerPoint slides. But putting DE&I into practice is anything but neat.

It's messy. It's emotional. And it's layered. It isn't a one-time event that starts with a good idea and ends with a policy memo tucked away in a binder or buried on your agency's intranet. Although there might be a designated person leading DE&I efforts at your agency, this work spans titles.

It's an all-of-government job that requires everyone, especially leaders, to ask themselves tough questions. We must all be aware of our biases and be willing to confront them and embrace diversity with empathy. But how? In this section, we explore actionable steps for putting these words into practice.

How to Embrace Diversity With Empathy

First, how do we define empathy?

Cognitive empathy: Understanding the perspectives or thoughts of another. Alone, cognitive empathy can lead to manipulation. It can also lead to being cold and unfeeling.

Emotional empathy: Feeling and sharing the experience of another. Alone, emotional empathy can lead to overwhelming stress and even burnout.

Compassionate empathy: Understanding and inspiration to take action. This can be grand gestures or even just listening. Compassionate empathy can improve communications, interpersonal relationships and even happiness.



What gets in the way of embracing diversity?

Often, diversity can be impaired by split-second decisions triggered by biases. We all are capable of impeding diversity because of our narrow experiences and views of the world. Family, culture and environment all play a part in how we make sense of everything.

5 Steps for Embracing Diversity With Empathy



Tips from Frieda Edgette, Certified Executive Coach and Organizational Strategist

The key to embracing diversity with empathy is to better understand ourselves.

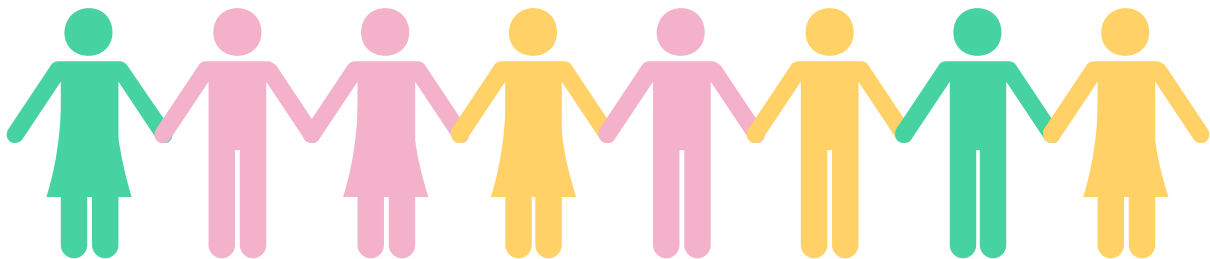
Be authentic. Seek a better understanding of who you are. Develop self-awareness by exploring your identity, background, principles and life experiences. Do those experiences cloud your vision when interacting with people of the same race? What do you do when you encounter differences? Be honest when asking these questions.

Self-manage. What is your natural response when presented with difference or conflict? Develop an "in the moment" strategy to practice self-control like taking a deep breath or a six-second pause.

Practice active listening. When interacting with others, watch verbal and non-verbal cues. Make sure you turn your inner voice off for a moment and focus entirely on the other person.

Get curious. Ask open-ended questions that start with "what" or "how." What experiences shaped the other person's life? Where do they get their information? What's most important to them? Your only mission is to understand.

Respect, connect. We as the human race share 99% of the same DNA. It's important to share stories with others and connect beyond work and government life.



Try This Today!

Log 3 We's. Think of someone who is different from you. Next, set a timer for 60 seconds. Write down three ways this person is just like you. Here's an example. **1) We're both people; 2) We are both trying to make sense of the government landscape; 3) We both want to be accepted.** When the timer sounds, review your list. What do you notice? How do you see the person now? The next time you see this person, what is one thing you will do to connect? Be sure to write it down.

Randomly do five good deeds today. Today, do five random acts of kindness. Compliment someone at work. Make an effort to talk to support staff at your office and learn their names. Large and small acts can make all the difference.

Reframe Your Thinking About [Unconscious] Bias

Tips from **Pamela Fuller**, Thought Leader of Inclusion & Bias at FranklinCovey



Last year, a report by the Center for Talent Innovation found that 71% of leaders select proteges who are of the same gender and race.

"What does that mean for how we reinforce what leadership looks like?" asked Pamela Fuller, Thought Leader of Inclusion & Bias at FranklinCovey, a management consulting firm.

At the 2020 NextGen Government Training Summit in August, Fuller unpacked what unconscious bias means, how it can negatively impact agency performance and how to overcome it by reframing biased thinking.

1. Everyone has biases.

It's impossible to assume you are not biased if you are human. Our biases are formed from the content we consume, the education and training we receive, our cultures, our born preferences, and our lived experiences. To become aware of these unconscious biases requires self-reflection.

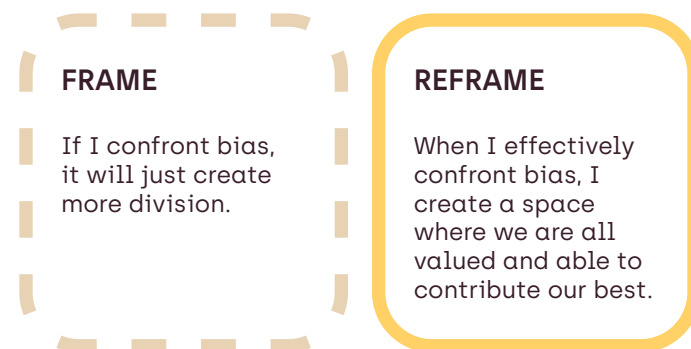


2. Unconscious bias is not conscious bias.

The term "unconscious bias" may have become a little conflated as more people talk about it. The difference is whether you are aware of it. "People might say, 'I have unconscious bias against women in leadership.' Well, once you state that, that is no longer an unconscious bias," Fuller pointed out.

The process of taking it from unconscious to conscious is an important step that comes about through self-reflection and others' input.

3. Avoiding bias doesn't stop division.



Since when has avoiding the elephant in the room made it go away?

It's easy to believe that discussing bias around any identifier, such as race, would create more divisiveness in an office. If we bring it up, it'll create more disunity. But what Fuller points out is that confrontation doesn't create more disunity; it unearths it.

"We might be avoiding conflict, but we're not actually avoiding division," Fuller said.

Organizations need to effectively address bias by approaching it strategically, just like any other business initiative is approached. Ignoring it doesn't mean it disappears.

4. You can't fix your biases on your own.

FRAME

If I understand my biases, I can fix them on my own.

REFRAME

Only when I cultivate meaningful connections can I see past bias and value the people around me.

In the absence of information, our brains tend to create stories for the gaps. That's why in overcoming unconscious biases, it's critical to be intentional in cultivating meaningful connections with other people, Fuller said. These meaningful connections can complicate potential biases in a good way.

Our brains are supercomputers that process 11 million bits of information at a time, Fuller said. In other words, they have a capacity problem, and it's not a good idea to try and follow your gut when it comes to making decisions about people. This is especially true in areas like hiring, where gut-based decisions can drive away the most qualified candidates for the sake of imaginary comfort or so-called "fit." These decisions ultimately come at the expense of the agency.

Try This Today!

Ask yourself: Whose hand is being acknowledged and whose hand is being ignored in your workplace? Think about promotions, hiring, retention, mentorships, sponsorships, career development opportunities and more.

Learn more.

Dig Deeper

We've outlined 19 questions for leaders to gauge if they are serious about racial equity.

Get serious.

Are you creating space for honest conversations about race?

Get started.

Try it Yourself

FRAME

REFRAME

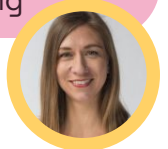
Mapping Career Goals

Where you are today might be completely different from the path you planned five or 10 years ago. Or maybe you're exactly where you thought you'd be. The truth is career paths are rarely linear.

We take twists and turns and learn new experiences along the way. But what if you could take a more intentional approach to mapping your career path and goals? If you're ready to own your career, we have guided exercises to help you on your journey.

What Feelings Have to Do With Creating an Intentional Career

Tips from **Catherine Andrews**, author, teacher, coach and expert in intentional living



How do you know you're struggling in an unintentional career and might be ready to create an intentional one?

Some ideas:

- You've always followed the straight and narrow, and what steps to take next have always been pretty clear — and now they're not.
- You've started to dread going to work.
- You're aware you want something new but have no idea where to start.
- You are beginning to realize you chose your career path based on somebody else's goals or expectations.

So if you're ready to begin the process of intentional career planning, where do you start? In my opinion, you don't start with a resume, networking or acquiring new skills.

You start with *feeling*.

Why are feelings important when it comes to creating an intentional career?

Because we, as humans, think we want things and experiences.

We believe the salary or the title or the corner office or the list of goals is what makes a complete life.

But what we're really chasing in our pursuit of those things or experiences is simple: It's a feeling.

- We hope a salary will make us *feel* secure.
- We hope a promotion will make us *feel* confident.
- We think working in a particular field may make us *feel* respected.
- We believe a particular kind of assignment might make us *feel* freedom.

We must first understand the core feelings we are looking to experience in our day-to-day jobs.

- How do we want to feel when we get to work in the morning? Energized? Calm? Purposeful? Grateful?
- How do we want to feel when we close our laptops at the end of the day? Nourished? Certain? Connected? Grounded?
- What will the greatest feeling you experience during your day-to-day be?

How do we discover those feelings?

I've got a couple of ways forward: a guided meditation and journaling exercise.

Listen to this guided meditation. Afterward, come up with a list of five important "feelings" words — the five words you most want to frequently feel in your intentional career.

Sit with those feelings, and list them out in your journal. Answer these prompts:

- What is my definition of each of those feelings?
- When in my past jobs did I experience any of these feelings?
- What kind of career or job might allow me to experience these feelings more regularly?

I call these feelings we're looking for "core feelings" — the deep, motivating emotions and senses that, whether we know it or not, drive all that we do. And now that you have a sense of your core feelings you want in your job, you're well on your way to beginning to create your intentional career.

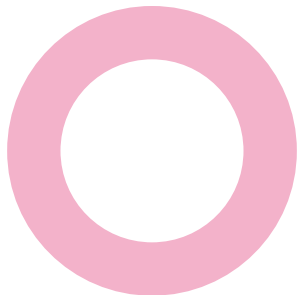
Dig Deeper

Want more insights on what an intentional career means?

Start here.

If you're considering a career change, these three focus areas can help.

Try this.



5 Steps to Own Your Career

Tips from **Dr. Tana Session**, Certified-Level Performance Strategist



Everyone has moments when they feel like the best-kept secret about something they love. During those moments, even the most confident individuals wish the right people would see them make the right moves at the right times.

But what if the respect everyone craves already exists within reach? Certified Executive-Level Performance Strategist Dr. Tana Session believes every human comes equipped with their own brand of success. Session, who is also a best-selling author and award-winning international speaker, argues that reaching one's true potential only requires a few simple steps.

1. Own your power.

Owning your power includes forgiving yourself and others, Session says. Ultimately, abandoning negativity can help people reach even their hardest goals.

"You clear your heart space to let other things into your life. You have to give yourself permission to succeed."

2. Own your truth.

Humans love stories, and the ones people share give shape to their beliefs, goals and lives. More importantly, they can forge valuable connections that eventually become fulfilling relationships.

"Speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we have. It's important to do that in a trusting and authentic way."

3. Own your healing.

Adversity is a given, and no one can escape struggling personally, professionally or both. Realizing this, Session suggests, can help people acknowledge and overcome hurdles that would otherwise slow them down.

"It proves you have a story, and you overcame it. It helps us leave baggage at the door and fly so much easier and lighter."



4. Own your worth.

Knowing what makes them unique can help individuals achieve their deepest desires. For example, those who value their time spend it wisely.

"Never let your worth be determined by the acceptance or rejection of others. If I'm saying 'yes,' I'm saying 'no' to another part of my life."

5. Own your destiny.

For many people, the hardest part of progress is taking control of the future. Session advises that recognizing stagnation is the first step to conquering it.

"What do you want your life to look like? We have to be able to get out of our comfort zone."

Put Everything Together

Armed with Session's five strategies for taking personal ownership, the sky's the limit for public servants, private citizens and everyone in-between.

"Give yourself a challenge," she said. "Push yourself to the limit. It doesn't matter where you start. What matters is where you see yourself going."



Try This Today!

Identify one or two career or personal goals. Next, brainstorm at least five to 10 (more if needed) "bridge steps" that you will need to accomplish that goal. The path between where you are right now and the accomplished goal is not just one step; it's a path built out of dozens of bricks. Ready for the next step? [This article can help.](#)

Dig Deeper

How to overcome imposter syndrome.
[Try this approach.](#)

How one question can change your career trajectory.
[Here's a message for managers.](#)

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It's Time to Rethink Employee Learning in a Virtual World

An interview with Bryna Dash, VP, Business and Government, Blackboard

In-person training has long been the default for many government agencies, but the widespread adoption of remote work in 2020 has changed the dynamics.

While agencies were already using online training platforms to some extent — for self-paced and even blended learning — the shift to online learning dramatically accelerated out of necessity.

However, successful delivery of training in a virtual environment requires more than taking activities that were previously done on-site and lifting and shifting them to an online platform, said Bryna Dash, Vice President of Business and Government at Blackboard.

"Blackboard is focused on the data and identifying anomalies or trends to help agencies improve their courses and programs over time, and even see how they're impacting mission," she said. **"It's not just about ensuring employees complete the course and check the box, but how did that actually improve the mission?"**

Dash shared best practices that agencies can prioritize to ensure a smooth and lasting transition to online learning.

1. Know your goals.

Knowing the desired outcome of your training program is critical. You should create goals to provide clarity on learning objectives, collect employee performance data, and measure it against standards and desired outcomes. For more complex goal sets, you may want to establish connections and relationships between them [goal mapping].

2. Know your transformation strategy.

Once you've identified your goal, you can begin detailing what transformation looks like, Dash said. That includes determining how you need to retrofit the course or upskill instructors to optimize online delivery.

A large part of successful learner outcomes is figuring out the best teaching strategies for your subject matter and for employees. Keeping learners engaged and excited about learning is a combination of course design and collaborative tools. Both the learning content [asynchronous] and collaboration [synchronous] should be seamless for learners.

Also consider the delivery mode. Refactoring or personalizing content for each learner can improve their individual outcomes. For example, micro-learning, audio files, and language translations should be automated — easing the burden for instructors and meeting individual learner needs.

3. Know what's possible.

Not all learning management vendors are created equally. Dash stressed the importance of sussing out your LMS provider to understand the core of what they do and all the offerings they provide.

"We focus on the whole aspect of teaching and learning, not just the technology that supports that," Dash said of Blackboard. That includes supporting agencies with creating goals for learning, a roadmap for migrating training content and improving it, and how to make data-driven decisions to improve training programs.

"Agencies that invest now to meet the needs of their increased remote workforce will be the agencies with best-in-class online learning programs for years to come," Dash said. "These agencies will save money on travel and building space, and will have the rich data sets available from their online tools to enable substantive improvements to their programs over time."

Workforce Culture and Retention

Management guru Peter Drucker declared what many of us have come to know: "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." Think about the strategies you had in place pre-COVID-19. How have they changed? Have you considered what policies and workforce practices are no longer serving you and your colleagues in this new environment?

Understanding the heartbeat of your team, how they're wired and what they're passionate about is key to redefining your strategy and keeping everyone engaged. We share pointers for addressing employee retention in the new normal and how to tap into engagement as a force multiplier.

5 Pointers for Employee Retention in the New Normal

As agencies continue to be resilient and adjust operations, approaches and procedures, it's critical to not forget about your employees.

They are arguably the most valuable asset in weathering these challenges and achieving your mission. Essential employee care means considering five things.

Tips from **Edward Tuorinsky**, an expert in leadership, management consulting and IT services



1. Can we fill empty seats?

If you have unfilled positions that put pressure on other employees or leave pieces of projects undone, now is the perfect time to hire for those vacancies.

- Effective human resource management uses proven business processes, methods and tools to ease the ability of government organizations to hire in as little as two weeks.
- From position description to interviewing to onboarding, a process that works smoothly and quickly allows you to nab great candidates and fulfill needs.

2. Can we connect deeper with our people?

Virtual work is good — some agencies are seeing record levels of productivity. But nothing can replace human connections.

- Managers should try to engage everyone on a personal, human level, removed from staff calls and status updates.
- Inquiring about how things are going or how employees are handling challenges allows managers to suggest personalized forms of self-care, such as flexibility in the workday.

3. Can we create culture without an office?

Remote teams can get a big boost in energy and creativity by engaging with one another. An energized workforce is a successful workforce.

- The task now is to recreate some of that office comradery and culture. Think about team lunches or coworking while connected over Skype or Teams.
- Assign partners to check in with one other, and use chat channels to connect with colleagues.

4. Can we look at our policies with fresh eyes?

What worked before may no longer make sense or be practical for employees working remotely. This extraordinary time is an opportunity to evolve how government works.

Examine your policies and guidelines with fresh eyes and see if more flexibility can be part of your new normal.

- Encourage employees to take time off and establish boundaries for greater work/life balance, which can keep employees happy and productive.
- Even if offices reopen, allowing telecommuting may make more sense now that employees have had months to work out the kinks and managers have seen proof points.

Dig Deeper

Here are eight ways you might be negatively impacting coworkers.
Read these scenarios.

Tired of forced morale-building events?
Try this instead.

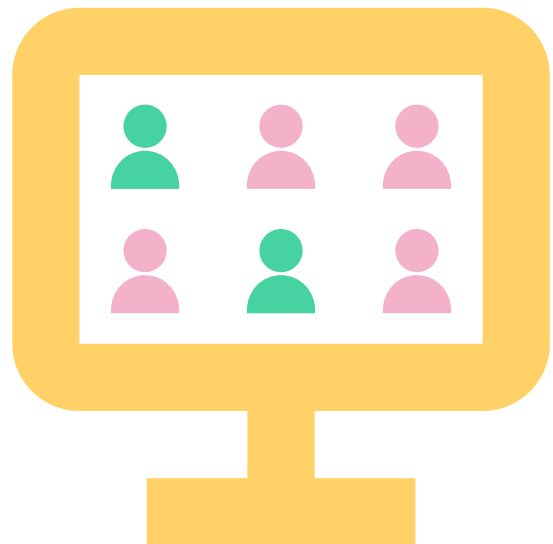
5. Can we move forward?

Your strategic plan may be a mess, but now is not the time to drop into a holding pattern. Reassess your plans and adjust for new realities. Start moving forward by taking small steps.

- This is a prime opportunity to experiment a bit.
- When you try something, analyze what works, what doesn't and why.
- Look at your current state and your desired future state and identify gaps. Be more agile.

Try This Today!

Whether your team is virtual or still meeting in the office, you can start a collective journal where everyone writes a paragraph or two each week with ideas, tips and lessons learned. Review those at team meetings and look for opportunities to embrace new ideas.



Passion: The Engagement Multiplier

Insights from **Steve Wiley**, a certified Executive and Leadership Coach and former GovLoop Featured Contributor



Every government leader should recognize the importance of employee engagement, and look for different tools and techniques to cultivate it. But the most powerful way to engage a workforce is through passion, writes Steve Wiley, a recent GovLoop featured contributor.

Leaders, however, cannot manufacture passion. Sure, you can inspire with a compelling vision and message. But true passion is something different. True passion is something discovered within ourselves. Effective leaders can help us.

Here are five suggestions that leaders can try to engage their colleagues' passion.

Hire for the *why*, not the *what*.

- How often do you draft requirements for an open position that simply detail the skills and responsibilities of the job?
- Do your candidates even consider the underlying mission of your organization? While it's important to engage talented resources, it's more important to engage inspired employees.

Update your hiring processes to emphasize the *why* over the *what*.

- Give preference to the under-qualified candidate who embraces the mission over the qualified candidate who can simply do the job.
- It's often more beneficial to the team to teach an inspired doer, rather than activate a complacent thinker.

Discover the unique passions of your team.

- In many cases, we don't have the luxury to hire colleagues who may be inspired by a shared and compelling mission. That's OK.
- Sometimes, inspiration can simply come from what someone does and how they do it. When we're engaged in work we enjoy, we're more passionate about it.

Align team roles with their unique passions.

- With an enhanced understanding of your colleagues, you're now in a position to better align responsibilities among the team.
- After doing this exercise within a team, team leaders can more effectively distribute the workload. For example, one team member might take on more analytic work that another colleague does not enjoy.
- This gives leaders the chance to assign work to employees who are best-suited for specific tasks and align projects with their passions.

Engage the workforce.

- Continue to prioritize engagement.
- Deliberately move away from measuring productivity solely based on deliverables or tasks.
- Coach and lead your team to understand how passion and effort contribute to the overall quality and commitment of work.

Try This Today!

Aligning employees' roles with their unique passions is a team sport. To get everyone involved, consider working collectively to assign informal job titles as a reminder of what each person loves to do. Some examples include Chief Catalyst of Wellness, Chief Gardener of People and Chief Learning Provocateur.

Dig Deeper

Do you have a culture plan? [Start here.](#)

8 Icebreakers for Virtual Meetings

1. Ask a simple question.

We've all probably done this one before. Sometimes a fun icebreaker can be as simple as asking an intriguing question about your colleagues to get to know them better.

Here are some fun ideas to get started:

- What actor/actress would play you in a biopic of your life?
- If you could choose your age forever, what age would you choose and why?
- What is your most used emoji?
- If you could kill any fashion trend forever, what would it be?
- What is your least favorite food?

2. Show off your work-from-home set up.

Working remotely gives you the opportunity to create your own ideal work environment. So why not show it off? Before the meeting starts, have your colleagues show the team their remote digs.

3. Build a pump-up playlist!

What makes everything more fun? Music, of course! To kick off your meeting, have your team go around the virtual room and share their favorite "pump-up song." Once everyone has shared, build a playlist with all of the songs. Then, send it out to the team to keep them inspired and excited. You could even play it quietly in the background or at the start of your meetings to lift the mood.

4. Play two truths and a lie.

Like a simple question, but with a little more pizzazz. Go around the room and have everybody share two truths and a lie about themselves. The goal is to then have the rest of the team guess which one is the lie. It's fun, gets your brain working and allows you to learn a lot more about your coworkers!

5. Draw your mood.

Let's get creative. Begin your meeting by asking your team to take five minutes to draw, paint or color a picture that represents their current mood and share their creations with the group. Not only does it give you a good feel of how your employees are doing mentally, but it'll stretch those creative muscles to have an effective and productive meeting.

6. Have a new hobby? Show it off!

Being stuck inside has given many of us the opportunity to try out those hobbies we put off or decided we just didn't have time for. So, what have you picked up during quarantine? Have your teammates share their new hobbies! Whether it's painting, knitting, writing or cooking, it'll be exciting to hear what your colleagues have been up to, and perhaps inspiring for others to pick up new hobbies as well.

7. Lead a 5-minute exercise.

Get up and get moving! Chances are, you and your employees have spent most of the day sitting down. So, initiate your meeting by leading a five-minute stretch with your team. This will wake up both your bodies and minds, so your meeting can be as productive as possible.

8. Show your favorite picture in your home.

Whether it's a piece of artwork or a family photo from the beach in 2012, why not show your colleagues what you have on display in your home? It's a fun way to get to know others better and finally get an explanation for that painting that's always behind your coworker in every meeting.



Tips from **Kaitlin Moller**,
Senior Digital Marketing
Analyst at GovLoop

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nextGen

Elevating Success Skills Through Professional Development

An interview with Emily Jarvis, Director of NextGen and Senior Events Manager at GovLoop

Career growth looks different for everyone, but often the path to promotion is closely tied to employees' technical abilities.

For example, if you excel at crunching numbers or software development, you'll likely take on more responsibilities. That often includes leading projects and managing people.

But who prepares pre-managers and new managers for this immense responsibility?

"A lot of training opportunities skew toward technical positions," said Emily Jarvis, Director of NextGen and Senior Events Manager at GovLoop. "But that's only a part of the equation. If you can't get along with your colleagues, if you can't communicate clearly and if you can't manage up or manage down, you're not really developing into a well-rounded government employee."

Jarvis leads the planning and execution of NextGen, a two-day virtual professional development summit for public servants. To better understand government's training needs, her team met with chief human capital officers at all levels.

They shared similar sentiments about the void and need for training that empowers all employees to thrive — managers included.

Jarvis, who prefers the term "success" over "soft" skills, shared tips for elevating success skills through professional development and how NextGen can help.

Use Executive Core Qualifications to track professional development

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has a system to help leaders learn and grow in a structured and measurable manner. For members of the Senior Executive Service (SES), OPM has established five Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) that cover the various areas that SES members need to be competent in to lead effectively.

These areas are: Leading Change, Leading People, Results Driven, Business Acumen and Building Coalitions. All NextGen workshops and sessions are intentionally mapped to ECQs to help attendees gain relevant, resume-enhancing experience and to help them effectively communicate their growth. Attendees can also earn a continuing professional education credit for each of the 24 NextGen sessions.

But what if you don't aspire to be a senior executive, and what if you don't work in the federal government?

"Whether you're looking to be an SES or not, by aligning all of your training and making sure that you have different training opportunities in all of those categories, you will propel your career forward."

Tap into the power of community to help you grow

A community is essential for developing in your career and for meeting mission objectives. That's especially true now that many employees are remote, which can make community building difficult.

"We're all learning and growing together," Jarvis said. She endearingly refers to this community as NextGen Nation, which includes summit attendees and anyone who joins online trainings and book club events throughout the year, downloads content and engages via social media.

"The opportunity to bring together a diverse set of employees who can share best practices, insights and stories is critical," Jarvis said. "That focus is at the heart of NextGen — helping employees map their career path and growth together."

Apply What You Learn to Current [HR] Events

What good is learning professional development tips if we don't intend to apply them?

In this section, we've highlighted recent developments that will impact the government workforce. As you read, think of ways you can apply the insights you've gained in this guide to help you understand, communicate and adapt to these changes.

You can use the change management tools on [Page 12](#) to talk through the implications of these changes with your team, and revisit the improving communication section on [Page 18](#) for ways to frame questions and get feedback.

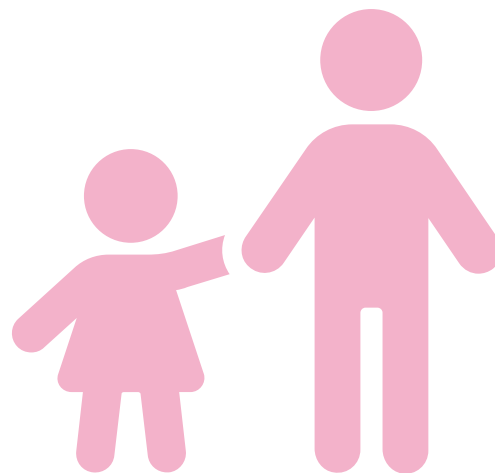
Paid Parental Leave for Feds

In December 2019, Congress passed and the president signed the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2020, which included a section enacting [paid leave for federal civilian personnel](#). The law provides federal employees with up to 12 weeks of paid time off within 12 months after the birth, adoption or foster placement of a child, in addition to any earned paid vacation or sick time. But, as is so often the case with government employee benefits, it's not as simple as that summary sounds.

Check out these [five misconceptions](#) about paid leave.

The new guidelines went into effect Oct. 1, and we've outlined some of the main points included in the paid leave interim final rule that OPM released in August.

Love Rutledge, the host of the FedUpward Podcast [FedUpward.com] and a former GovLoop Featured Contributor, shared [several tips](#) for expectant feds, based on her personal experience of being a first-time mom in 2015.



Prioritizing Job Skills Over College Degrees

A [recent executive order](#) intends to change how federal agencies hire people for government jobs.

The [“Executive Order on Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates”](#) issued on June 26, prioritizes skills over college degrees as qualification for certain federal government jobs. It states:

This order directs important, merit-based reforms that will replace degree-based hiring with skills- and competency-based hiring and will hold the civil service to a higher standard — ensuring that the individuals most capable of performing the roles and responsibilities required of a specific position are those hired for that position — that is more in line with the principles on which the merit system rests.

OPM [released guidance](#) on July 31 directing agencies on how to implement the executive order. Whether you're in HR or not, it's vital that all employees understand the implications of this executive order. What does this mean for the workforce and their current pay scale or qualifications for particular roles?



State and Local Employees See Social Media Recruiting Soar

In this year's [State and Local Government Workforce Survey](#), 60% of respondents said social media was most successful in reaching qualified candidates. The percentage has increased considerably from 29% in 2015.

For example, Maine's Office of Information Technology and the Vermont Agency of Digital Services post job openings via Twitter. The use of job fairs is also increasing in prevalence, up from 8% to 26%.

Newsletter advertising, on the other hand, has decreased from 16% to 7%. An interesting note: Seven percent of respondents said they used artificial intelligence for screening or online interviewing, which was a new category in the survey.

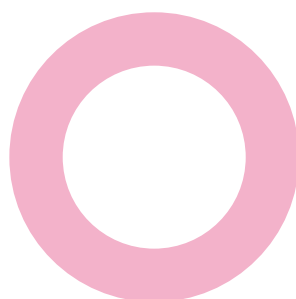
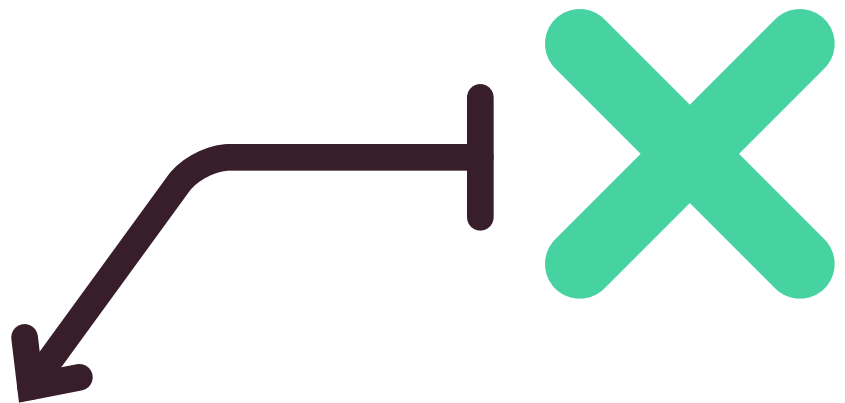
What's Next for You?

We've covered a lot of ground in this guide, and we hope you've found these resources helpful. Try to apply what you've learned as soon as possible, even if it's initially only a small step, and make sure to share what you've learned with a colleague or two.

This resource is one of the many ways you can connect with us at GovLoop and continue your learning journey.

- We invite you to join our free [online trainings](#).
- Take one of our self-paced [learning modules](#).
- Download other [resources](#) that cover pertinent issues for the government community.

If there are professional development topics you'd like to see us cover in the future, let us know! Or maybe you have expertise to share with the community. Either way, we'd love to hear from you.



About GovLoop

GovLoop's mission is to inspire public sector professionals by serving as the knowledge network for government. GovLoop connects more than 300,000 members, fostering cross-government collaboration, solving common problems and advancing government careers. GovLoop is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with a team of dedicated professionals who share a commitment to the public sector.

For more information about this report, please reach out to info@govloop.com.

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Thank You

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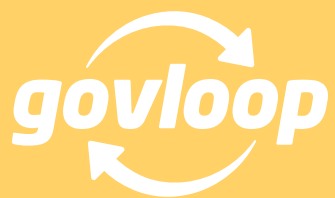
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