

hiring authority  
delegated examining  
certification  
audit



# Crossing the Chasm

## Restoring Your Agency's Human Capital Management Program, Hiring Authorities with the R3+P Program

**S**equestrations, mandatory furloughs, hiring slowdowns: What else can go wrong for the senior manager or agency CHCO? How about losing the authority to hire?

That's right — in some departments, one out of every two organizations is losing authority to hire external candidates into their agencies. This authority is called “delegated examining authority,” and by law that authority is delegated from the President to the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, who then delegates it to Department and agency heads.

How do you lose your authority? Typically after an audit — whether scheduled or a “no-notice” audit conducted by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the agency that grants your Department or agency its hiring authority, the result doesn't turn out so well.

OPM has a schedule to review all agencies that have delegated authority and can drop in to conduct audits based your Department's request, an Inspector General request, or if prob-

### WHITE PAPER R3 + Prevention Program

**R3+P** // The Rescue, Relief, & Recovery plus Prevention program is a service offering of Avue Technologies Corporation. To learn more about the program, go to [www.avuetech.com](http://www.avuetech.com).

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lems occur that catch the attention of OPM. OPM is the sole arbiter of this delegation and can provision or revoke the authority based on its determination of the agency's HCM program fitness and record.

Individuals and agency HR offices are then “certified” to conduct hiring actions that use this authority. Delegated examining or DE certification is granted to individuals following an established courseware program and individuals must recertify every three years.

In addition, there are delegated examining units, or DEUs, made up of individuals with the certification. DE and DEU authority are controlled by Departments — as well as OPM — and are required to be “self-audited” in the intervening years of OPM audits.

## **What happens when you lose your hiring authority?**

What is the overall impact of losing your hiring authority? At an agency, this can result in a significant delay in hiring hundreds or thousands of employees to fill key, critical vacancies. These are vacancies that have received agency approval to hire despite the restrictive budget climate, and may have already been delayed because of prior hiring freezes, or “pauses.”

This problem is compounded by an environment unfriendly to budgeting.

You're left answering the question: How will the agency achieve its national mission for the American taxpayer?

## **How do you get it back?**

Getting your DE and DEU authority restored is no small feat. Taking a cue from FEMA's emergency management principles, Avue Technologies has created the R3+P DEU emergency management program. R3 is an emergency management strategy that organizes and manages resources and responsibilities for DEU and other audit-based emergencies. It involves rescue, relief, and recovery — each organized to lessen the impact of losing DEU authority or individual DE certifications. All aspects of R3 are designed to restore federal organizations to their previous level of operational efficiency, improve it, and protect the agency from the consequences of losing DE authority. The final process, prevention, is a series of business process changes that offer continuous risk mitigation.

## **Assessing your agency's vulnerability to losing hiring authority**

In talking with seasoned Human Capital Officers and HR professionals throughout the Federal System (who have been audited and have conducted audits), and with officials of the Office of Personnel Management, we've been able to put together the Top 10 Ways You Know You're Going to Lose Your Hiring Authority. Take the self-assessment quiz on the following page. While what follows is somewhat tongue-in-cheek in its format, the quiz is based on the outward symptoms that would lead an auditor to look further for systemic causes.

You Know You're Going to Lose Your Hiring Authority If:		My Agency's Rating Is		
		That's Not Us . . .	That's So Us . . .	Don't Know
<b>Number 10</b> ....	. . . your managers don't know what the 80-Day-Time-to-Hire requirement is, missed hearing about the President's Hiring Process Improvement Memorandum, can't identify the lead program manager for the President's veterans' hiring initiative, and still use the Rule of Three.			
<b>Number 9</b> ....	. . . it seems like a lot of new hires in your agency were working as contractors just before they got hired.			
<b>Number 8</b> ....	. . . the same position keeps getting posted over and over again, with very short open periods.			
<b>Number 7</b> ....	. . . if you haven't worked in your agency before, or even in the job before, it's impossible to meet the qualification requirements for vacancies posted for your agency.			
<b>Number 6</b> ....	. . . there is no love lost between agency management and the HR office — complaints from both sides abound.			
<b>Number 5</b> ....	. . . there's a DE operations handbook somewhere, but our HR folks haven't cracked it open since taking the training.			
<b>Number 4</b> ....	. . . the road from your agency to OPM is paved with requests to pass over qualified veterans in favor of hiring non-veterans.			
<b>Number 3</b> ....	. . . someone has spread the word that Category Rating allows you to bypass veterans' preference and is therefore "better" than the Rule of Three — and told managers OPM won't audit Category Rating as much.			
<b>Number 2</b> ....	. . . despite the fact you have posted scores of jobs using delegated OPM authority, you haven't made many hires from these posting because you've found non-competitive procedures to use instead.			
(Drumroll) <b>Number 1</b> ....	. . . there is an audit from OPM scheduled for your agency, but you don't have time to prepare for it, don't have the skills in your HR office to prepare for it, or don't have a clue what you should be doing to prepare for it.			

How did you do on the quiz?

Just one of these risky behaviors — subject to an intense audit by the Office of Personnel Management — can result in a revocation of hiring authority and a significant delay and inability to provide critical hiring to your agency. And it is so devastating — especially now — when each approval to hire is so precious.

Worse, audit resources aren't the only resources swallowed by this effort. More are required to reconstruct hundreds, if not thousands, of actions to make them compliant with regulations. And if OPM suspects prohibited personnel practices are at play they can direct the Office of Special Counsel and the Merit Systems Protection Board investigate and adjudicate cases.

Decisions rendered may mean that selected employees be separated, others be appointed, and a host of other devastating actions occur that cause significant mission disruption. Even taking over the hiring authority at a headquarters operation can be a drain on resources, may result in additional sanctions, and muddle the role for human capital program direction.

R3+P not only creates a continuous risk mitigation strategy along it applies a focused emergency management strategy, with superior delegated examining and IT staff to organize and manage resources and responsibilities to respond to the aftermath of these audits.

This approach is offered in three phases: Rescue, Relief and Recovery.

These three phases have four dedicated streams of support in each phase: Operations, Training and Skill Building, Tracking, Report and Monitoring and Executive Support and Services.

Every senior HCM manager, whether the agency CHCO or head of management, needs extensive federal HR experience to provide sound, non-political advice and judgment and to get hiring back on track as soon as possible in today's budget climate.

The R3+P program provides the superior advice, support, and expert consultation senior managers need.

Your mission, performed with the best hires ready to do your critical tasks, depends on focus, speed, and efficiency — and that's R3+P.