



EXECUTIVE VISION

A Publication of the Georgia Merit System
Volume 3, Number 3 August 15, 2000

A Forum for Georgia Government Leaders

calendar

SOUTHEAST HUMAN RESOURCE CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION

October 4-5
Cobb Galleria Center, Atlanta
www.shrmailanta.org

NATIONAL CYBER ETHICS CONFERENCE: TEACHING RESPONSIBLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

October 6-8
Marymount University
Arlington, Virginia
Contact Dr. Cherie A. Geide
703-526-6829

COUNCIL FOR STATE PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION Fall Conference

Oct. 30 – Nov. 1 Augusta
Contact Margaret Nixon
404-656-7560

VIEWPOINT IN THIS ISSUE

Electronic marketplace raises opportunity and expectations for first-rate service from state government.

Phoenix HRMS Query Capability Can Aid Workforce, Budget Planning

So far, things have gone pretty much according to plan for the Phoenix Human Resources Management System (HRMS). Pat Martin, manager of the Phoenix HRMS development team, said there have been no major glitches. Employees are getting their paychecks. Everyone got a W2 form last January. And, she said the first interface between Flexible Benefits and Phoenix during this year's open enrollment was a success.

With these milestones behind them, everyone involved with the new system expects the October 2000 salary increases to go smoothly. Phoenix HRMS is stable and working as everyone hoped it would, which Ms. Martin says allows them to go on to the next phase of implementation.

"In this phase agencies can begin using the system's query capability," she said. "Several queries are ready for use now, and with input from agencies, we expect to develop a range of queries that will meet most agency needs."

It's this phase of the HRMS that may be of considerable interest to agency managers and personnel directors, because it offers access to much more workforce data than the old system did. Being able to quickly and easily find out what percentage of your workforce is likely to retire soon, or compare turnover rates among divisions and work units, or analyze your agency's distribution of performance ratings compared with the external labor market is becoming increasingly valuable as marketplace dynamics put more pressure on workforce planning.

Ms. Martin said queries initially will

be Run Only and will provide predefined information. For example, she said a predefined query might provide an alphabetical list of employees terminated during a given period of time. Agency users could then resort the query results in Excel to show other more specific details, such as how many of those terminated were classified and how many were unclassified.

Besides using predefined queries, she said that agencies will be able later to create their own customized queries. A customized query, for example, might show employees of an agency who have been terminated for failing random drug testing. "Training for qualified agency personnel on how to write customized queries will be available in the late fall or early winter," Ms. Martin said.

Generally, agencies will be looking at or querying information about their own employees, and the Merit System will run the reports that analyze data about the workforce statewide. The Merit System will also continue to answer agencies' requests for data that helps them in such areas as workforce planning and budgeting.

And finally, to provide extra insurance that the October salary increases do go smoothly, the Phoenix team and the Merit System have developed a standalone computer program called Salary Planning Tool that agencies can use to calculate and analyze the cost of salary increases.

Salary Planning Tool training for agency personnel was offered in July. A user's guide is also available on the Phoenix Web site (www3.state.ga.us/departments/doas/phoenix). ♦

viewpoint

Electronic Marketplace, An Opportunity For First-Rate Service

By Marjorie H. Young, Commissioner
Georgia Merit System



Each day that goes by leaves our world more transformed by computer technology. As the marketplace changes from a paper-based to an electronic-based medium, new demands are being

placed on government to make its services and information accessible to constituents through e-commerce. Because demand for online access to government services can only escalate, the Merit System is committed to using modern technology in a way that facilitates the first-rate service we want to provide for all our customers.

To provide the greatest benefit to job seekers, to employees, and to agency managers and agency human resources personnel throughout state government, our staff is constantly upgrading and improving the Merit System Web site's content and functions. Perhaps the most significantly beneficial recent upgrades have been the creation of the state's job vacancy posting site (called *The JobSite*) in February 1999 and its expansion in January 2000 to include online application for state employment. Both applicants and agencies have embraced these services and are using them as vigorously as like services are used in the business sector.

Early this year the Merit System also began offering direct deposit for reimbursement of Flexible Benefits Spending Accounts. Now, instead of the employee having to wait for a paper check for reimbursement of a health care or dependent care spending account claim, reimbursements are electronically transferred to an employee's bank account in about three days. Although electronic funds transfer is not new technology, being able to offer it provides the prompt service that employees who benefit from Spending Accounts want.

The Merit System is in the process of transferring such paper- and labor-intensive processes as the annual Flexible Benefits

Internet Recruiting Proving Beneficial for Agencies

Let up in the tight labor market does not appear to be just around the corner. With no relief in sight, most recruiters are thanking their lucky stars for the Internet. Without this additional tool for advertising jobs, filling positions would be more difficult than it is. Just a few years ago high-tech industry workers were the most likely users of the Internet for job hunting. But today a far greater range of job hunters—whatever their level of work experience, training, and education—include searching the Internet in their tactics for finding a job.

Use of *The JobSite*, the state's Internet job vacancy posting site, has increased significantly each month since it opened in February 1999. *The JobSite* now averages 500,000 visits a month. And, on any given day state agencies have about 400 job openings posted.

To ensure that job hunters do not miss job vacancy announcements, *The JobSite* has a Notify Me feature, which automatically notifies subscribers by e-mail when new jobs are posted. Almost 5,600 job hunters are currently signed up for the Notify Me feature.

Online application was added to *The JobSite* in January 2000, and applications submitted online have increased each month since then. By June 30

more than 20,300 individual applicants had created accounts online. Approximately 63,300 applications (both online and paper) were received for jobs posted on *The JobSite* between January 2000 and June 30, 2000. While it appears that online application is becoming increasingly acceptable, paper applications can still be submitted.

The Department of Transportation's advertisement for a general trades foreman last January coincided with the start up of online application. Susan Bragg, a personnel analyst in DOT's Maintenance Personnel Office, said that among the applications they received for the vacancy, four were submitted online.

Ms. Bragg said that while their personnel office has advertised several other jobs on *The JobSite* since then, most of their jobs, such as mechanic and equipment operator, are recruited continuously. As applications for these jobs come in, the Merit System rates them and adds them on a daily basis to *The JobSite*'s lists of available applicants.

"It's a real timesaver for us to be able to go online and get the most up-to-date list when we have an opening we need to fill," she said.

Becky Derrick, like Ms. Bragg, appreciates the quick and easy access

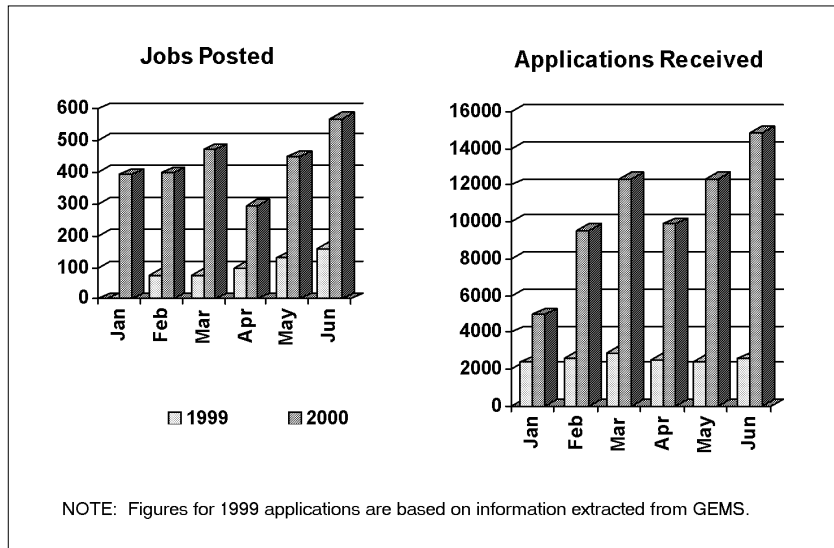
Open Enrollment, the Charitable Contributions Program, and the Employee Suggestion Program to Internet-based systems. Automating these processes will save the state considerable money and make enrollment and participation more convenient for most employees.

Other Merit System staff is in the final stages of developing a time and leave management computer program for use by employees. To save agencies data entry steps, the program has been designed so that the records the employee keeps ultimately can be linked to the Phoenix Human Resources Management System.

Certainly the Internet has shifted the way the world conducts business, but the Internet

may yet prove to be equally effective as a tool for education and training. The acceptance of online learning is growing, and as the methods and techniques for online training evolve to utilize more fully the capacities of Internet technology, educational possibilities will be infinite. Our Training Division is exploring those possibilities and looking for the ways to adapt them to the training needs of state employees.

The Merit System is directing vigorous effort toward capturing the power and potential of the Internet to deliver first-rate services and information. We are committed to meeting the demands of the new electronic marketplace and the new expectations of employees, applicants, and agencies.



Applicants for state employment are increasingly using online application, which became available in January 2000, to apply for jobs posted on *The JobSite*.

to applications that the online system provides. "We hire about 20 new full-time and part-time employees each month, and any time we can save in the application process is valuable," Ms. Derrick said. As human resources program manager for Advantage Behavioral Health Systems (formerly the NE Georgia Center Community Service Board), she has a routine that capitalizes on the immediacy of *The JobSite*.

"Every Wednesday morning I download all the applications that are in the system for the jobs we advertised the previous week. Then, on Wednesday afternoon or Thursday morning I post all our new job vacancies to *The JobSite*, including our part-time jobs," she said.

Because advertising on *The JobSite* helps put a job vacancy before the broadest audience, it is not surprising that agencies are receiving applications from out of state. "About 15 percent of our applications are from out of state. These are usually for our licensed professional and paraprofessional positions," Ms. Derrick said.

The recruiting range of the Internet has also been a boon for the Gwinnett County Department of Family and Children Services. Lucy Smith, eco-

nomics support program director for the agency, said she has already hired one applicant from Virginia and is happy to see the out-of-state applications coming in.

"Being an urban county, we have a hard time competing in the local job market. The Internet has greatly expanded the quantity and quality of our applicants," she said. "We are getting more applicants with advanced degrees, and having more and better qualified people to pick from allows us the luxury of hiring people we think will stay."

Ms. Smith said she pushed for Internet recruiting for her agency after learning of another county's success with *The JobSite*. "With the recruitment system we used before the Internet, the jobs we announced over this past four-day July 4th holiday would have been in closed offices for four days with no one to see them. The Internet is constantly visible, which makes recruiting much more efficient. We can advertise for a shorter period of time and still get lots of applicants, she said."

Posting job vacancies on *The JobSite* is available to all agencies at no charge, but each agency user must preregister. See <http://TheJobSite.org> for more information.

newsbriefs

◆ In a unanimous ruling in June, the **Supreme Court decided that workers can win employment discrimination suits without direct proof of discriminatory intent.** With the Court's lessening the burden of proof for the plaintiff employee, it may be enough to show that the employee was in a protected class (race, sex, age) and there is a reason to believe that he or she was discriminated against. While employment law experts do not expect the number of discrimination cases to increase substantially, they do predict that more cases will go to trial and settlement values will go up. See <http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/99-536.ZS.html>. See also Age Discrimination in Employment Act: <http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/29/ch14.html>.

◆ Almost three quarters of the **major companies in the U.S. record and review employees' communications on the job,** according the American Management Association's (AMA) annual electronic monitoring survey. That's twice as many as in AMA's first monitoring survey in 1997. This year, for the first time, the AMA asked employers whether they keep track of employees' Internet connections, and a full 54 percent of the 2,100 respondents said they do. Thirty-eight percent said they monitor e-mail, up from 15 percent in 1997. Only 14 percent reviewed computer files in 1997; now 31 percent do. Fifty-five percent of respondents use blocking software to prevent unauthorized or inappropriate telephone connections, and 29 percent similarly block Internet connections. AMA also found that the larger the company, the more likely it is to monitor employee communications. See www.amanet.org/pdfs/WT2EMS.pdf.

◆ More than **38 percent of job applicants tested** for basic skills by U.S. corporations in 1999 **lacked the necessary reading, writing, and math skills** for the jobs they sought, according to the 2000 American Management Association survey on workplace testing. Forty-three percent of the 2,133 major companies surveyed said they test for basic skills. Large firms are more likely to test than small ones, and manufacturers tend to test more often than service providers do. Of the companies that test, 85 percent say they do not hire skills-deficient applicants. Only five percent said they would hire skills-deficient applicants and then offer them training. See www.amanet.org/research/pdfs/psych.pdf.



Violence in the Workplace on the Increase

Violent incidents in the workplace increased by almost 19 percent from 1996 to 1999, according to a Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) survey of 3,000 U.S. businesses in July 1999. Approximately 57 percent of respondents said violence had occurred in their organizations during the past three years, compared to the 48 percent response in early 1996.

While the stereotype of workplace violence is that of an aggrieved employee seeking revenge on a former supervisor, in reality almost half of the incidents reported occurred among coworkers. Violence aimed at supervisors by current employees accounted for only eight percent of the incidents, and acts directed toward supervisors by former employees made up only two percent of the cases.

Two percent of violent incidents involved shootings, stabbings or other

assaults that caused serious injury or death. Most incidents involved verbal threats, pushing and shoving, and fistfights.

Although personality conflicts are still the biggest factor behind workplace violence (55 percent in 1999 compared to 62 percent in 1996), family, marital, and personal relationship problems are closing in. Thirty-six percent of respondents cited relationship problems as the cause in 1999, up from 27 percent. And, in 1999 nearly 25 percent reported work-related stress and emotional or mental illness as the cause of workplace violence.

To help human resource professionals and managers prevent workplace violence, the SHRM survey report includes several recommendations:

- Ensure that time and effort are devoted to a quality screening and pre-hiring process to identify high-

risk applicants. Be diligent in checking references and in carrying out criminal background checks.

- Continuously review the effectiveness of the goal-setting and review process to provide for clarity, fairness and responsiveness to issues. Frequently this is where the first warning signs for violent behavior surface. Respond early to employees who demonstrate erratic or anti-social behavior.
- Create and foster effective two-way communications and respect. Reinforce an open and respectful culture by strongly supporting the use of employee assistance programs, wellness programs, and community resources.

The SHRM survey report is available by calling 1-800-444-5006 or visiting www.shrm.org/shrmstore.

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 Published quarterly by
 the Georgia Merit System

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