

**STRATEGY
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DOD AUDIT ORGANIZATIONS: THE RECRUITING CHALLENGE

BY

JOYCE MORROW

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

DOD AUDIT ORGANIZATIONS: THE RECRUITING CHALLENGE

by

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ABSTRACT

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As the United States enters the new millennium with a booming economy and unemployment at record lows, Department of Defense (DOD) audit organizations face a daunting recruiting challenge. Employers no longer have the luxury of sorting through multiple applications and selecting only the best and brightest. It is now an employee's market. Now employers need to be more aggressive and creative in their search for employees. While the private sector can use virtually any incentive to attract quality college graduates, recruiters for the federal workforce must work creatively within some fairly restrictive limitations. This study describes the challenges DOD audit organizations face. It offers techniques that audit organizations can use to enhance their recruiting programs.

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THESIS

As the United States enters the new millennium with a booming economy and unemployment at record lows, Department of Defense (DOD) audit organizations face a daunting recruiting challenge. Employers no longer have the luxury of sorting through multiple applications and selecting only the best and brightest. It is now an employee's market. Now employers need to be more aggressive and creative in their search for employees. While the private sector can use virtually any incentive to attract quality college graduates, recruiters for the federal workforce must work creatively within some fairly restrictive limitations.¹

ORGANIZATION OF PAPER

This study discusses the challenges DOD audit organizations face in recruiting college students. It offers techniques that audit organizations can use to enhance their recruiting programs. It begins with a brief look at the recruiting challenges organizations face and current efforts to meet these challenges. Following an assessment of the current job market, it reviews practices used by private sector companies to identify and develop entry-level employees. Then it discusses constraints associated with recruiting for federal employment. Following a discussion of how recent college graduates view federal employment, it then identifies factors that have prompted recent graduates to accept positions in DOD audit organizations. This

analysis then suggests techniques audit organizations should consider in developing recruiting strategies. The study concludes with recommendations for institutionalizing these strategies.

This study is offered from the perspective of a career DOD employee, serving in the U.S. Army Audit Agency. Thus the study benefits from examples, data, and surveys readily available to an Agency professional.

SCOPE OF RECRUTNIG EFFORT

The federal government employs about 2.8 million civilian workers. Approximately 750,000 of them work for DOD.² A small but vital group of these DOD civilians are auditors.

Since the early 1990s DOD has reduced its workforce.³ Despite these reductions, DOD audit organizations need to recruit and hire auditors annually. Over the next few months, DOD audit organizations need to hire over 150 auditors to sustain the workforce to carry out their missions.⁴ This is not an easy task. Consider the following challenges and current initiatives to meet these challenges:

- The DOD Inspector General (DODIG) seeks to hire about 100 auditors this summer. This number is significantly higher than normal because the IG recently received authority to hire additional personnel to conduct financial audits required by law. DODIG's program manager for recruiting said their biggest challenge is fierce competition in a seller's market. In an attempt to be more competitive with the private sector, DODIG recently began offering signing bonuses. DODIG is sending recruiters to over 50 campuses and to about 13 job fairs to reach potential candidates. Unfortunately, spring is not the best time of year for

recruiting new college graduates. By this time most graduating seniors already have jobs⁵, especially the more talented candidates.

- The U.S. Army Audit Agency seeks to hire at least 50 new auditors.⁶ Over the last couple of years the Agency has accelerated its recruiting efforts and continues to look for new and innovative ways to reach more candidates.⁷ The Agency recently listed its job openings on the Internet through Jobtrak.⁸ They also mailed letters to over 1,300 students urging them to apply for Agency positions.⁹
- Air Force Audit Agency is currently undergoing a drawdown, so it has only about 10 entry-level auditor positions to fill. Like DODIG, the Air Force Audit Agency sees its biggest challenge coming from private industry. They report that starting salaries in the private sector are about \$10,000 more than their top salary (GS-7) for an entry-level employee. Air Force Audit Agency tries to recruit college students into its Co-op Program. After working for two to four semesters with the Agency, successful student interns are offered permanent positions.¹⁰
- Naval Audit Service hires between 16 and 32 interns each year through the Navy's Financial Management Trainee Program. The Service immediately enrolls them in the Navy's Audit Intern School.¹¹ A representative of the Naval Audit Service said it is becoming more and more difficult to attract college students to their program.¹²

Given the tight labor market, DOD audit organizations need to be more aggressive and innovative in their approach to recruiting.

CHANGES IN JOB MARKET

The job market has changed dramatically over the past few years. No longer do employers have the luxury of sorting through stacks of applications and selecting only the best and brightest. It is now a seller's market: Graduates can shop around for employers, comparing pay and benefits packages and working conditions, and then they choose organizations that best fit

their desires and lifestyles.¹³ As one personnel analyst has observed:

It starts to sound like a broken record—the best job market in a quarter century, starting salaries that look like a misprint, signing bonuses, the opportunity to do challenging work right out of the starting blocks.¹⁴

Two recent economic trends account for this broken record: First, the U.S. economy has been in a sustained growth pattern for the past several years, creating more jobs every day. The national unemployment rate of 4.3 percent is at a 28-year low.¹⁵ Second, there are simply fewer people available to fill the jobs that have been created. After peaking at about 4 million births per year in the baby boom years (1946-1964), by the 1970s the rate was only about 3.1 million per year.¹⁶ So now employers must woo potential employees. It's a new ball game.

RECRUITING PRACTICES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Companies desperate for skilled employees are offering lucrative pay packages loaded with big salaries and benefits, stock options, signing bonuses—even free vacations. Demand is so strong that employers are engaged in bidding wars for the best students.¹⁷

Companies in private industry are investing more resources and becoming more innovative in their efforts to attract graduating seniors. They are contacting and developing relationships with students earlier in their college years,

creating a more worker-friendly atmosphere, and lavishing them with gifts and incentives.¹⁸

Organizations that wait until students are seniors to recruit them are taking a risk in today's market. There are fewer uncommitted college seniors than in the past. Companies have found that if they can capture students' interest early in their academic years, they stand a better chance of getting the students to come to work for them upon graduation. By the time they are ready for their senior year of college, many students already have a firm and lucrative offer of employment. At the accounting firm of Arthur Andersen, for example, college juniors are brought to the firm's home office in Chicago for paid summer internships. By the end of the summer, before they return to school for their senior year, 90 percent of the interns are offered full-time positions starting at more than \$43,000 per year upon graduation.¹⁹

Prospective employers are also going to great lengths to create a worker-friendly atmosphere where employees can be more casual—where work can be fun. Even some of the most stereotypically traditional corporations, like International Business Machines (IBM) and Arthur Andersen, are loosening up in an effort to attract college graduates. Some aggressive companies are even recruiting students at their spring vacation playgrounds in Florida. At one job fair in Daytona Beach in 1998, 45 large, well-known corporations participated. The recruiters didn't realistically expect to make job offers.

Rather, they viewed the trip as an opportunity to make contact with the students on their own turf, and show that the corporate workplace is changing:

While finding qualified workers is a major reason companies are here, it's not the only one. In today's family-friendly hip work world, lifestyle considerations have catapulted to the forefront of worker concerns. Thus, it's incumbent upon companies to show people they can be laid back and cool.²⁰

Casual dress, flexible work schedules, and other amenities that make the workplace more relaxed are becoming more common, because that is what it takes to attract today's college graduate.

Once a company connects with a student and convinces the student that working for them would be satisfying, there is still no guarantee that the student will accept their offer. It is quite possible that other competing organizations have been pursuing the same student. Then it becomes something of a bidding war for the student.²¹ In addition to guaranteed job offers before students begin their senior years, private sector companies use several other tactics to attract employees:

- One company planned to take 250 summer interns on a 4-day Caribbean cruise.²²
- Another treats students to dinner and theater, corporate tailgate parties, and tickets to sporting events.²³
- Some companies send students gift baskets during final exams.²⁴
- Other companies agree to pay off student loans.²⁵

With the pressure mounting to get to the students first and to develop a relationship that will continue until the students

graduate, campus recruiting is clearly a high priority issue among private industry executives.²⁶

RECRUITING IN THE FEDERAL SECTOR

As federal agencies, DOD audit organizations are required to follow some fairly strict guidelines when it comes to recruiting and making job offers to students. Such incentives as free meals, event tickets, or paid vacations are generally not permitted. Salary offers are fixed by pay scales, with little or no flexibility to adjust pay to compete with private industry salaries. Perhaps most limiting of all, campus recruiters cannot make job offer commitments. Rather, interested students must go through a relatively rigorous job application process—with no guarantee that they will even be considered for a specific job.²⁷ So federal recruiters do not have the freedom to compete head-on with corporate recruiters.

Because they are funded with taxpayer money, federal agencies don't have the resources available to pay for the events and other incentives that the private organizations have. And, even if funds were available, regulations prohibit such incentives. Therefore, federal agencies must rely on other means to attract applicants. Historically, the intangible benefits of federal service (job security, the patriotic appeal of public service)—along with tangible benefits (good retirement program, low cost health and life insurance)—have helped bridge the pay

gap between public and private sector employment. However, as the pool of available college graduates shrinks, the stakes are raised. Federal agencies simply have not been able to keep pace, constrained as they are by existing regulations.²⁸ In an extreme example of these restrictions, U.S. Army Audit Agency campus recruiters are limited in distributing give-away items (such as plastic cups and highlighters costing less than \$1) to only those students who sign a contact roster. Recipients must then be contacted with a follow-up call to discuss their continued interest in working for the Agency. In addition, the recruiter must maintain documentation to account for the give-away items and prove that follow-up calls were made to all recipients.²⁹

Federal regulations also limit the salary that can be offered to a new employee. Federal pay scales and the student's grade point average determine the starting salaries for new auditors. College graduates with no prior experience may be hired as a GS-5 or GS-7, depending on their grade point average. The current salary in the Washington-Baltimore area is \$22,208 for a GS-5 and \$27,508 for a GS-7.³⁰ To qualify for the higher starting salary, the student must graduate with a 3.5 or better grade point average in accounting, or a 3.0 or better grade point average overall.³¹ With major accounting firms offering starting salaries in excess of \$40,000,³² federal starting salaries are lagging far behind those offered by private companies.

If a student remains interested in a federal career and the starting salary is acceptable, the next hurdle for the campus

recruiter and human resource team is to guide the student through the federal hiring process. Most federal agencies do not have the authority to make direct job offers to the students. Therefore, the campus recruiter cannot make an on-the-spot job offer, no matter how promising the candidate might be. Instead, the student must apply for the job through the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and compete with anyone who applies for the same job. The OPM system uses a rating and ranking process that gives preferential weight to military veterans and requires that candidates be interviewed and hired in rating sequence according to the "rule of three." The hiring agency must select one of the top three candidates on the list (even if none of them were previously recruited), and candidates with veterans' preference points cannot be bypassed to select a candidate that doesn't have the preference points.³³ This means that student recruits may end up on a list with several unrecruited candidates in front of them, then the hiring organization may be forced to select one or more of those candidates in order to reach the recruit. Because of this process, campus recruiters cannot make any promises to the student that they will be offered a position when they apply.³⁴ This bureaucratic process puts the federal recruiter at an extreme disadvantage in the current market.

PERCEPTIONS AND MOTIVATION

Another challenge federal recruiters face is overcoming students' negative perceptions of federal employment. Most accounting majors are programmed by college professors and career counselors to seek employment with big accounting firms.³⁵ Few encourage accounting majors to seek careers in public service. Therefore, recruiters for DOD audit agencies must work doubly hard to overcome this mindset.

HOW COLLEGE STUDENTS VIEW FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT

At one time a federal job was considered a "good job." Today, fewer and fewer college students view federal employment as a good career choice. Paul Light, in a January 1999 Government Executive column, observed that:

The past 20 years of downsizing and bureaucrat bashing have taken a toll on young Americans. Even if they believed that government was interested in hiring them, they would still be reluctant to serve. They have come to believe that government is a vast wasteland of dead-end jobs and mind-numbing bureaucracy.³⁶

Similarly, the General Accounting Office (GAO) offered gloomy conclusions in its 1994 report Federal Employment: How Government Jobs are Viewed on Some College Campuses. GAO found that, as a rule, placement officials they interviewed said graduates of their schools had little interest in working for the federal government. The officials identified several reasons for the graduates' attitudes. The reasons mentioned most frequently were:

- Low, noncompetitive starting salary.
- Burdensome and lengthy hiring process.
- Inadequate and ineffective federal recruiting.
- Poor image of government work and employees.
- Lack of information on federal job availability.

College graduates responding to the survey tended to confirm placement officials' views. Although results varied somewhat by school, the respondents generally believed that the factors important to them in selecting an employer were more often present in nonfederal employment than in federal employment.³⁷

The Office of Personnel Management subsequently initiated actions to address these concerns.³⁸ But the hiring process remains cumbersome. The current administration continues to talk about reforming the Civil Service System. A February 1999 discussion paper suggested dozens of potential changes. Among them are proposals to increase an agency's flexibility in hiring and with career intern programs.³⁹

More flexibility in the federal system would certainly be welcome, but for now federal recruiters are faced with the challenge of working within the current system.

MOTIVATION FOR WORKING FOR A DEFENSE AUDIT ORGANIZATION

Knowing what motivates the people you want to reach is critical to designing a successful recruiting strategy. The things that motivated our parents and the things that motivate us are very different from the things that motivate young people just graduating from college and entering the professional workforce.

The "Generation X" age group (Americans born between 1963 and 1977)⁴⁰ comes to the workplace with different expectations and experiences. Consider this observation in a February 1999 article in the Boston Globe:

Just as baby boomers were shaped by Watergate and the Vietnam War, the generation that ranges from their 20s up to mid-30s has been influenced by this era of technology, television, day care, divorce, and downsizing. As a result of growing up in a fast paced world, these young adults are said to be even more skeptical and impatient with the status quo than previous generations. Often reared as latchkey children, they're fiercely independent, yet needy—working well alone but requiring liberal doses of feedback. Disgusted by their parents' workaholicism, they defend their right to a full life outside work.⁴¹

Recruiters must acknowledge that life has changed. The current generation's expectations are quite different from those the recruiters brought to the workplace.

In September 1998, the U.S. Army Audit Agency surveyed its employees. One of the questions it asked was "What is your primary motivation for working for the U.S. Army Audit Agency?" It is interesting to note that the motivation for new hires (0 to 1 year with Agency) was different from that of those who had been with the Agency longer. The following table summarizes the results:

Table 1: Motivation for Working for DOD Audit Agency

Motivating Factor	Years with Agency				
	0 to 1	2 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 20	Over 20
Income	14%	43%	37%	39%	47%
Job Security	18%	9%	14%	18%	7%
Overseas Assignment	5%	0%	2%	1%	1%
Challenging Work	28%	20%	25%	20%	22%
Job Satisfaction	26%	20%	17%	17%	15%
Travel	9%	3%	3%	2%	3%
Public Service	0%	5%	2%	3%	4%
# Responding	43	56	63	93	75

Most common answers are shaded.

Challenging work and job satisfaction were the reasons given most often by new hires (0 to 1 year with Agency). It is also interesting to note that travel and opportunity to work overseas were rated higher by new hires than by any other group of employees. For auditors with two or more years of experience, income was their primary motivation. The second most common response was challenging work.⁴² Based on these results, a recruiting brochure or advertisement that stresses challenging work and job satisfaction is more likely to draw interest than one that focuses on public service. Again, knowing what motivates the people you want to reach is key.

SURVEY OF NEWLY HIRED AUDITORS

For this study, a questionnaire was sent to all entry-level auditors that were hired by the U.S. Army Audit Agency from 1 March to 31 December 1998.⁴³ One of the questions on the survey asked "What made you decide to work for the Army Audit Agency?" Responses varied, but the following responses recurred:

- Challenging work.
- Opportunity to travel and work overseas.
- Promotion potential.
- Enticing training opportunities.⁴⁴

These are all things audit agencies can, and do, offer their employees. Recruiters, recruiting brochures, and advertisements can highlight these features to attract individuals to DOD audit organizations.

DEVELOPING A RECRUITING PROGRAM

Given the perceptions many young people have of federal employment and their motivation for work, what can DOD audit organizations do to attract quality young people to work for them?

First, an audit organization needs to determine the level of commitment and funding it is willing to dedicate to recruiting efforts. It is also important for the organization to have a general estimate of the number of people it will need to hire. This estimate, of course, should include projected losses as well as current vacancies. Two DOD audit organizations said they are losing an average of about 8 auditors per month—or nearly 100 auditors per year.⁴⁵ So they must plan to recruit many replacements, as well as candidates for new positions. To be effective, the recruiting program must tackle each of the negative perceptions reported by GAO.

SALARIES

The GAO report identified "low, noncompetitive starting salary" as one of the major reasons college students are not interested in working for the federal government.⁴⁶ As previously mentioned, federal regulations limit the grade and salary organizations can offer new employees. The long-term solution is to get these restrictions lifted or at least relaxed. Although federal regulations are slow to change, the current administration seems receptive to change some of the rules. A February 1999 discussion paper on civil service reform states:

Agencies need tools to respond quickly to critical hiring needs (e.g. CFO occupations). Competing employers are able to make offers to high-quality candidates in shortage and critical need occupations before agencies can.⁴⁷

DOD must inform lawmakers of the challenges it is facing hiring auditors. If they are aware of the challenges, they are more likely to make the changes needed to give federal agencies more flexibility.

In the short term, however, agencies may be able to address the pay issue by starting new employees at a higher step on the pay scale. Within each pay grade there are 10 steps, with progressively higher pay for each step. A GS-7, step 1, in the Washington-Baltimore area makes \$27,508. Each successive step adds about \$1,000 to an employee's salary, so that a GS-7, step 10 makes \$35,760 per year.⁴⁸ A short-term solution may be to start new employees at a higher step. Such initiative will

likely require special approvals, but it may be worthwhile for agencies to explore.

Another way to raise a recruit's income for the first year is to do what DODIG is doing—give a signing bonus.⁴⁹ With proper approval federal agencies can give signing bonuses of up to 25 percent of annual salary.⁵⁰ In an effort to be more competitive, DODIG is giving entry-level recruits a bonus equal to 20 percent of their first-year salary. This equates to about \$4,400 for a GS-5 and \$5,500 for a GS-7. If recruits do not stay with them for at least one year, they are required to pay a prorated portion of the bonus back.⁵¹ Of course, this type of incentive can add up to a sizeable investment. If an agency hires 100 new recruits and gives each a signing bonus of \$5,500, they have expended over a half million dollars. Each organization will need to decide if this is how they want to spend their recruiting dollars.

Another technique is to convince auditors to accept the lower starting salary because of the rapid promotion potential and other benefits the job offers. Auditors hired at the GS-7 level can be promoted to the GS-12 level in three years. Current regulations allow an auditor to be promoted non-competitively from GS-7 to GS-9 after one year, to GS-11 after another year, and to GS-12 after one more year.⁵² At today's pay rates a GS-12, step 1, makes \$48,796 a year in the Washington-Baltimore area.⁵³ Also, most defense audit organizations provide tuition assistance to employees who want to further their education or become

certified.⁵⁴ If recruiters sell these benefits, some recruits may be willing to accept a lower starting salary.

HIRING PROCESS

Another drawback to federal employment cited in the GAO report was the "burdensome and lengthy hiring process."⁵⁵ OPM has taken some actions to streamline the federal hiring process—but there's no question it is still cumbersome. OPM's Strategic Plan for 1997-2002 recognizes that more changes are needed. The plan seeks to bring about a "merit-based civil service which contributes to the transformation of the government and provides tools necessary to attract, motivate and retain the best possible workforce in service to the American people." OPM invites suggestions and comments.⁵⁶ DOD organizations need to respond to this invitation and advise OPM of the challenges they are facing so appropriate changes can be made.

DOD audit organizations should also request direct-hire authority. This would permit them to offer jobs to qualified applicants on the spot. Such authority would significantly reduce the length of time between interviewing recruits and offering them jobs. In the interim, DOD audit organizations can help ease the frustration by walking potential employees through the hiring process.

A recent recruit suggested that agencies establish a toll-free telephone number for people to obtain information about job openings and the application process. The recruit indicated that

people—particularly college students on a tight budget—get frustrated having to pay for calls. A toll-free number could help alleviate this frustration.⁵⁷ Audit organizations may also want to conduct first interviews before requiring students to fill out the application forms. Once a student is interested in working for the organization, they will be more willing to do the required paperwork.

RECRUITING EFFORTS

The third reason GAO cited for college students not being interested in federal employment was "inadequate and ineffective federal recruiting."⁵⁸ This can readily be overcome with an active on-campus recruiting program. A well-prepared campus recruiting plan will eliminate the anxiety that often accompanies haphazard planning and nick-of-time scheduling.

There is a tendency for organizations to use the "more is better" approach when it comes to campus recruiting: Go to as many schools as possible, and seek out schools with large graduating classes in the area of interest (for example, accounting majors).⁵⁹ Some experts suggest, however, that this is not the most productive approach. They advise that other factors should be considered when targeting schools. In his detailed study of managing the transition from college to the workforce, Phillips concludes that organizations should limit their recruiting efforts to a specific number of colleges and

universities and maintain a consistent presence at those schools. In order to select the schools that best suit an organization's needs, he recommends that organizations develop selection criteria.⁶⁰ Here are some additional steps that should be taken to develop the foundation of an effective campus recruiting program:

- Using the selection criteria developed, identify a limited number of schools as a core group for focusing campus recruiting efforts. Schools can be added or deleted from the core group as circumstances change, which requires continuous monitoring and feedback on recruiting efforts at each school.
- Establish and maintain ongoing communications with the faculty and administrators at selected schools and develop a working relationship that will encourage the schools to recommend promising candidates to your organization. Included in the communication process is active participation and involvement in school-related programs or activities to help increase visibility of the agency.
- Develop recruiting practices that target students earlier in their college education. Contact students up to two years prior to their scheduled graduation date and begin discussing the benefits of federal employment and working for your organization.
- Identify and select a core group of recruiters from your professional audit staff who will best represent your organization in campus visits. The recruiters should be effective communicators who are comfortable working with college students and are knowledgeable of your organization's operations.
- Develop a training program that effectively prepares recruiters for their duties. At a minimum, they should be trained in effective recruiting and interview techniques, methods for following up with candidate students, agency operations and functions, federal employment pay and benefits, and the OPM-governed hiring process. There should also be at least annual training workshops to keep recruiters abreast of current programs and agency recruiting goals.
- Clearly define the goals and objectives of campus recruiting visits. Distinguish between a recruiting interview and an

employment interview so the recruiters understand their mission on the campus visit and the level of commitment they should be making to the student.

- Identify the key information to be gained from the campus recruiting visit and interviews, and develop an outline for the recruiters to follow. In preparing the outline, allow enough flexibility for recruiters to add their own personal touch to the process, while ensuring that the key information is obtained.
- Develop a process to regularly obtain feedback on the campus recruiting process from both recruiters and the recruits. Incorporate this feedback into the recruiter training process.⁶¹

A long-term approach such as this will undoubtedly be far more effective in reaching students than a frenzied hiring binge.

IMAGE

The fourth observation GAO made in its report was "poor image of government work and employees."⁶² There are a number of ways DOD audit organizations can help to change this perception.

Consider these:

- Go to places where the potential workforce can be found, such as accounting club meetings. Tell them about your organization. Give examples of the type of work DOD auditors do and the service they provide.
- Invite prospective employees to your office and show them around. Have them talk with various employees to get a feel for the organization. You may also want to arrange for students to take a free tour of the Pentagon. Visiting the Pentagon may help prospective recruits see the challenges and satisfaction a job with a military department holds.
- Offer paid internships and co-op programs to get students interested in and familiar with your organization. This is a win-win situation. The student gets a taste of the organization and the organization gets a closer look at the employee.
- Encourage current employees to tell others about their job and employment opportunities.

- Have a recent graduate of the same school greet and share their perspective on working with the organization with students being interviewed.
- Let recruits know about travel and the chance to work overseas.⁶³

An organization cannot expect to develop a favorable image and strong reputation simply by visiting the campus once or twice a year to conduct recruiting interviews. Recruiters must establish a campus presence so that the students, the faculty, and job placement officers come to know what their organization has to offer and what the organization is looking for in an employee. It is also vital for recruiters to effectively connect with the student. Selecting alumni to recruit at their alma mater is one way to facilitate that connection, especially if that person remains active in university activities. Also, the recruiter should be youthful enough to relate to the undergraduates on a more personal level. Students may see the organization in a more favorable light if they can see that people sharing their common interests are successful and enjoy working for the organization.⁶⁴

JOB AVAILABILITY

The last reason GAO listed in its report to explain why college students aren't interested in working for the federal government was "lack of information of federal job availability."⁶⁵ This too can be remedied. Here are some ways to get the word out:

- Use the Internet to advertise jobs. Describe application procedures and provide information about the organization. Be sure to include the name and telephone number of a person

to contact if a prospective employee wants more information.⁶⁶ (Of the DOD audit organizations, Naval Audit Service has the most extensive information on employment opportunities on the Internet. Their website talks about: the challenge, the organization, the future, the benefits, and current opportunities. See notes for a list of the Internet addresses for DOD audit organizations.)⁶⁷

- Display posters on the campuses you have targeted. Let students know about your organization and its employment opportunities.
- Participate in job fairs. Make sure recruiters have appropriate materials to project a professional image for the organization and to compete with other recruiters. Use brochures and give-away items that will help the student remember the organization. Use up-to-date and eye-catching displays and recruiting booths.⁶⁸

Most DOD audit organizations announce a job opening for a specified period of time—generally 2 weeks to 30 days.⁶⁹ All interested applicants must apply during that period. Because of the cost involved (about \$600 each) to obtain a list of applicants from OPM, organizations tend to limit the number of announcements they issue. Even if the organization has on-going openings it wants to fill, announcements may be issued months apart. Audit organizations should consider an open announcement. OPM will set up an open announcement for a start-up fee of \$5,000 plus \$450 for each list of applicants the audit organization requests. An open announcement could prove worth the investment.⁷⁰

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recruiting college graduates for careers with audit organizations in DOD has become and will continue to be a

challenge as long as the economy remains strong and unemployment stays low. While the private sector can use virtually any incentive to attract college graduates, recruiters for the federal workforce are constrained by some fairly restrictive limitations. DOD audit organizations need to let lawmakers and OPM know about the challenges they are facing in hiring auditors so changes can be made. Realistically it will take time for changes at that level to be made. Until then, here are some techniques DOD audit organizations may want to consider to enhance their recruiting strategies:

- Make salary packages more competitive by obtaining approval to start entry-level recruits at a higher step in the pay scale and/or give signing bonuses. Another option is to convince auditors to accept the lower starting salary because of rapid promotion potential and other benefits (such as tuition assistance and challenging work) the job offers.
- Expedite hiring process by obtaining direct-hire authority from OPM. Establish a toll-free telephone number and a point-of-contact for recruits to call for information about jobs and the application process.
- Institute a campus recruiting program: Target selected schools; coordinate with school faculty and administrators; select and prepare campus recruiters; define goals of recruiting interviews; and review and update the program based on lessons learned.
- Work at replacing the unfavorable image college students have of the government with a positive image of your organization. Invite prospective employees to your office; speak at college accounting club meetings; offer internships and co-op programs.
- Get the word out about available jobs. Use the Internet, display posters, and participate in job fairs. Consider setting up an open announcement.

Recruiting budgets, like resources in general, are not unlimited. Therefore, managers must determine which techniques they can afford. DOD can attract talented candidates to its audit agencies. But recruiters must work harder and smarter than ever.

WORD COUNT: 5,581

ENDNOTES

¹ Kevin Kelly, "Campus Recruiting Programs: A Strategy for the U.S. Army Audit Agency, Research Paper, Salve Regina University," March 1999, 1.

² U.S. Office of Personnel Management, "The Fact Book: Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics 1998 Edition," 25 November 1998; available from <<http://www.opm.gov/feddata/factbook/index>>; Internet; accessed 17 January 1999.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Conservative estimate of combined total of auditors to be recruited by DODIG, Air Force Audit Agency, Army Audit Agency and Naval Audit Service. See notes 5, 6, 10 and 11.

⁵ Teri Clark <tclark@dodig.osd.mil>, "Recruiting Information," electronic mail messages to Joyce Morrow <morrowj@awc.carlisle.army.mil>, 10-12 March 1999.

⁶ Patricia Cromer <cromerp@aaa.army.mil>, "Recruiting Information," electronic mail messages to Joyce Morrow <morrowj@awc.carlisle.army.mil>, 4 January - 31 March 1999.

⁷ Cromer.

⁸ John Bourgault <Bourgauj@aaa.army.mil>, "Jobtrak," electronic mail message to Joyce Morrow <morrowj@aaa.army.mil>, 1 April 1999.

⁹ Cromer.

¹⁰ Barbino, Michael <BarbinoM@pentagon.af.mil>, "Air Force Audit Agency Recruiting Program," electronic mail message to Joyce Morrow <morrowj@awc.carlisle.army.mil>, 16 February 1999.

¹¹ Naval Audit Service, 1998 Annual Performance Report, 23 December 1998, B-2 and B-3.

¹² Dewy Gibson, Special Assistant, Naval Audit Service, telephone interview by author, 20 January 1999.

¹³ Kelly, 3.

¹⁴ Eric C. Evarts, "Here's Your Diploma; Here's Your Job; So Many Choices," Christian Science Monitor, 18 May 1998, B1.

¹⁵ Diane E. Lewis, Globe Staff, "Class of '98 is Here: Let the Bidding Begin!," Boston Globe, 18 May 1999, A1.

¹⁶ Kristin Downey Grimsley, "Campus Recruiters Step Up the Search; Firms Contracting Students Earlier, Offering More Perks to Line Up Future Hires," Washington Post, 22 December 1998, C1 and C11.

¹⁷ Lewis.

¹⁸ Grimsley.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Steven Ginsberg, "Where the Jobs Are; Recruiters Cruise Spring Break Hot Spots Seeking New Hires," The Washington Post, 22 March 1998, A1 and A15.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Grimsley.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Stuart Silverstein, "Work & Careers; On The Job; With a Tight Job Market, Campus Recruiters Are Suffering Labor Pains," The Los Angeles Times, 26 April 1998.

²⁶ Grimsley.

²⁷ Kelly, 6.

²⁸ Kelly, 7.

²⁹ Raymond O'Connor, Jr., Attorney, U.S. Army Audit Agency, "Legal Opinion on Use of Agency Appropriated Funds for the Purchase of Recruitment Aids," Alexandria, VA, 10 February 1998.

³⁰ Federal Employees News Digest, 1999 Federal Employees Almanac, 46th Ed. (Reston, VA: Federal News Digest, Inc., 1999), 41.

³¹ U.S. Army Audit Agency, "USAAA Professionals' Career Trail", recruiting brochure, 1998-2000.

³² Grimsley.

³³ Civilian Personnel Online, U.S. Army, "Recruitment and Placement Program: Office of Personnel Management Certificates,"

available from <<http://www.cpol.army.mil/permis/6334.html>>, accessed 6 April 1999.

³⁴ Kelly, 8.

³⁵ Clark.

³⁶ Paul C. Light, "The Public Service: Back for the Future," Government Executive, January 1999, 12.

³⁷ U.S. General Accounting Office, Federal Employment: How Government Jobs are Viewed on Some College Campuses (Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Accounting Office, September 1994), 2-3.

³⁸ Ibid., 18.

³⁹ "Discussion Paper: 1999 Civil Service Improvements," 26 February 1999; available from <<http://govexec.com/dailyfed/0299/022699b2.htm>>; Internet; accessed 17 March 1999. The discussion paper is being used as a starting point for civil service reform discussions among the administration, Congress, unions and professional associations. The administration expects to propose official changes later this year (1999).

⁴⁰ Jeff Miner, "Bringing Out the Best in Generation X," The Futurist, January 1999, 6-7.

⁴¹ Maggie Jackson, "Adjusting to the 'X' Factor: As a New Generation of Workers Emerges, Corporations Reconsider Training, Benefits," Boston Globe, 21 February 1999, J4.

⁴² U.S. Army Audit Agency, "Employee Satisfaction Survey," September 1998, obtained from Richard Thompson <thompson@aaa.army.mil>, 1 February 1999. In September 1998 the U.S. Army Audit Agency sent an employee satisfaction survey to all employees. A total of 333 auditors and 58 support staff employees responded to the survey. Mr. Richard Thompson, agency employee, compiled the results and provided the to the author in a database. The author used SPSS (a statistical analysis software program) to analyze the results. For this analysis the author only included responses from auditors. The table shows 330 responses. Three auditors, responding to the survey, did not answer this question.

⁴³ Joyce Morrow <morrowj@aaa.army.mil>, "Agency Recruiting Survey," electronic mail message to 51 auditors hired by the U.S. Army Audit Agency between 31 March and 31 December 1998, 22 January 1998. The survey contained these six questions:

- What made you decide to work for AAA?
- Is your job what you expected? If no, explain how it differs from your expectations.
- What techniques did AAA use effectively to recruit you?
- What recruiting techniques did other organizations use effectively?
- What could AAA do to improve its recruiting techniques?
- Were you interviewed in person or by telephone? Was the interview effective? Do you have any suggestions for improving the interview process?

About half (25 of 51) of the new hires responded to the survey. Most of the responses were very positive in nature. It is unknown whether those that didn't respond have similar views.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Clark and Cromer.

⁴⁶ U.S. General Accounting Office, 3.

⁴⁷ "Discussion Paper: 1999 Civil Service Improvements."

⁴⁸ Federal Employees News Digest, 41.

⁴⁹ Clark.

⁵⁰ Cromer.

⁵¹ Clark.

⁵² U.S. Army Audit Agency, "USAAA Professionals' Career Trail," Recruiting Brochure, 1998-2000.

⁵³ Federal Employees News Digest, 41.

⁵⁴ Naval Audit Service, 1998 Annual Performance Report and personal knowledge of author.

⁵⁵ U.S. General Accounting Office, 3.

⁵⁶ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, "Strategic Plan for FY 1997 - FY 2002," 15 August 1997, available from <<http://www.opm.gov/iag/drafts/gprapl.htm>>; Internet; accessed 16 January 1999.

⁵⁷ Cheri Becker <beckerc@aaa.army.mil>, "Recruiting Suggestions," electronic mail message to Joyce Morrow <morrowj@aaa.army.mil>, 6 April 1999.

⁵⁸ U.S. General Accounting Office, 3.

⁵⁹ Kelly, 10-11.

⁶⁰ J. J. Phillips, Recruiting, Training and Retaining New Employees: Managing the Transition from College to Work, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1987), 79-83.

⁶¹ Kelly, 19-22.

⁶² U.S. General Accounting Office, 3.

⁶³ Joyce Morrow (author), "Agency Recruiting Survey," summary of responses from new hires. See note 43.

⁶⁴ Kelly, 13-14.

⁶⁵ U.S. General Accounting Office, 3.

⁶⁶ Joyce Morrow (author), "Agency Recruiting Survey," summary of responses from new hires. See note 43.

⁶⁷ Here is a list of the Internet addresses for DOD audit organizations:

- DOD Inspector General <http://www.dodig.osd.mil/>
- Air Force Audit Agency <http://www.afa.hq.af.mil/>
- U.S. Army Audit Agency <http://www.hqda.army.mil/AAAWEB/>
- Naval Audit Service <http://www.hq.navy.mil/NavalAudit/>

⁶⁸ Kelly, 15.

⁶⁹ Department of Defense Inspector General, "Job Opportunity Announcements," available from <<http://www.dodig.osd.mil/jobs/index.html>>, Internet, accessed 17 February 1999.

⁷⁰ Cromer.

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