



Selecting Candidates for Key Leadership Positions in Program Executive Offices Ground Combat Systems and Combat Service and Combat Service Support

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to compare the current interview process for senior positions within Program Executive Office (PEO) Ground Combat Systems (GCS) and PEO Combat Support & Combat Service Support (CS&CSS) with the guidance for key leadership positions, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) guidance, and best practices in industry. These comparisons provide important insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current practices, and suggest ways to improve current practices.

This study was limited to the hiring practices of PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS for core NH-IV (senior level) positions. Both organizations are located at the TACOM Life Cycle Management Command (LCMC) on the Detroit Arsenal in Warren, MI. At the time of the study, PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS did not have a specific policy for hiring key leadership positions; however, each organization has similar hiring policies for core NH-IV pay band positions.

The survey was released to the entire TACOM LCMC workforce in December 2015. The workforce was instructed that the survey was intended for only NH-IV grade, or equivalent, employees. Of the 267 respondents, only 51 met the grade requirement and had participated in a core NH-IV hiring action within either PEO.

The data collected provides senior leaders a snap shot of their current core NH-IV hiring process. The survey instrument was designed to assess the current process against the key leadership position guidance, OPM guidance and industry best practices. The results show that small changes throughout the current process will help the PEOs meet the new key leadership position guidance when hiring for those positions. The quantitative and qualitative results show that each PEO's senior leaders are not satisfied

with the current process. Each PEO needs to revamp the hiring process to account for the OPM hiring guidance and industry best practices. Specifically, each PEO should incorporate the following changes to the hiring process:

- Develop a standard location within the evaluation process (Automated screening, resume review, or interview) for evaluating each key leadership position evaluation category.
- Assign equal weight to each evaluation category for key leadership positions and core NH-IV positions within the PEO.
- Create a PEO interview guide based on the OPM guidance (Office of Personnel Management, 2005, p. 14) and the functional key leadership position requirements (USD(AL&T), 2016).
- Always ask for and check references (U.S. Merit Protection Board, 2005). Use the reference check to assess a candidate's emotional intelligence (EI).
- Use behavioral and situational questions during interviews. Use the questions to evaluate a candidate's judgment, mastery of required competencies, and EI.
- Use the resume review step in the process to ensure candidates have the experience necessary for the position.
- Allow the use of follow up questions. But limit the use, based on the OPM guidance (Office of Personnel Management, 2005, p. 12).

- Conduct practice interviews to refine questions prior to conducting interviews (Office of Personnel Management, 2005, p. 14). Use personnel who conduct the resume review as practice interviewees.
- Create a PEO interview guide based on the OPM guidance (Office of Personnel Management, 2005, p. 14).
- Develop mandatory training for personnel that participate in the interview process. This training should be required for all interviewers or selecting officials. This training could be done for each interview panel or could be done at a specified interval.
- Extend the interview time for conducting an interview or limit the questions.
- When using a second round of interviews for candidate selection, develop 1st and 2nd round questions together. This will eliminate duplicate questions and provide a more holistic view of the candidates.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Senior executives in any organization make important decisions every day. One of the most critical decisions they make is hiring the right person for a key leadership position (McDonald, Avoiding the Costs of Making the Wrong Senior Level Hire, 2013). The right hire requires less management by an executive, freeing the executive to work on other tasks (McDonald, Avoiding the Costs of Making the Wrong Senior Level Hire, 2013). The right hire will also increase the performance of the team (Martel, The Principles of High Performance and How To Apply Them, 2002). Hiring a key leader is a challenging proposition. The hiring process is rife with psychological traps that are amplified when hiring for a senior level position (Fernández-Aráoz, Getting the Right People to the Top, 2005). It was estimated in 2007, that hiring the wrong person costs American organizations 105 billion dollars a year in lost time spent managing underperforming employees. (Calvasina & Calvasina, 2008). The wrong hire has negative effects across the organization. Fernández-Aráoz observed:

“Ask any CEO, board member, or senior executive of any large corporation about the most important decision she has to confront. Chances are that her answer will be hiring. Hiring the right executive is the most important challenge because of its impact, its lasting consequences, its irreversibility, its growing complexity, and its increased criticality. This decision adds or destroys a huge amount of economic value for the organization. Whereas the right decision can start or continue a profitable growth pattern and boost morale and motivation, a poor decision may bring the company to the brink of financial distress and even bankruptcy, and start a downward trend in organizational climate, with a dramatic impact on the

company's income statement and balance sheet" (Fernández-Aráoz, 2001, p. 182).

There are several reasons why hiring senior leaders is difficult. One is organizations don't hire at this level often (Fernández-Aráoz, *Getting the Right People to the Top*, 2005). Also, the majority of people applying for positions at this level are competent, high performers (Fernández-Aráoz, *Getting the Right People to the Top*, 2005) making differentiation among candidates difficult. Additionally, hiring managers have a hard time both identifying the skills needed for the position, and discerning those skills during the interview process (Glinow, Drost, & Teagarden, 2002).

Great organizations focus on getting the right people in the right positions to achieve results (Martel, *Finding and Keeping High Performers: Best Practices from 25 Best Companies*, 2003). The Department of Defense (DOD) acquisition community is no different. The Honorable (HON) Frank Kendall, in his written testimony for his confirmation hearing to the Defense Acquisition Executive (DAE) position stated that one of his top priorities is "strengthening the acquisition workforce in order to achieve better acquisition outcomes" (Kendall, 2012, p. 5). This research paper identifies and evaluates current practices for hiring senior leaders within the Program Executive Offices (PEO) Ground Combat Systems (GCS) and PEO Combat Support & Combat Service Support (CS&CSS), located in Warren, Michigan, and compares these practices for consistency with Mr. Kendall's new policies. Additionally, this research paper evaluates the current processes within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS against the recommended Office of Personnel Management (OPM) hiring guidance and industry best practices.

Background

On November 8th 2013, the DAE, the HON Frank Kendall issued a memorandum titled “Key Leadership Positions and Qualification Criteria” (Kendall, 2013). This memorandum provides a definition of key leadership positions, and guidance on required experience, education, cross functional competencies, tenure requirements, and professional development (currency) (Kendall, 2013). Key leadership positions are only identified for offices that manage Major Defense Acquisition Programs (MDAP) at the acquisition category (ACAT) I, and for program manager positions of ACAT II programs. Non-information technology ACAT I programs are the largest programs within the Department of Defense, and have estimated budgets greater than \$480 million in research, development, testing and evaluation (RDTE) or \$2.79 billion in procurement in fiscal year 2014 dollars (Defense Acquisition University, 2015). ACAT II programs are smaller, with estimated budgets greater than 185 million RDTE dollars or \$835 million procurement in fiscal year 2014 dollars (Defense Acquisition University, 2015). The following positions are considered key leadership positions (Kendall, 2013):

- Program Executive Officer/ Deputy Program Executive Officer
- Senior Contracting Official
- Program Manager
- Deputy Program Manager
- Chief Engineer/Lead Systems Engineer
- Product Support Manager
- Chief Developmental Tester
- Program Lead, Business Financial Manager

- Program Lead, Contracting Officer
- Program Lead, Cost Estimator
- Program Lead, Production, Quality, and Manufacturing
- Program Lead, Information Technology

Additional guidance provides specific evaluation criteria for each of those positions (Defense Acquisition University, n.d.). For every position listed above each evaluation criterion is grouped into one of seven categories; education, training, experience, program management, technical management, business management, and continuous learning (currency). Due to the limited number of key leadership positions at PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS, and the fact that almost all of the personnel currently in key leadership positions were hired into those positions prior to the new policy, this paper does not evaluate each specific criterion for each of the position types listed above. This paper focuses on how each category is evaluated during the interview process for senior positions and what weight each category has in selecting a candidate.

Problem Statement

PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS are facing the dual challenges of replacing a retiring workforce (Hicks, 2014), while implementing the new key leader position guidance from the HON Kendall (Kendall, 2013). In general, hiring within the government is always a challenge. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) rules regarding hiring practices and background checks adds, on average, 80 days to the hiring process (O'Keefe, 2011) compared with 25 days in private industry (Weber, 2014). Figure 1 illustrates the current OPM hiring process (Office of Personnel Management, 2005).

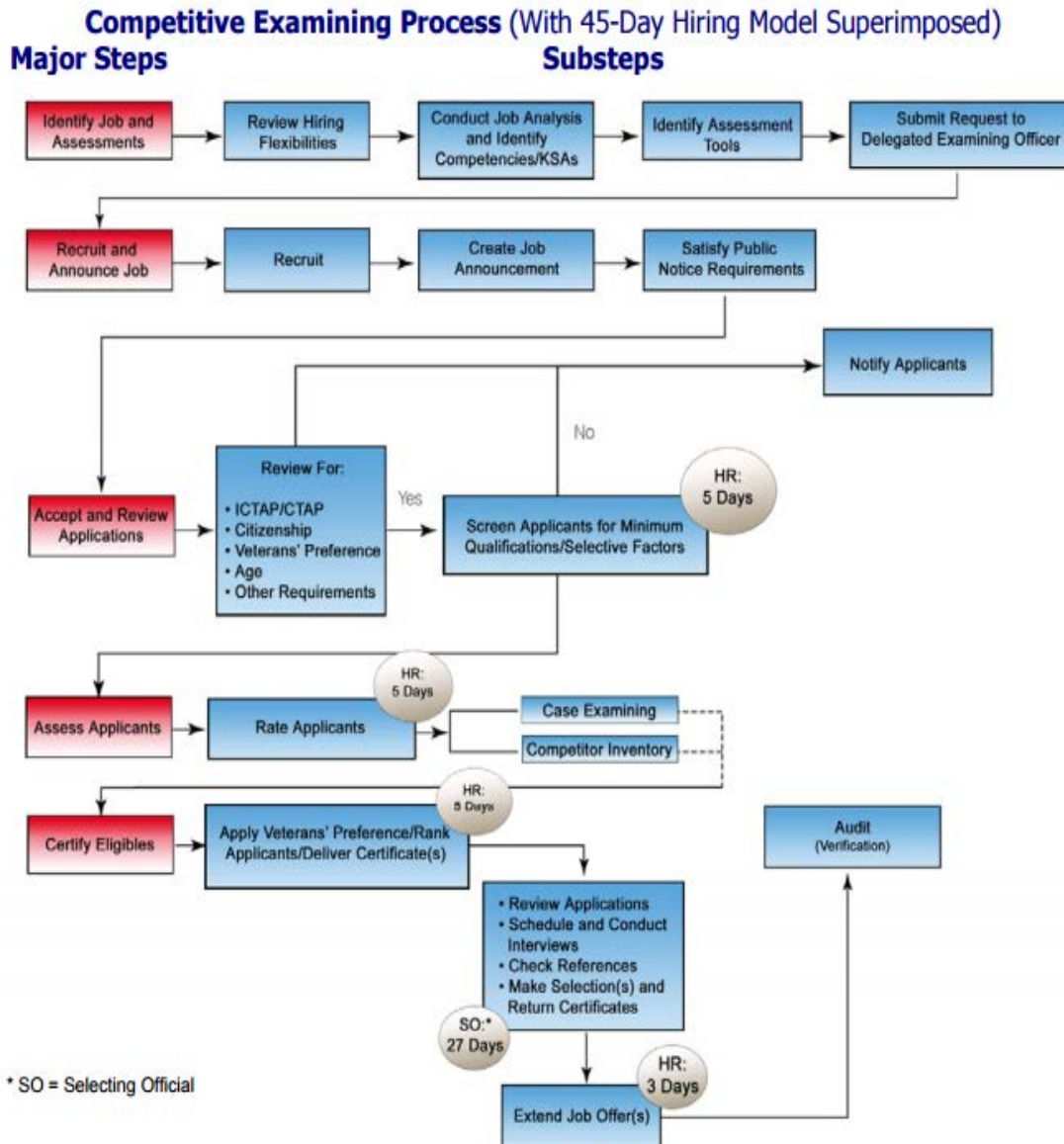


Figure 1 OPM competitive hiring process map

When hiring senior talent, private industry always has the option of not conducting a formal hiring action to permanently fill a position. That is not an option for the Federal Government (OPM Hiring Process , 2015). That isn't to say hiring managers within the Federal Government always conduct a full and open hiring action for every position opening; however, hiring managers have limited options to permanently fill

senior positions without interviews. Those options provide temporary solutions at best due to equal employment opportunity rules and local union contracts. With the coming wave of baby boomer retirements (Hicks, 2014) within the Federal Government, the DOD will have to conduct interviews to fill large gaps created by retirements. By 2016, nearly three in five senior executives and almost half of the managers will be eligible to retire (Rein, 2013).

Currently the PEOs and Program Management Offices (PMO) organizations within DOD have personnel assigned to handle the functions covered in the HON Mr. Kendall's memorandum. The problem moving forward for these organizations is how their current hiring practices for key leader positions align with the new guidance. Within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS there are policies for hiring senior positions; however, these policies do not contain the specific evaluation criteria laid out in by the new key leadership position guidance. The demographics of PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS closely map to the overall federal workforce demographics (Figure 2). PEO GCS & PEO CS&CSS can reasonably expect a large number of retirements in the next ten years, and hiring new senior leaders will soon become a critical issue.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to compare the current interview process for senior positions within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS with the guidance for key leadership positions, OPM Guidance, and best practices in industry. These comparisons provide important insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current practice, and suggest ways to improve current practice.

Research Questions

This study focused on determining how well the current senior position interview processes within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS aligns with the key leader position guidance, and with best practices in private industry and OPM guidance. The research questions are:

- 1) How well do current hiring processes within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS address key leadership position requirements?
- 2) How well do the PEOs use the interview process recommendations provided by OPM?
- 3) How does the PEOs current interview process compare with industry best practices?
- 4) How can the PEO hiring process be improved?

Significance of This Research

By 2016, nearly three in five senior executives and almost half of the managers will be eligible to retire (Rein, 2013). Currently the PEOs and PMO organizations within the Department of Defense (DOD) have personnel assigned to handle the functions covered in the HON Mr. Kendall's memo. Within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS there are policies in place for hiring senior positions; however, these policies do not contain the specific evaluation criteria laid out in by the new key leadership position guidance. The demographics of the Detroit Arsenal, where PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS are located, closely map to the overall federal workforce demographics, and will face the issue of hiring new key leaders soon. Figure 2, below, shows the demographics of PEO GCS's

core positions (Gonda, 2015), negative numbers represent associates eligible for retirement.

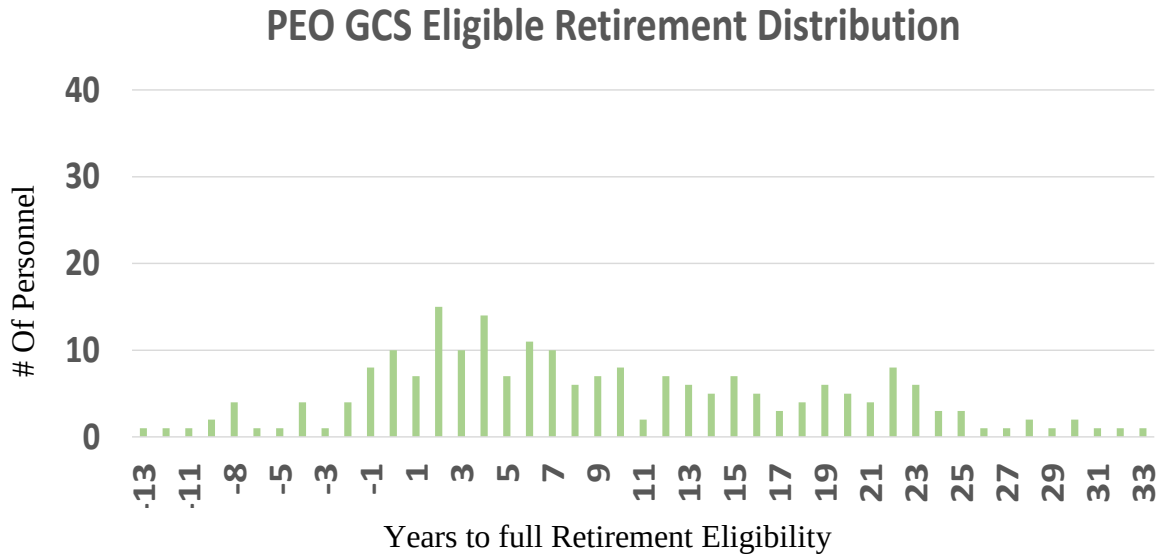


Figure 2 PEO GCS Retirement Eligibility (Gonda, 2015)

The government work force is aging (see table 1); 45.03% of the workforce, as of September 2013 (the latest information available), is 50 years of age or older. In fiscal year 2013, 65,176 federal employees retired at an average age of 61 years (Office of Personnel Management, 2014). If these trends hold over the next decade, the Government will have to replace 45% of its workforce.

Table 1 *Full-Time Permanent Age Distribution* (Office of Personnel Management, 2014)

Age	Count	Percent
< 20	139	0.1%
20-24	17,477	0.95%
25-29	111,124	6.07%
30-34	189,630	10.35%
35-39	185,663	10.14%
40-44	222,702	12.16%
45-49	280,102	15.29%
50-54	326,728	17.84%
55-59	270,061	14.74%
60-64	158,132	8.63%
65 or more	69,965	3.82%
Total	1,831,723	100.00%

Average Age 47.3

Overview of the Research Methodology

This research paper used a quantitative and qualitative survey instrument, provided to the entire TACOM Life Cycle Management Command (LCMC) workforce. The survey instrument limited the responses of the workforce to those personnel who were: NH-IV level, equivalent or higher; and have served on an interview panel for NH-IV position in either PEO GCS or PEO CS&CSS. After applying the discriminating questions above, 53 people completed the survey. The instrument consisted of 36 questions in the following areas; two discriminator questions, six demographic questions, nine questions on the key leadership position evaluation categories, six questions on

OPM best practices, two questions relating to industry best practices, six current interview structure questions, one on key leadership position policy knowledge, and four open ended qualitative questions.

Three of the demographic questions also serve as moderators. The NH-IV or equivalent pay band includes non-supervisors, first line supervisors, and second line supervisors. Each of these groups have very different responsibilities. Experience in conducting interviews also serves as a moderator. One of the issues when hiring at the senior level organizations don't do it often, and therefore personnel responsible to conduct candidate selection have limited experience (Fernández-Aráoz, 2001). Finally, experience in civilian federal service also serves as a moderator. This moderator was selected because of the uniqueness of processes and rules within the federal government. Also, TACOM hired a significant amount senior people from private industry over the last ten years to support overseas operations. These senior people may have different prospectives than ones that have worked at TACOM their entire careers.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the hiring practices of PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS for core NH-IV (senior level) positions. Both organizations are located at the TACOM LCMC on the Detroit Arsenal in Warren, MI. At the time of the study, PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS did not have a specific policy for hiring key leadership positions; however, each organization has similar core employee hiring policies for core NH-IV pay band positions. Each policy requires at least one person on each interview panel work in an external organization. For the purposes of this study, core NH-IV positions within each PEO will be considered a key leadership position.

The survey was released to the entire TACOM LCMC workforce in December 2015. The workforce was instructed that the survey was intended for only NH-IV grade, or equivalent, employees. Of the 267 respondents, only 51 met the grade requirement, had participated in a core NH-IV hiring action within either PEO, and completed the survey. The limited response does not allow for significant statistical analysis to occur along moderating factors, but is a large enough sample size to show trends in hiring action process. The limited responses may be due to hiring freezes and other limited hiring authorities over the last five years. (Cadieux, 2015). As of January 2016, both PEOs are still under significant hiring restrictions, but can now start to hire NH-IV positions if approved by Department of the Army (Bagwell, 2015). These restrictions, and retiring workforce, may have contributed the limited number of responses to the survey.

Summary

The Federal Government, and in particular PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS, are facing a demographic challenge with the impending retirement wave from the baby boomer generation (Hicks, 2014). Additionally, PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS are now implementing new hiring guidance for senior leaders (Kendall, 2013). The results of this study provided hiring managers within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS an assessment of their current hiring practices against the new key leadership position guidance, while providing a comparison to OPM's recommended the hiring practices and industry best practices. The dual trials of replacing 50% of the workforce; while meeting the new key leadership position guidance will be a challenge for senior executives and hiring managers within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS. However, this study provides

foundational data that will allow those senior executives and hiring managers take on the challenge.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature related to best hiring practices in the private and public sectors. The literature review was conducted across a wide array of sources, including: books, magazine articles, peer review journal articles, public testimony, published Department of Defense (DOD) policies, published reports, and statistical data from Program Executive Office (PEO) Ground Combat Systems (GCS). This chapter starts with a brief background of the new hiring requirements for key leadership positions and the demographic issues facing the federal workforce. Then this chapter explores the current process within PEO GCS and PEO Combat Support & Combat Service Support (CS&CSS), the key leadership position guidance, and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and industry best practices regarding hiring senior leaders.

Background

The Federal Workforce is rapidly aging (Office of Personnel Management, 2013). 45.03% of the workforce (as of September 2013), is 50 years of age or older. In fiscal year 2013, 65,176 federal employees retired at an average age of 61 years (Office of Personnel Management, 2014). If these trends hold over the next decade, the government will have to replace 45% of its workforce. There is evidence that due to the stock market collapse of 2008, Federal employees are retiring later. But based on the latest data (Office of Personnel Management, 2014), the average age of employees at retirement has only gone up six months in the last five years. In the long term, employees delaying retirement will not provide any significant relief to the coming personnel crisis.

At the local level, the Detroit Arsenal faces many of the same challenges. Individual tenant organizations at the Detroit Arsenal may be in better position to handle

the challenges of the baby boomer retirements than others; however, the workforce age distribution of a single tenant does not take into account the fluidity in which personnel can move from one organization to another within the Detroit Arsenal. Within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS there are approximately 70 positions that are considered key leadership positions. Many of the personnel currently serving in key leadership positions are within the 10 year retirement window.

Hiring Practices by PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS

All competitive hiring actions conducted by the government have job descriptions posted on usajobs.gov. This website posts all relevant information about the position and provides a portal for potential applicants to apply for positions. Once a candidate applies for a position, the candidate will be required to answer a number of questions as part of an automated review. The usajobs.gov process is automated once the hiring manager provides the initial position description and key position requirements. After the usajobs.gov process provides the automated review of all applicants, it selects the qualified candidates and sends their information to the local hiring manager.

Once the local hiring manager has the qualified candidates the process of reviewing resumes and interviewing candidates will begin. Though specific details of the process can vary across different elements within the Army, PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS follow the identical process described below (Bagwell, 2015; Cadieux, 2015). For NH-IV core positions in each PEO, the hiring official will have no less than a three member panel review the resumes of all qualified candidates. That resume review panel will recommend the top tier, typically eight to 15, candidates be called for a face-to-face interview. The selecting official will convene a second separate panel, of at least three

people, with at least one person external to the organization, to conduct face-to-face interviews. Once face-to-face interviews are completed, the interview panel will provide a ranked list of recommended candidates. Depending on the position, the selecting official may make a selection using the interview panel's recommendations, or the selecting official may convene a second round of interviews. If a second round of interviews is conducted, a new second interview panel is convened with new interviewers, and the interviewees are selected from the top group of the first interview panel. Once the interview process is completed, the top ranked candidate is offered the position. Due to fair hiring practice rules within the government, the hiring manager has little flexibility in selecting someone else.

The use of references has been a topic of discussion within each PEO for a long time (Bagwell, 2015; Cadieux, 2015). Currently there is not standard policy on requiring candidates to provide references, nor does the policy require that references be checked. During interviews with each Deputy PEO, this confusion became apparent. In 2005 the U.S. Merit Protection Board issued a report, "Reference Checking in Federal Hiring: Making the Call". In this report (U.S. Merit Protection Board, 2005), the U.S. Merit Protection Board states that:

"Reference checking has an important role to play in the Federal hiring process. It should be more than a formality conducted by administrative staff. It should be more than a casual, unstructured phone conversation between supervisors. It should certainly not be an illegal and inappropriate exchange of gossip about unsuspecting applicants. Reference checking can improve the quality of the Federal workforce by reducing the number of unqualified, unscrupulous, and

otherwise unsuitable applicants whose liabilities escaped detection during the earlier phases of the hiring process. If reference checking is to reach this potential, it will require cooperation among Federal hiring officials, applicants for Federal employment, and reference providers. The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) recommends that agency policy makers, human resources professionals, hiring officials, job applicants, and former supervisors of these applicants appropriately utilize their roles to make reference checking work. (p. iv)”

The U.S. Merit Protection Board report provides hiring managers specific and legally defensible steps for checking references when hiring an employee. To account for this best practice, the survey instrument used in this research paper asks if interview panels or selecting officials ask and check references (question 15 and 16 respectively).

Key Leadership Position Guidance

On November 8th 2013, the Defense Acquisition Executive (DAE), the Honorable (HON) Frank Kendall issued a memo titled “Key Leadership Positions and Qualification Criteria” (Kendall, 2013). This memorandum defines the positions that qualify as key leadership positions (listed in Chapter 1). The memorandum also provides definitions for each requirement category used. Those definitions are (Kendall, 2013):

- Education: this is the degree requirements for the position
- Experience: Level III certification in respective career field and years in an acquisition position

- Leadership: Demonstrated competencies in leading change, leading people, managing results, building coalitions, business acumen, and enterprise wide perspective.
- Program Execution: Leadership and management of defense acquisition program covering every aspect of the acquisition process, such as integration, engineering, program control, test and evaluation, deployment (fielding), configuration management, production and manufacturing, quality assurance, and logistics support.
- Technical Management: Knowledge and acquisition experience in the position career field. This is the evaluation area following best business practices, regulatory and statutory requirements for a given career field.
- Business Management: Is the oversight of controlling, leading, monitoring, organizing, and planning for the business success of the program. This includes, cost estimating, budgeting, requirements development with the user, contracting strategy, and program planning. This also includes evaluating best value decisions for the government.
- Currency: Continuous learning (80 hours every 2 years) with courses directly related to continuous learning in the functional area.

The key tenant in Mr. Kendall's policy is that all of the above evaluation categories must be accounted for when selecting a candidate. The policy tries to establish depth and breadth requirements for these key acquisition positions. To quote the initial memorandum establishing key leadership positions, the DOD "... cannot afford to add risk to our programs by placing unqualified or unprepared personnel into key leadership

positions” (Kendall, 2013, p. 2). Questions 7 through 13 in the survey instrument identify where in the evaluation process, automated screening, resume review, or interview, each category is evaluated. Question 14 in the survey instrument ranks the importance an interview panel member places on each category. The additional guidance provides specific evaluation criterion for each requirement category for a given key leadership position. However, due to the limited number of key leadership position positions at PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS, and the fact that almost all of the personnel currently in key leadership position positions were hired into those positions prior to the new policy (Bagwell, 2015; Cadieux, 2015), this paper does not focus on evaluating each specific criterion for each position type. This paper will focus on how each category is evaluated during the interview process for senior positions and what weight each category has in selecting a candidate.

Office of Personnel Management Guidance

In September of 2008, OPM published its “Structure Interviews: A Practical Guide” (Office of Personnel Management, 2008). OPM’s “Structure Interviews: A Practical Guide” already incorporates several external academic references and peer reviewed papers that included some industry best practices. This document provides federal hiring managers:

“A practical information on designing structured interviews. The guide discusses *why* interviews should have structure, *what* structure consists of, and *how* to conduct a structured interview. It also addresses the pros and cons of different types of interview questions and helpful/harmful interviewing techniques. Additionally, the guide provides practical tools for developing and implementing a structured interview” (p. 3).

OPM strongly encourages the use of structured interviews when selecting a candidate. Unstructured interviews typically have: low levels of reliability, as defined by consistency among interviewers; low levels of validity, as defined as by assessment methods used to measure the potential for successful job performance; and unstructured interviews leave the government open to legal challenges (Terpsta, 1999; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 2003).

Prior to conducting interviews, OPM suggests doing the following activities (Office of Personnel Management, 2008):

1. Conduct a job analysis
2. Determine the competencies to be assessed by the interview
3. Choose the interview format and develop questions
4. Develop rating scales to evaluate candidates
5. Create interview probes
6. Pilot-Test the interview questions
7. Create the interviewer's guide
8. Document the development process

Some of these steps would occur prior or concurrently with the announcement on usajobs.gov of the new opening. The guide provides a complete overview of how to conduct quality structured interviews; however, for the purposes of this study, only sections three through six are critical. Those sections of the guide provide several valuable tips and best practices for conducting interviews and provided the basis of several of the survey instrument questions. Those include the use of:

- Q17: Use of probing questions during an interview
- Q18: Use of behavioral (past action) questions in an interview

- Q19: Use of situational (hypothetical) questions in an interview
- Q20: The use of standard rating schema to evaluate every candidate interviewed
- Q21: The use of general cognitive ability tests to evaluate candidates

Industry Best Practices

Through the review of the academic literature regarding hiring senior leaders, a theme began to emerge identifying several reasons why hiring senior leaders is difficult. One reason is organizations don't hire at this level often (Fernández-Aráoz, *Getting the Right People to the Top*, 2005). Also, the majority of people applying for positions at this level are competent, high performers (Fernández-Aráoz, *Getting the Right People to the Top*, 2005). Third, hiring managers have a hard time identifying the skills needed for the position, and discerning those skills during the interview process (Glinow, Drost, & Teagarden, 2002).

In 2002, Huo, Huang, and Napier, published "divergence or convergence: a cross-national comparison of personnel selection processes." This study was conducted by more than 20 scholars from 13 countries and regions, using the Best International Human Resource Management Practices Survey (BIHRMPS) as the measuring instrument. The BIHRMPS uses ten questions to gather data in the following areas:

- Technical skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Inter organizational skills
- Likelihood of the person staying with the organization, or Return on Investment

The study measured each person's opinion of the current state of hiring practices within their organization and what should be the hiring practices within that organization (Huo, Huang, & Napier, 2002). Although this study has results from several geographic regions and countries, this research paper will only focus on the results for the United States. The top three considerations used by organizations when hiring a candidate in the U.S. are (Huo, Huang, & Napier, 2002):

1. A personal interview
2. A person's ability to perform the technical requirements of the job
3. Proven work experience in a similar job

The same study found managers believed that the following should be the top considerations when hiring a candidate (Huo, Huang, & Napier, 2002):

1. A person's ability to perform the technical requirements of the job
2. A personal interview
3. A person's ability to get along well with others already working here

Comparing current results with the "should be" results shows one very interesting fact that most companies do not take into account a person's "ability to get along well with others already working here." Though Huo, Huang, and Napier's 2002 study does not specifically define "ability to get along well with others already working here" (Huo, Huang, & Napier, 2002) as emotional intelligence (EI), it does fit within Psychology Today's definition of EI (Psychology Today, 2016).

Most articles state that high EI is important for success in senior positions (Fernández-Aráoz, 2001; McDonald, 2013; Weber, 2014) and is reinforced as a need within the TACOM LCMC community (Archer, 2012). In the study EI, high intelligence

quotient (IQ), and work experience were evaluated for each study participant. The researchers then selected each candidate's top two traits. The results, in Table 2, show that candidates with EI as one of their two top traits were much less likely to have poor (failure) results in their new position (Fernández-Aráoz, 2001).

Table 2 *Success and Failure Profiles*

Factor	% found in Success	% Found in Failure
Experience	71	79
EI	74	24
IQ	48	71

To account for the Huo, Huang, and Napier, 2002 study and Fernández-Aráoz 2001 study, two questions were included in the survey instrument. Those were:

- Q23: When evaluating a candidate for a CORE NH-IV position, what is the most important skill the panel looks for in a candidate? Rank Emotional intelligence, Intellectual Ability, and Previous Experience from highest importance (1) to lowest (3).
- Q24: What do you individually believe is the most important skill for success in a senior leader? Rank Emotional intelligence, Intellectual Ability, and Previous Experience from highest importance (1) to lowest (3).

Decision making is a key element of any senior leader's job (Fernández-Aráoz , 2005; Martel, 2003). But evaluating a candidate's decision making capability is difficult to do during an interview. Lake and Highhouse's (2001) research into the methodology of decision making in the context of hiring provides a relevant model, Figure 2. First they decomposed decision making performance into three predictor constructs, and developed based on several peer reviewed papers. Those predictors are: decisiveness,

analysis, and adaptability. Then they conducted a research and identified three predictor methods that have correlation with predictors constructs. Those predictor methods are: In-basket, how well one organizes tasks; critical thinking tests scores; and finally situational judgment tests (SJTs).

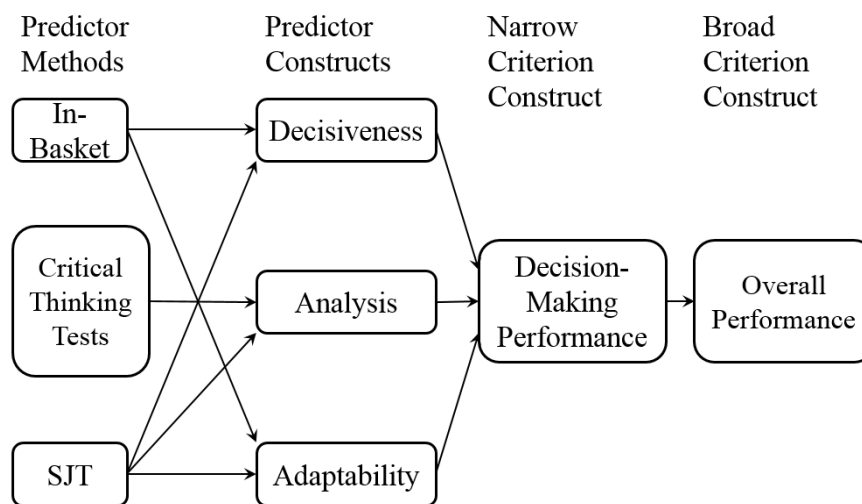


Figure 3 Predictor Methods and Constructs for Decision Making (Lake & Highhouse, 2001)

Using SJTs as a predictor method, within the interview process, provides a hiring authority the ability to evaluate a candidate's decisiveness, analysis, and adaptability (Lake & Highhouse, 2001). Decisiveness, analytic thinking, and flexibility are identified as key requirements within the key leadership position guidance (Kendall, Defense Acquisition University, 2013, Appendix 1). Though not a perfect alignment, the intent of the key leadership position guidance does align with the predictor constructs in Lake & Highhouse's model. The use of SJTs, in-basket, and critical thinking tests are all approved and recommend methods of assessing candidates within the federal government (Office of Personnel Management, 2008). Taking these three sources in aggregate shows

the use of situational (hypothetical) questions in an interview are critical to evaluate the future overall performance of a potential candidate.

Fairness in Hiring Practices

The importance of having a robust process in place for selecting a person for a senior leadership position is self-evident. Getting the best person for the job is critical to the success of any organization (Fernández-Aráoz, 2001). In addition, there are second and third order organizational effects of having hiring process that is perceived as fair (Hassan, 2013). The research shows that there is statistically significant positive correlation between higher perceived hiring fairness resulting in higher employee job involvement and organizational identification which lowers employee turnover intention. The research also shows that the inverse is also true, when personnel perceive the leadership is not fair in hiring practices, it decreases employee job involvement and organizational identification which increases employee turnover intention. The following question was included in the survey instrument to assess hiring fairness:

Q30: How would you rate the fairness of the current process used to hire CORE NH-IV positions?

Summary

This chapter detailed industry best practices, OPM guidance, and key leadership position requirements when hiring a senior leader. Identifying the right person for a key position starts with the selection process (Fernández-Aráoz, Getting the Right People to the Top, 2005). The research shows the type of questions that should be asked during an interview, while emphasizing that use the questions do eliminate the possibility of a poor selection. The research does provide recommendations and guidance to set the

conditions to get the best outcome possible (Fernández-Aráoz, 2001; Glinow, Drost, & Teagarden, 2002). These sources provided the intellectual underpinning for the research methodology and survey instrument used in this paper. The next chapter describes the methodology for collecting the data used in this study, the population evaluated, and the analytical process.

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology used to collect and analyze the quantitative and qualitative data for this study. This study focuses on determining how well the current process for selecting candidates senior-level positions within Program Executive Office (PEO) Ground Combat Systems (GCS) and PEO Combat Support & Combat Service Support (CS&CSS) align with the key leader position guidance, and with the best practices in private industry, and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) guidance. The research questions are:

- 1) How well do current hiring processes within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS address key leadership position requirements?
- 2) How well do the PEOs use the interview process recommendations provided by OPM?
- 3) How does the PEO's current interview process compare with industry best practices?
- 4) How can the PEO hiring process be improved?

The key leadership position requirements are relatively new to PEO GCS and PEO CS & CSS and this study provided an assessment of the current hiring practices against the new key leadership position requirements. This study also offers an excellent opportunity to assess the current hiring practices against the recommended process from OPM and against industry best practices.

Research Design

This study is structured as a mixed methods survey, incorporating qualitative and quantitative questions. Mixed method was selected to allow for the collection of data that

could be analyzed statistically and to allow respondents the ability to provide additional information in free text within the survey instrument. The quantitative survey questions were developed from various sources, described in detail in Chapter 2. The quantitative data gathered in this study are used to benchmark the current process, and determine if any gaps exist between the current process and new policy, OPM guidance, and industry best practices. This paper has no hypothesis to prove and has a limited sample size (51). Given the objectives of the paper and constraints of the sample, a limited statistical analysis was done.

The qualitative questions captured the strengths and areas for improvement within the overall hiring process, and within the face-to-face interview process within the PEOs. The qualitative responses were thematically analyzed, and the results are found in Chapter 4. Below are the four qualitative questions used in the survey instrument.

- Q33. What are the most important strengths of the current hiring process within the PEOs?
- Q34. What changes would you recommend to improve the hiring process within the PEOs?
- Q35. What are the most important strengths of the current face-to-face interview process within the PEOs?
- Q36. What changes would you recommend to improve the face-to-face interview process within the PEOs?

The survey is designed to be administered through a web-based tool, taking 10-15 minutes to complete. The research is focused on senior positions within the PEOs, therefore the instrument is designed to exclude potential respondents that do not meet the

grade requirement and have not participated in the PEO interview process at the NH-IV level.

Pilot Study

To help ensure the survey instrument would properly address the research questions, several reviews and pilot surveys were conducted. The survey instrument was first reviewed by several faculty at Lawrence Technological University (LTU), faculty at Defense Acquisition University (DAU), staff members within the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology (ASA (ALT)), and the deputy PEOs for GCS and CS&CSS.

Once the reviews were conducted, the survey instrument was sent to LTU's institutional review board (IRB) for approval. Once approval was granted on 4 November 2015, the survey was placed into Survey Monkey tm and two pilot surveys were conducted. The first was sent to Senior Service College Fellowship (SSCF) students located in Warren, MI. After the survey's logic was corrected to ensure non-qualified respondents could not participate, the survey was sent to the SSCF students located in Huntsville, AL to ensure the survey logic was correct, and the questions were clearly understood.

Data Collection

Once the pilot surveys were completed, the instrument was sent, through the Deputy to the Commanding General at TACOM, to the entire TACOM Life Cycle Management Command (LCMC) workforce. This was done because the policy of both PEOs is to include at least one person external to the organization on NH-IV interview panels. Additionally, sending the survey to the entire community allowed the survey to

capture any former employees of the PEOs who have transferred to another organization. The survey was completely anonymous and participation was voluntary. The instrument included the standard LTU IRB informed consent form. No compensation was provided and employees did not receive any benefits for completing the survey.

Summary

This chapter described the qualitative and quantitative methods used to collect the data. It further described the rationale for the qualitative survey questions, the steps taken to ensure the survey instrument asked the right questions, and the data collection method.

Chapter 4 – Findings

This chapter provides the results of the research. The quantitative part of the survey compares the current hiring process against the new key leadership position guidance, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) best practices, and industry best practices. The qualitative survey results were used to support and verify findings from the quantitative results.

Population & Sample Size

The survey was released to the entire TACOM Life Cycle Management Command (LCMC) workforce in December 2015. The workforce was instructed that the survey was intended for only NH-IV grade, or equivalent, employees. Of the 267 respondents, 101 met the grade requirement. Within the 101 respondents that met the grade requirement, 58 had participated in a core NH-IV hiring action within either Program Executive Office (PEO). Of the 58 that met these requirements, 51 completed the survey. The limited number of responses may be due to multiple hiring freezes and limited hiring authorities from the Department of Defense over the last five years (Cadieux, 2015). As of January 2016, PEO Ground Combat Systems (GCS) and PEO Combat Support & Combat Service Support (CS&CSS) are still under significant hiring restrictions, but can now start to hire NH-IV positions if approved by Department of the Army (Bagwell, 2015).

The limited response size (51) does not allow for significant statistical analysis, particularly moderating analyses, but is a large enough sample to answer the research questions reliably, and show trends in the hiring process. Assessments at the median and 95% confidence level were used to assess the moderating factors of position, years of

civilian service, and interview experience against 15 questions within the survey. The results of the analysis show there may be some small differences of opinions on the interview process, based on the moderating factors. However, there aren't enough respondents in each moderating factor sub-category to provide a reasonable margin of error. The graphical results of this analysis are located in Appendices B, C, and D.

Current Process Against Key Leadership Guidance

The survey instrument has seven questions designed to assess if, and where in the current hiring process, each category within the key leadership position guidance is evaluated. Respondents were allowed to select all steps within the process in which a key leadership position requirement is evaluated. The results in Table 3 show that each category is evaluated multiple times during the process; except for continuous learning. The key leadership position guidance requires each area to be evaluated during the candidate selection process, but is not specific in identifying at what step (automated screening, resume review, or interview) each category should be evaluated. All factors were evaluated multiple times throughout the process, except for continuous learning, as over half of the respondents stated that this factor is not evaluated. Ensuring senior leaders continue to develop professionally throughout their career is a key tenant of the key leadership position policies (Kendall, 2013). The rest of the key leadership position categories are evaluated during the resume review and interview steps.

Table 3 Responses to Key Leadership Position Evaluation Categories by Step in Process

key leadership position Evaluation Category	Did not evaluate	USAJOBS			Average Times Evaluated
		Automated Screening	Resume Review	Interview	
Education	1	20	45	22	1.7
Experience	1	20	50	44	2.2
Leadership	1	8	39	48	1.9
Program Execution	1	13	42	47	2.0
Technical Management	1	14	42	49	2.1
Business Management	7	11	38	42	1.9
Currency (Continuous Learning)	21	6	26	18	1.0

Question 14 of the survey instrument asked respondents to evaluate the importance of each key leadership position interview requirement. Respondents provided answers using a five point Likert scale. The response choices were “of no importance” (1), “less important than other criteria” (2), “of roughly equal importance” (3), “more important than other criteria” (4) and “most important criteria” (5). The results show that respondents consider “Leadership” to be the most important key leadership position category. Education and continuous learning score below equal importance. The results, see Table 4, found that the PEOs focus on leadership, as defined by the key leadership position guidance, above all other factors, followed by program execution, technical management, experience, business management, education, and finally continuous learning. The key leadership position policy has two major tenets; first, is candidates need to meet all the requirements in every category; and second, every category is of equal importance. In general, hiring managers look at the position and determine what are the most critical characteristics a leader must possess in order to excel in the position (to include factors such as what type of programs are being executed, what are the personnel or human capital management initiatives, etc). In some instances, it is determined that

one leadership category is determined to be more important than others given the environment (Cadieux, 2015). Consistency with the key leadership position policy should have yielded average scores closer together.

Table 4 Average Importance of Key Leadership Position Evaluation Category when Evaluating a Candidate

Category	Avg. score
Education	2.69
Experience	3.49
Leadership	4.20
Program Execution	3.88
Technical Management	3.63
Business Management	3.22
Currency (Continuous Learning)	2.06

Question 25 provides an assessment of respondent's knowledge of key leadership position policy. Twenty-five of the 51 (49%) respondents haven't read the policy, and only 11 (22%) have read and started to implement the key leadership position guidance. The remaining 15 respondents have read the policy, but haven't started implementation. The results show that PEO's need to do a better job of informing their selecting officials and interview panel members of the new guidance.

Current Process against Office of Personnel Management Best Practices

The survey instrument uses seven questions to assess the current interview process against OPM best practices. Respondents provided answers using a five point Likert scale. The response choices were "never", "rarely", "sometimes", "most of the time", and "always". The results, in Table 5, show that respondents are inconsistent in using the OPM best practices when conducting a hiring action. Several interesting findings can be found in the data. Since these questions are focused on best practices, respondents would be expected to be performing these actions most of the time or always

during an interview. Checking references is highly recommended by OPM guidance and is identified in the literature as a critical tool to ensure the right candidate is selected.

Panels ask for references 34% of the time, and check them 22% of the time. Panels use behavioral questions, most of the time or always 51% of the time and use situational questions most of the time or always 47% of the time. The use of behavioral and situational questions during an interview is highly recommended by OPM guidance, and is identified in the literature as a critical tool to ensure the right candidate is selected.

Additionally, panel members rarely ask follow up questions, only 22% of respondents do this most of the time or all the time. Properly constructed follow up questions can help panel members understand a candidate's response, and can provide clarity. The survey results show PEO's do an excellent job ensuring the use of standard candidate rating schema.

Table 5 Respondents use of OPM Best Practices During Interview Process

Questions	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Q15. Ask for References	16%	27%	24%	14%	20%
Q16. Check for References	16%	31%	31%	10%	12%
Q17. Ask Follow up Questions	14%	20%	45%	20%	2%
Q18. Use of Behavioral Questions	8%	10%	31%	31%	20%
Q19. Use of Situational Questions	6%	8%	39%	31%	16%
Q20. Use of Standard Rating Schema	0%	0%	12%	20%	69%
Q21. Use of Standardize Tests	71%	24%	2%	2%	2%

Current Process Against Industry Best Practice

The survey instrument uses two questions to assess the current interview process against industry best practices. The first question asked the respondents to force rank the emotional intelligence (EI), intellectual ability (IQ), and previous experience from “least important (1)” to “most important (3)” when selecting a candidate in the current hiring process. The second question asked respondents, using the same scale, to rank the importance of those factors in the success of their job. On average, respondents view EI (1.92), IQ (2.06), and previous experience (2.02) factors are roughly equal in the performance of their current jobs. However, when evaluating a candidate for a position, respondents use previous experience (2.37) as the most important factor, followed closely by IQ (2.22). EI (1.41) is the least important factor when selecting a candidate. This is particularly troublesome, given the academic research which states that EI is the most important factor contributing to the success of a senior leader. Even if the academic research is ignored, the results are still insightful. The results, in Table 6, show the candidate selection process doesn’t reflect what interviewers feel is needed to be successful at the NH-IV level.

Table 6 Importance of EI, IQ, and Previous Experience

	EI (Average)	IQ (Average)	Previous Experience (Average)
Q23. Importance when evaluating a candidate	1.41	2.22	2.37
Q24. Importance In your current position	1.92	2.06	2.02

General Hiring Process Questions

The survey instrument used four questions to collect data on the general hiring process for core NH-IV positions within each PEO. The first of these questions asked how many questions are asked during an interview. The results show that over 80% of the respondents ask eight or more questions during an interview and that 71% of interviews are conducted in less than 50 minutes. Broken down further, 59% of respondents ask nine or more questions during an interview. Unfortunately, the survey instrument did not allow respondents to more precisely answer the number of questions during an interview question. Still some important findings can be drawn from these results. Assuming that interviews last the full 50 minutes, and that there are nine questions being asked, the interviewer has about five and a half minutes to answer each question. The interview is the primary evaluation tool for selecting candidates within each PEO's hiring process. The limited time of the interviews and the breadth of questions could limit the depth of answers given, and result in a less than complete assessment of the candidate.

The survey also asked respondents to provide their own personal satisfaction with the current core NH-IV hiring process. Of all the respondents (51), only 49% respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the current hiring process. Respondents who directly work within PEO GCS or PEO CS&CSS (36) have a slightly higher satisfaction level with the process, with 56% of respondents being satisfied or very satisfied with the current hiring process. These results support the qualitative results. While the respondents see strengths and are satisfied with some aspects of the process, the respondents also see a need for improvement.

Finally the survey asked respondents to rate the fairness of the current process to interviewees. According to the Office of Personnel Management, getting the best candidate is most important in hiring actions, but fairness is a key enabler. The perception of fairness in the process is critical to encourage applicants to apply and reduce equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaints. Ensuring the process is fair will ensure hiring actions will not be overturned by an EEO complaint (Office of Personnel Management, 2005). Additionally, the perception of fair hiring practices by the workforce provides significant improvement in employee organizational identification, job involvement, and reduces an employee's desire to leave the organization (Hassan, 2013). Thirty three percent of the respondents that work within PEO GCS or PEO CS&CSS (36) view the process as somewhat fair, while 33% of respondents within PEO GCS or PEO CS&CSS view the process as very fair. This leaves 34% of respondents with a neutral or negative view on the process fairness. The respondents are senior personnel tasked to execute the respective hiring policies of PEO GCS & PEO CS&CSS. The high neutral or negative view of process fairness, at the senior level, along with the qualitative results, should be a concern to the leadership of PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS.

Demographics

One of the key issues facing the federal government, and TACOM in particular is the oncoming wave of retirements in the next ten years (Hicks, 2014). One secondary effect of this retirement boom will be a loss of senior leader's experience, including experience conducting hiring actions. Of the 51 respondents 57% (29) of them are age 50 or older. Age 50 is significant, because the research shows that the average age of

retirement for a federal worker is 60.5 years old (Office of Personnel Management, 2014). Each PEO is currently working on ways to capture the knowledge of the workforce prior to the impending retirement wave.

Qualitative Data

The survey instrument asked respondents to provide the strengths and areas for improvement of the overall hiring process, and the face-to-face interview process. The average number of responses to each of the four questions was 38. Using a thematic analysis, the responses were grouped into similar themes, see Table 7). The responses were varied, but did provide a distinct theme. The process PEOs use for hiring and conduct face-to-face interviews is the greatest strength. Each PEO has a detailed hiring policy that emphasizes areas within the overall Government hiring process and adds additional rigor to the process. Respondents noted that the PEO's current processes that need the most improvement. This qualitative result shows that respondents like the policy but are really interested in making improvements.

The second greatest strength within the hiring process and face-to-face interviews are the panel members. Each PEO policy requires personnel external to the organization to serve as panel members, reviewing resumes and conducting interviews. The respondents consider this a great strength of the process. But the second greatest weakness of the face-to-face interviews is also the panel members. The respondent's negative opinion of the panel members is attributed to perceived bias by panel members.

Table 7 *Top Qualitative Results*

Question and Response	Percentage of Respondents
Strengths of the Overall Process	
- Process	55%
- Panel Members	22%
Areas for improvement in Overall Process	
- Process	62%
- Fairness	12%
- Candidate Pool	12%
Strengths of the face-to-face Interview	
- Process	73%
- Panel Members	11%
Areas for improvement of the face-to-face interview	
- Process	62%
- Panel Members Bias	14%

The results at first glance seem contradictory, but the results are meaningful. The results show that the current process and panel member composition are strengths and, but need improvements. This means that there are strengths that the PEOs are able to build upon. The fact that these senior leaders see the need for improvement is an opportunity for the PEO, since making the case for change is the first step in any successful transformation effort (Kotter, 1996).

Summary

The results show senior leaders at PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS a snap shot of their current core NH-IV hiring process and identified no significant deficiencies, nor was the survey instrument designed to do so. The survey instrument was designed to assess the current process against the key leadership position guidance, OPM guidance and industry best practices. The results show that small changes throughout the current process will help the PEOs meet the new key leadership position guidance, when hiring for those positions. Additionally, the results provide the PEOs areas for improvement in

the general interview process for core NH-IV positions. One important fact to come out of the results is each PEO's senior leaders are not satisfied (44%) with the current process. The qualitative results also show that 62% of respondents believe the process needs to be improved. The most interesting result to come out of the survey responses is the disparity between what interviewers don't look for in a candidate (EI) and what they need for their own position (EI). Given the emphasis on the need for EI in senior leaders found in the literature review and in previous Senior Service College Fellowship research (Archer, 2012).

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

This study compared the current interview process for senior positions within Program Executive Office (PEO) Ground Combat Systems (GCS) and PEO Combat Support & Combat Service Support (CS&CSS) with the guidance for key leadership positions, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Guidance, and best practices in industry. The results provide important insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current practice, and suggest ways to improve current hiring practice for future key leadership position hiring actions. The demographics of the federal workforce, and the Detroit Arsenal in particular, make the results of this study even more significant. By 2016, nearly three in five senior executives and almost half of managers will be eligible to retire (Rein, 2013). The demographics of the Detroit Arsenal, where PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS are located, closely map to the overall federal workforce demographics, and will face the issue of hiring new key leaders soon. Although the study was focused on senior leader positions, the recommendations have applicability, and should be implemented, across PEO hiring practices.

Discussion of Results

This study focused on determining how well the current senior position interview processes within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS aligns with the key leader position guidance, and with best practices in private industry and OPM guidance. The research questions (RQ) were as follows:

(RQ1): How well do current hiring processes within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS address key leadership position requirements?

The hiring processes within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS are robust, and do evaluate the key leadership position factors. However, the results of the survey instrument show the PEOs current process doesn't assign each category equal value, which is key in evaluating breadth of experience.

The key leadership position guidance requires each area to be evaluated during the candidate selection process, but is not specific in identifying at what step (Automated screening, resume review, or interview) each category should be evaluated. All factors were evaluated multiple times throughout the process, except for continuous learning, as over half of respondents stated that this factor is not evaluated (Table 3).

The results found that PEOs focus more on leadership, as defined by the key leadership position guidance, than all the other factors, followed by program execution, technical management, experience, business management, education, and finally continuous learning (Table 4). The key leadership position policy has two major tenets; first, the candidates need to meet all requirements in every category; and second, that every category is of equal importance. Consistency with the key leadership position policy should have yielded more equal average scores.

(RQ2): How well do the PEOs use the interview process recommendations provided by OPM?

OPM provides a long list of recommendations on how to conduct interviews. The survey instrument used seven questions to assess the current interview

process against OPM best practices (Table 5). The results show that respondents are inconsistent in using the OPM best practices when conducting a hiring action. The data provided several interesting findings. Checking references is highly recommended by OPM, and is identified in the literature as a critical tool to ensure the right candidate is selected. Panels ask for references 34% of the time, and check them 22% of the time. Panels use behavioral questions most of the time or always during interviews 51% of the time and use situational questions most of the time or always during interviews 47% of the time. The use of behavioral and situational questions during an interview is highly recommended by OPM guidance and is identified in the literature as a critical tool to ensure the right candidate is selected. Additionally, panel members rarely ask follow up questions, only 22% of respondents do this most of the time or all the time. Properly constructed follow up questions can help panel members understand a candidate's response, and can provide clarity. The survey results show the PEO's do an excellent job ensuring the use of standard candidate rating schema.

(RQ3): How does the PEOs current interview process compare with industry best practices?

The survey instrument uses two questions to assess the current interview process against industry best practices. The first question asked the respondents to force rank the emotional intelligence (EI), intellectual ability (IQ), and previous experience from least important (1) to most important (3) when selecting a candidate in the current hiring process. The second question asked respondents, using the same scale, to rank the importance of those factors in the success of their job. The results show that interviewers

overemphasize experience and underemphasize EI when selecting a candidate, while viewing the need for high EI as roughly equal in importance for successes in the respondents own positions (Table 6). This is particularly troublesome, given the academic research which states that EI is the most important factor contributing to the success of a senior leader. Even if the academic research is ignored, the results are still insightful. The results show that the candidate selection process doesn't truly reflect what is needed to be successful at the NH-IV level.

(RQ4): How can the PEO hiring process be improved?

Specific recommendations for improvement in the process will be discussed in the recommendations section of this chapter. However, the quantitative and qualitative (Table 7) survey results show that the senior leaders are interested in improving the process. This is critical to implementing any change to the current process, since the respondents of the instrument will be the ones charged with executing future hiring actions. Personnel that participated in the survey are all senior leaders across the Detroit Arsenal, and would be responsible for implementing any recommended changes to hiring policies. Having this key demographic already thinking the process needs to be improved will make implementing the recommendations of this study easier (Kotter, 1996).

Recommendations

On the aggregate, the survey results indicate that the current process needs improvement to meet the new key leadership position policy guidance, the OPM best practices guidance, and to incorporate best hiring practices. Within PEO GCS & PEO CS&CSS there are a very limited sub-set of the core NH-IV positions that would qualify

as a key leader position, given the current guidance. To address this limited subset, the PEOs should develop appendixes to the hiring policies that address hiring a key leader position, while updating general hiring policies with the recommendations below.

Specific recommended improvements to meet key leadership position policy guidance are:

- Develop a standard location within the evaluation process (Automated screening, resume review, or interview) for evaluating each key leadership position evaluation category.
- Assign equal weight to each evaluation category for key leadership positions and Core NH-IV positions within the PEO.
- Create a PEO interview guide based on the OPM guidance (Office of Personnel Management, 2005, p. 14) and the functional key leadership position requirements (USD(AL&T), 2016).

In conjunction with developing key leader position appendixes, PEO GCS and CS&CSS should also update the general hiring policies. The survey shows 44% of respondents who directly work within PEO GCS or PEO CS&CSS are neutral or not satisfied with the current process. The survey also shows there is a 34% neutral or negative perception of the fairness with the current hiring process among senior personnel (NH-IV level) personnel tasked to execute hiring actions within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS. Senior leaders within the PEOs involved in hiring have significant concerns with the procedure and the fairness of the current policy. Research shows an increased perception of procedural fairness plays an important role in enhancing job

involvement and lowering turnover within Government agencies (Hassan, 2013). To increase the positive perception of fairness and improve the hiring process, the PEOs should implement the following recommendations in the hiring process policy:

- Always ask for and check references (U.S. Merit Protection Board, 2005).
Use the reference check to assess a candidate's emotional intelligence (EI).
- Use behavioral and situational questions during interviews. Use the questions to evaluate the candidate's judgment, mastery of required competencies, and EI.
- Use the resume review step in the process to ensure candidates have the experience necessary for the position.
- Allow the use of follow up questions. But limit the use, based on the OPM guidance (Office of Personnel Management, 2005, p. 12).
- Conduct practice interviews to refine questions prior to conducting interviews (Office of Personnel Management, 2005, p. 14). Use personnel who conduct the resume review as practice interviewees.
- Create a PEO interview guide based on the OPM guidance (Office of Personnel Management, 2005, p. 14).
- Develop mandatory training for personnel that participate in the interview process. This training should be required for all interviewers or selecting officials. This training could be done for each interview panel or could be done at a specified interval.

- Extend the interview time for conducting an interview or limit the questions.
- When using a second round of interviews for candidate selection, develop 1st and 2nd round questions together. This will eliminate duplicate questions and provide a more holistic view of the candidates.
- Holistically evaluate the answers from the 1st and 2nd round of interviews when selecting a candidate.

Limitations

This study was limited to the hiring practices of PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS for core NH-IV (senior level) positions. Both organizations are located at the TACOM LCMC on the Detroit Arsenal in Warren, MI. At the time of the study, PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS did not have a specific policy for hiring key leadership positions; however, each organization has similar core employee hiring policies for core NH-IV pay band positions. For the purposes of this study, core NH-IV positions within each PEO was considered a key leadership position. The study respondents were limited to the Detroit Arsenal, by grade (NH-IV, equivalent, or higher), and by experience serving on a PEO GCS or PEO CS&CSS core NH-IV interview panel. One should not infer results from PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS will be true across all PEOs given potential differences in hiring policies and practices.

Implications of Further Research

The purpose of this study is to compare the current interview process for senior positions within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS with the guidance for key leadership positions, OPM Guidance, and best practices in industry. These comparisons provided

important insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current practice, and suggest ways to improve current practice. Although the data and results are location specific, the survey instrument is not location specific, and could be used by other PEOs, with minor modifications, to assess hiring practices against key leadership position policy, OPM guidance, and best practices.

Additionally, further research could address fairness across the organizations at the Detroit Arsenal, using Hassan's 2013 research as a starting point. Future research could be done in area of standardized testing use during candidate evaluation process within DOD.

Summary and Conclusion

This study provides senior leaders within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS an assessment of the current hiring practices. The literature review provided the basis for the survey instrument questions. The quantitative results of the survey clearly identified areas for improvement and showed that the PEO's senior leaders are not satisfied (44%) with the current process. The qualitative data also shows that 62% of respondents believe the process needs to be improved.

The federal government, and in particular PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS, are facing a demographic challenge with the impending retirement wave from the baby boomer generation (Hicks, 2014). Additionally, PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS are now implementing new hiring guidance for senior leaders (Kendall, 2013). The dual trials of replacing 50% of the workforce; while meeting the new key leadership position guidance will be a challenge for senior executives and hiring managers within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS. The results and recommendations of this study provides foundational data that

will allow those senior executives and hiring managers within PEO GCS and PEO CS&CSS to take on the challenge, ensuring that the right candidates are selected for future senior leadership positions.

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Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

ASA(ALT)	Assistant Secretary of the Army Acquisition Logistics & Technology
BIHRMPS	Best International Human Resource Management Practices Survey
CEO.....	Chief Executive Officer
CS&CSS	Combat Support & Combat Service Support
DAE	Defense Acquisition Executive
DAU	Defense Acquisition University
DOD	Department of Defense
GCS.....	Ground Combat Systems
HON	Honorable
EEO.....	Equal Employment Opportunity
EI.....	Emotional Intelligence
IRB.....	Intuition Review Board
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
LCMC	Life Cycle Management Command
LTU.....	Lawrence Technological University
PEO	Program Executive Office
PMO	Program Management Office
OPSEC	Operations Security
RQ.....	Research Question
SJT	Situational Judgment Test
SSCF	Senior Service College Fellows
USD (AL&T)	Under Secretary of Defense Acquisition Logistics & Technology

Appendix A – Survey Instrument

Discriminators

- 1) What is your current position (pick the one most applicable):
 - a. NH-III, DB-3, GS 13 or below: End Survey
 - b. NH-IV, DB 4, or GS 14-15 non-supervisor
 - c. NH-IV, DB 4, or GS 14-15 First line supervisor
 - d. NH-IV, DB 4, or GS 14-15 Director, second line supervisor or above
- 2) Have you sat on an interview, or been a selecting official, for a CORE NH-IV position in either PEO GCS or PEO CS&CSS?
 - a. Yes: Continue
 - b. No: To the end of the survey

Demographics

- 3) How many years of federal civilian service do you have?
 - a. 1-5 years
 - b. 6-15 years
 - c. 16-25 years
 - d. 25 + years
- 4) What is your primary career field?
 - a. Program management
 - b. Engineering
 - c. Logistics
 - d. Acquisition
 - e. Cost
 - f. Budget/Finance
 - g. Product Assurance, Production, or Test
 - h. Information Technology (including Information Assurance)
- 5) What is your current organization?
 - a. PEO GCS
 - b. PEO CS&CSS
 - c. TARDEC
 - d. ILSC
 - e. TACOM
 - f. SOSIE
 - g. Other: If Other, specify

- 6) How many interview panels have you participated in?
- a. 1-5
 - b. 6-10
 - c. 11-20
 - d. 20 +

Interview Process Questions (Using Key Leadership Position Definitions)

For the purposes of this survey please use the following definitions:

Education: this is the degree requirements for the position

Experience: Level III certification in respective career field and years in an acquisition position

Leadership: Demonstrated competencies in leading change, leading people, managing results, building coalitions, business acumen, and enterprise wide prospective.

Program Execution: Leadership and management of defense acquisition program covering every aspect of the acquisition process, such as integration, engineering, program control, test and evaluation, deployment (fielding), configuration management, production and manufacturing, quality assurance, and logistics support.

Technical Management: Knowledge and acquisition experience in the position career field. This is the evaluation area following best business practices, regulatory and statutory requirements for a given career field.

Business Management: Is the oversight of controlling, leading, monitoring, organizing, and planning for the business success of the program. This includes, cost estimating, budgeting, requirements development with the user, contracting strategy, and program planning. This also includes evaluating best value decisions for the government.

Currency: Continuous learning (80 hours every 2 years) with courses directly related to continuous learning in the functional area.

- 7) During the selection process, when do you evaluate an applicant's **Education** (Select all that apply)?
- a. Do not evaluate
 - b. USAJOBS automated screening
 - c. Resume Review
 - d. During Interview
 - e. Other: Please Specify
- 8) During the selection process, when do you evaluate an applicant's **Experience** (Select all that apply)?
- a. Do not evaluate
 - b. USAJOBS automated screening
 - c. Resume Review
 - d. During Interview
 - e. Other: Please Specify
- 9) During the selection process, when do you evaluate an applicant's **Leadership** (Select all that apply)?
- a. Do not evaluate
 - b. USAJOBS automated screening
 - c. Resume Review
 - d. During Interview
 - e. Other: Please Specify
- 10) During the selection process, when do you evaluate an applicant's **Program Execution** (Select all that apply)?
- a. Do not evaluate
 - b. USAJOBS automated screening
 - c. Resume Review
 - d. During Interview
 - e. Other: Please Specify

11) During the selection process, when do you evaluate an applicant's **Technical Management** (Select all that apply)?

- a. Do not evaluate
- b. USAJOBS automated screening
- c. Resume Review
- d. During Interview
- e. Other: Please Specify

12) During the selection process, when do you evaluate an applicant's **Business Management** (Select all that apply)?

- a. Do not evaluate
- b. USAJOBS automated screening
- c. Resume Review
- d. During Interview
- e. Other: Please Specify

13) During the selection process, when do you evaluate an applicant's **Currency (Continuous Learning)** (Select all that apply)?

- a. Do not evaluate
- b. USAJOBS automated screening
- c. Resume Review
- d. During Interview
- e. Other: Please Specify

14) Weight the importance of each factor below when evaluating candidates for a CORE NH-IV position. (Scale uses not important, less important than other criteria, roughly equal to other criteria, more important than other criteria, most important, or Not Applicable)

- a. Education
- b. Experience (Level III certified in respective career field, and years of acquisition position)
- c. Executive Experience
- d. Program Execution
- e. Technical Management
- f. Business Management
- g. Currency (Continuing Professional Development)

Guidance from the office of Personnel Management Questions

- 15) As a selecting official, do you ask for references?
- a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Most of the Time
 - e. Always
 - f. N/A not a selecting official
- 16) As a selecting official, do you check references of recommended candidates?
- a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Most of the Time
 - e. Always
 - f. N/A not a selecting official
- 17) As part of a panel, do you ask follow up questions to interviewee's responses?
- a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Most of the Time
 - e. Always
- 18) As part of a panel, do you use behavioral (past action) questions during interviews?
- a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Most of the Time
 - e. Always
- 19) As part of a panel, do you use situational (hypothetical) questions during interviews?
- a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Most of the Time
 - e. Always

- 20) As part of a panel, do you discuss and agree to use a standard rating scheme prior to conducting interviews?
- a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Most of the Time
 - e. Always
- 21) Do you use performance on general cognitive ability tests during the interview process?
- a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Most of the Time
 - e. Always
- 22) On interview panels, how many interviewers are not from the office conducting the hiring action?
- a. Never
 - b. At Least one
 - c. Multiple
 - d. All

Industry Best Practices (Bock, 2015) & (Fernández-Aráoz, 2001)

- 23) Of the skills below, rank them in order of importance during the current interview process for a CORE NH-IV position (highest to lowest)? (Force Rank, Random for each respondent)
- a. High Emotional Intelligence (social skills)
 - b. High Intellectual Ability (IQ)
 - c. Previous Experience
- 24) Of the skills below rank them order of importance for success for a CORE NH-IV (highest to lowest)? (Force Rank, Random for each respondent)
- a. High Emotional Intelligence (social skills)
 - b. High Intellectual Ability (IQ)
 - c. Previous Experience

Moderator

- 25) Are you familiar with the Army Key Leader Position and Qualification Criteria Policy issued by the Defense Acquisition Executive?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

General Practices

- 26) Do you evaluate an interviewee across multiple position competences from the answer to a single question?
- a. Never
 - b. Rarely
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Most of the Time
 - e. Always
- 27) How many questions the panel ask during an interview?
- a. 1-4
 - b. 5
 - c. 6
 - d. 7
 - e. 8
 - f. 9+
- 28) Generally, how long are face-to-face interviews?
- a. Less than 30 minutes
 - b. 30-39 minutes
 - c. 40-49 minutes
 - d. 50-59 minutes
 - e. 60+ minutes
- 29) How satisfied are you with the current process used to hire CORE NH-IV positions?
- a. Very Dissatisfied
 - b. Dissatisfied
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Satisfied
 - e. Very Satisfied

30) How would you rate the fairness of the current process used to hire CORE NH-IV positions?

- a. Very Unfair
- b. Somewhat Unfair
- c. Neither Fair nor Unfair
- d. Somewhat Fair
- e. Very Fair

Demographics:

31) What is your gender?

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Prefer not to answer

32) What is your age?

- a. 29 and under
- b. 30-39
- c. 40-49
- d. 50-59
- e. 59+
- f. Prefer not to answer

Qualitative Questions:

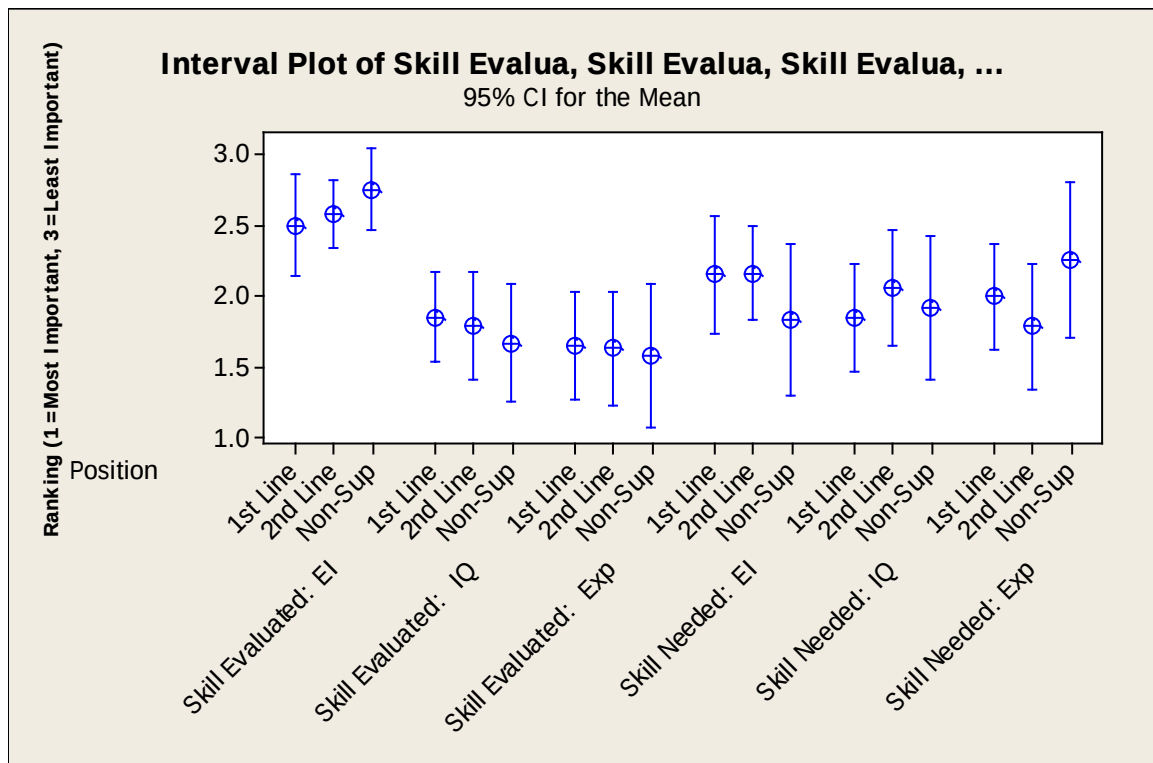
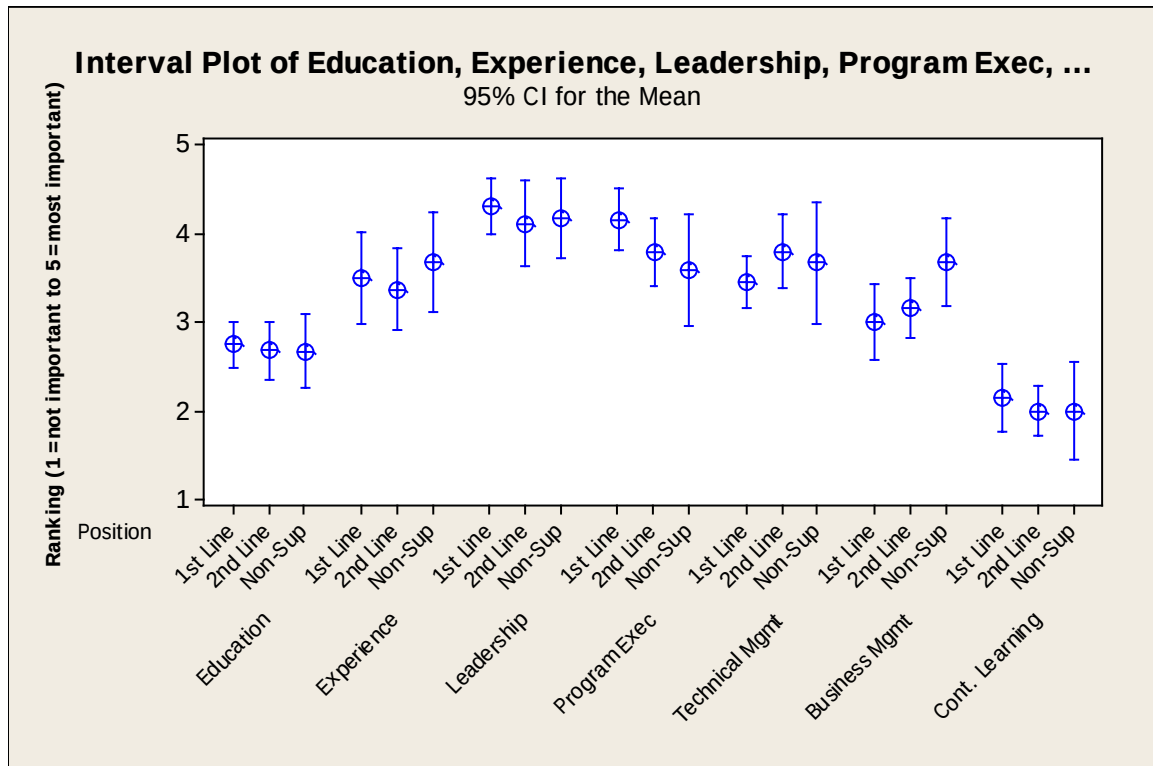
1) What are the most important strengths of the current hiring process within the PEOs?

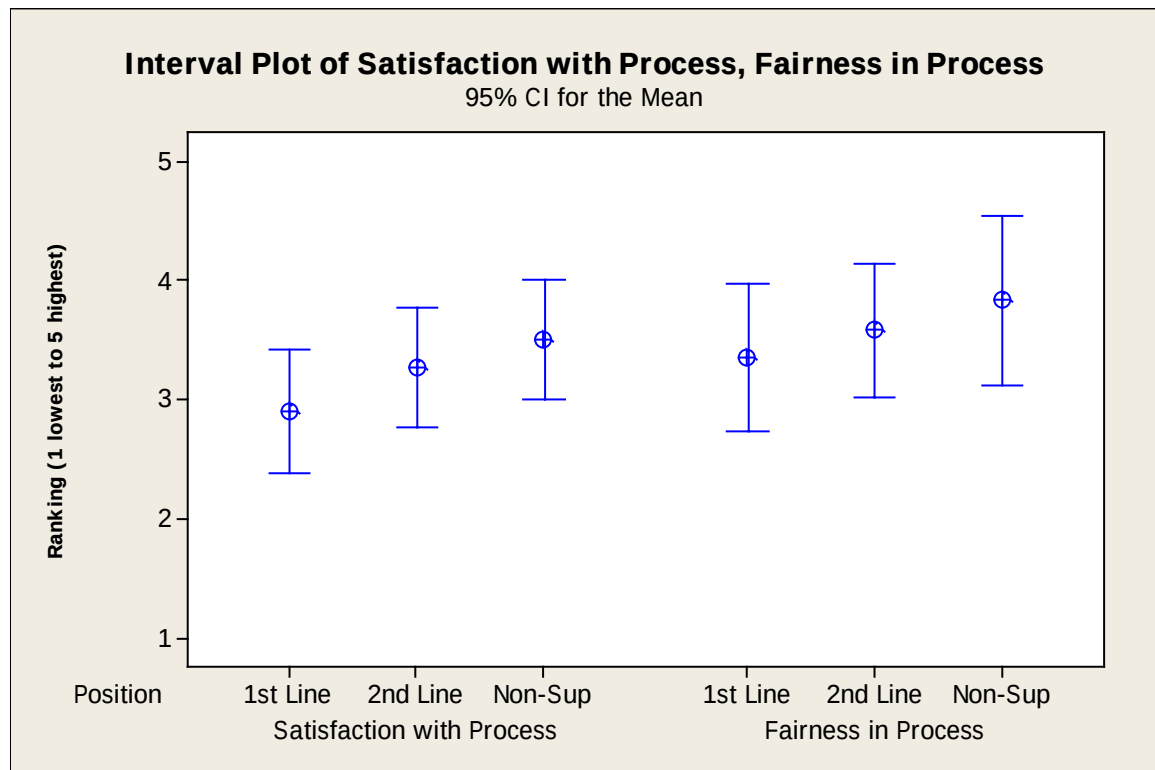
2) What changes would you recommend to improve the hiring process within the PEOs?

3) What are the most important strengths of the current face-to-face interview process within the PEOs?

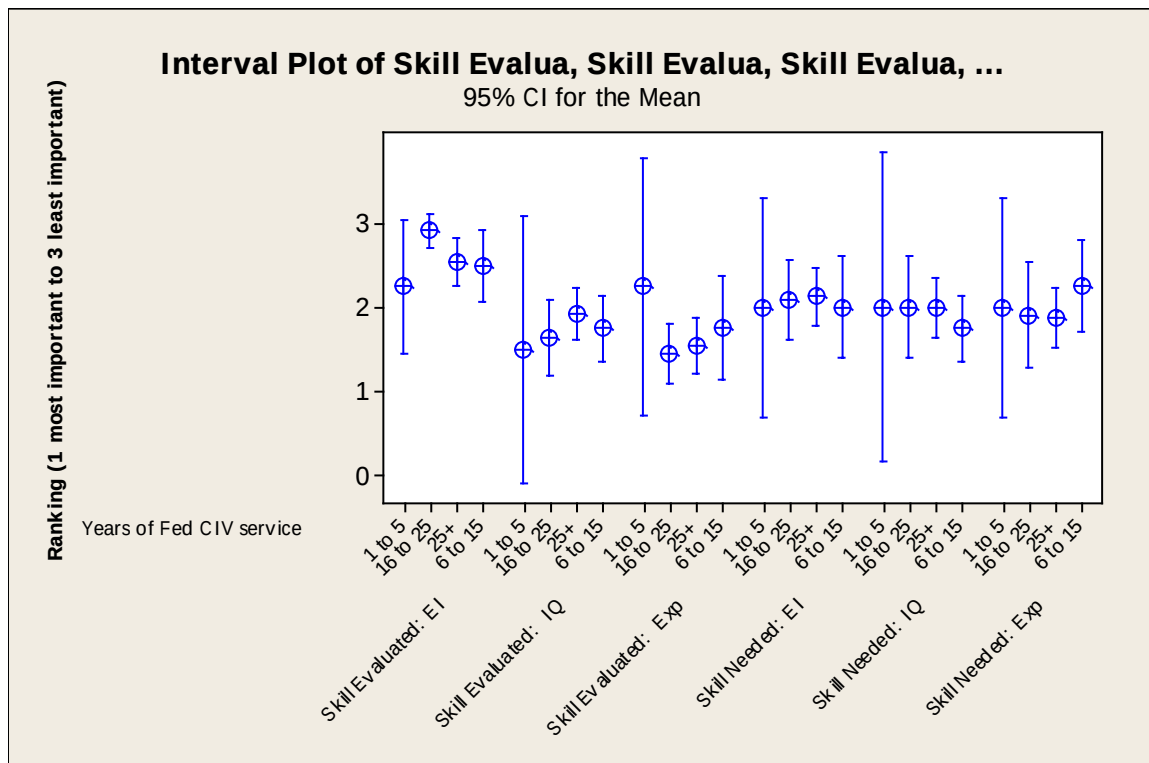
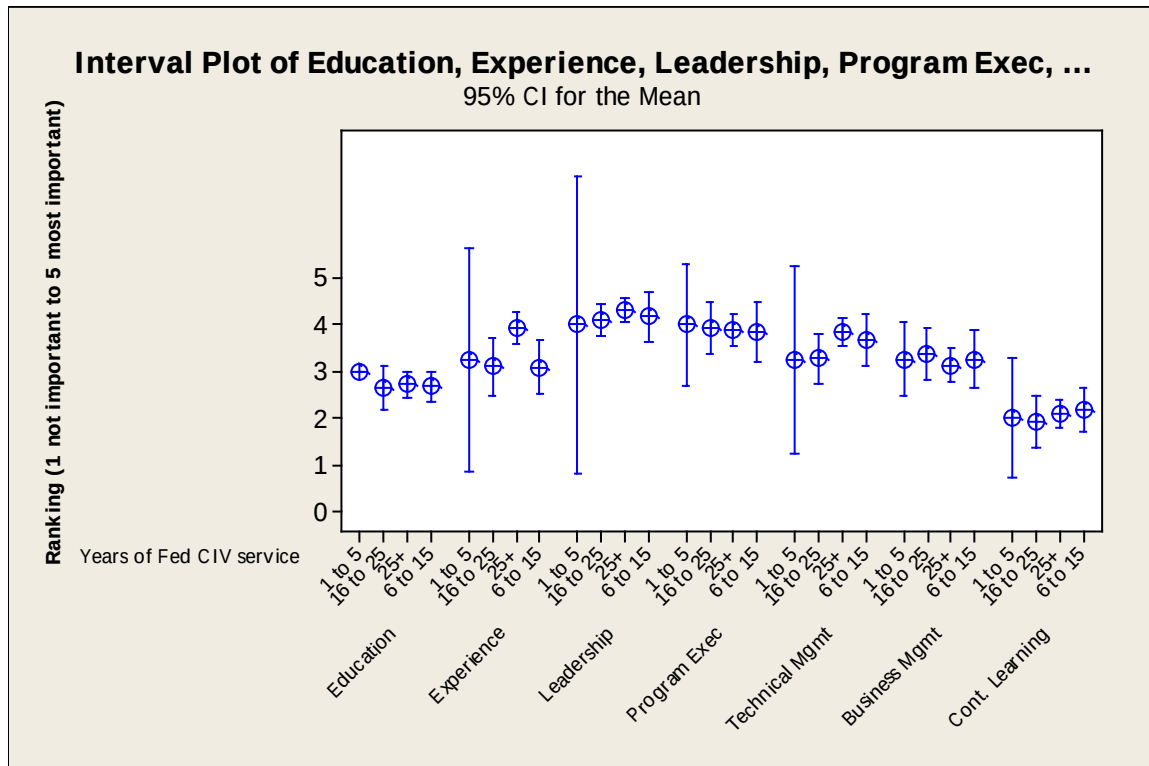
4) What changes would you recommend to improve the face-to-face interview process within the PEOs?

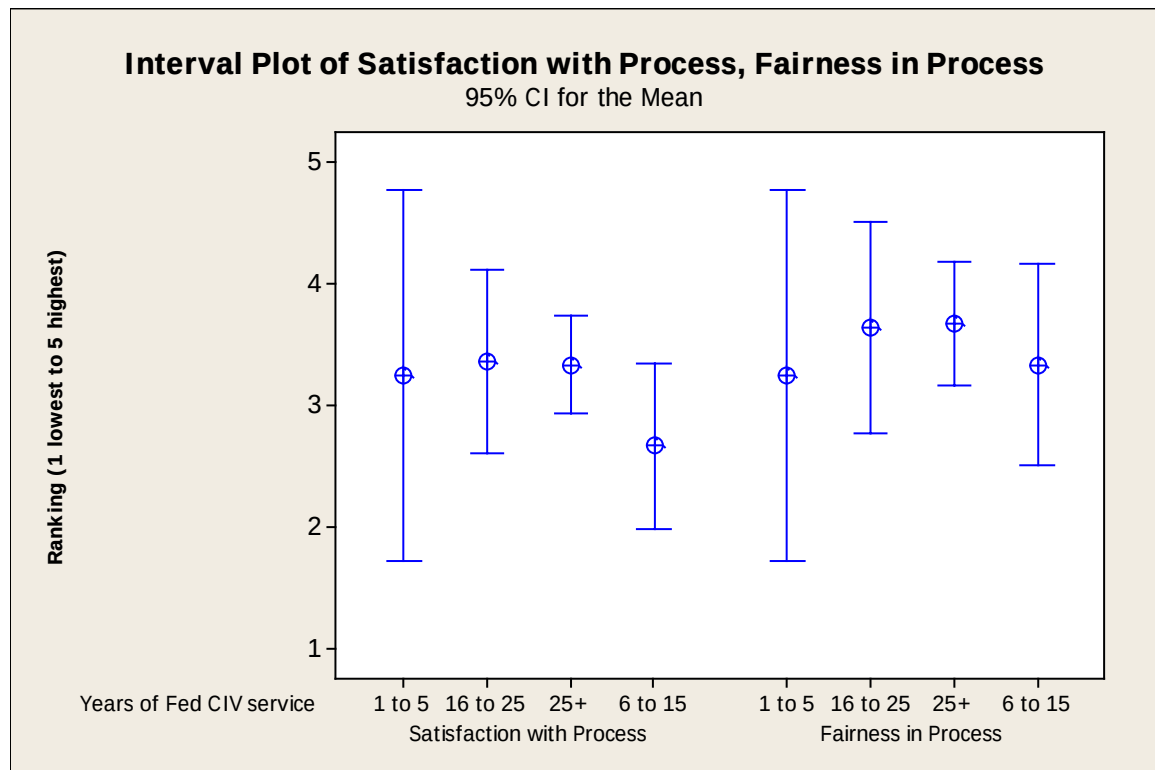
**Appendix B – Median and Standard Deviation of Survey Responses along
Respondents Position**



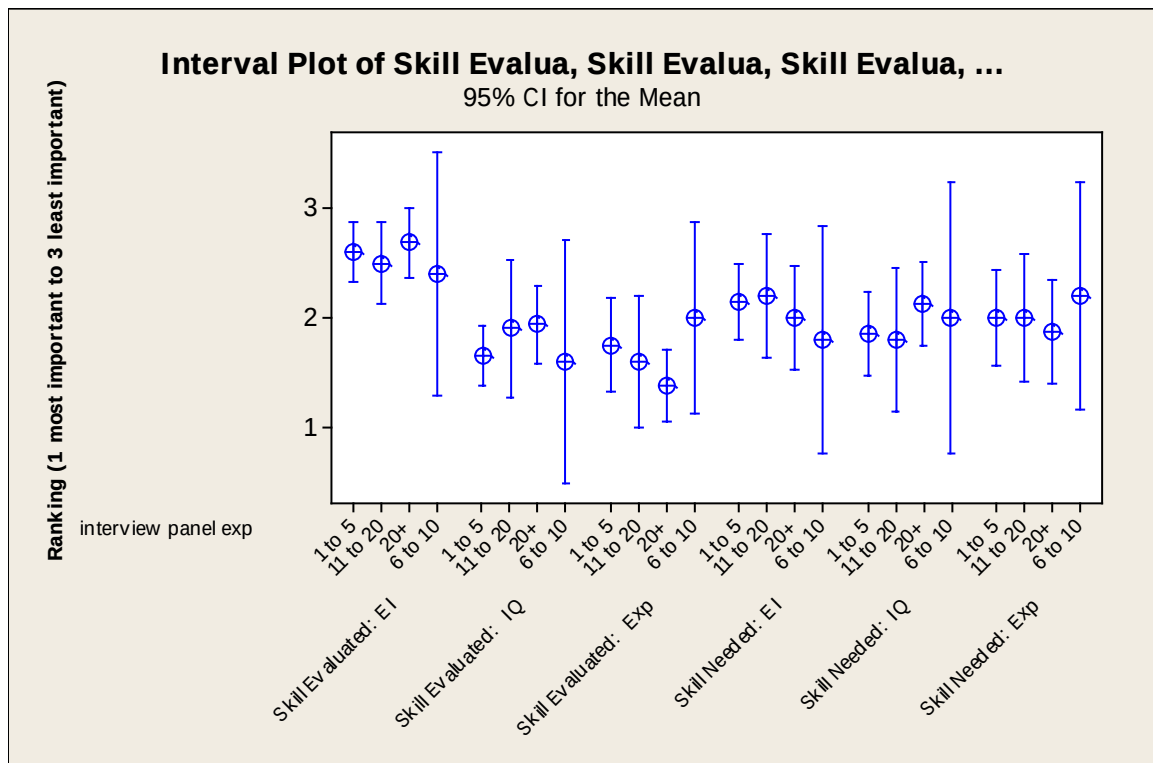
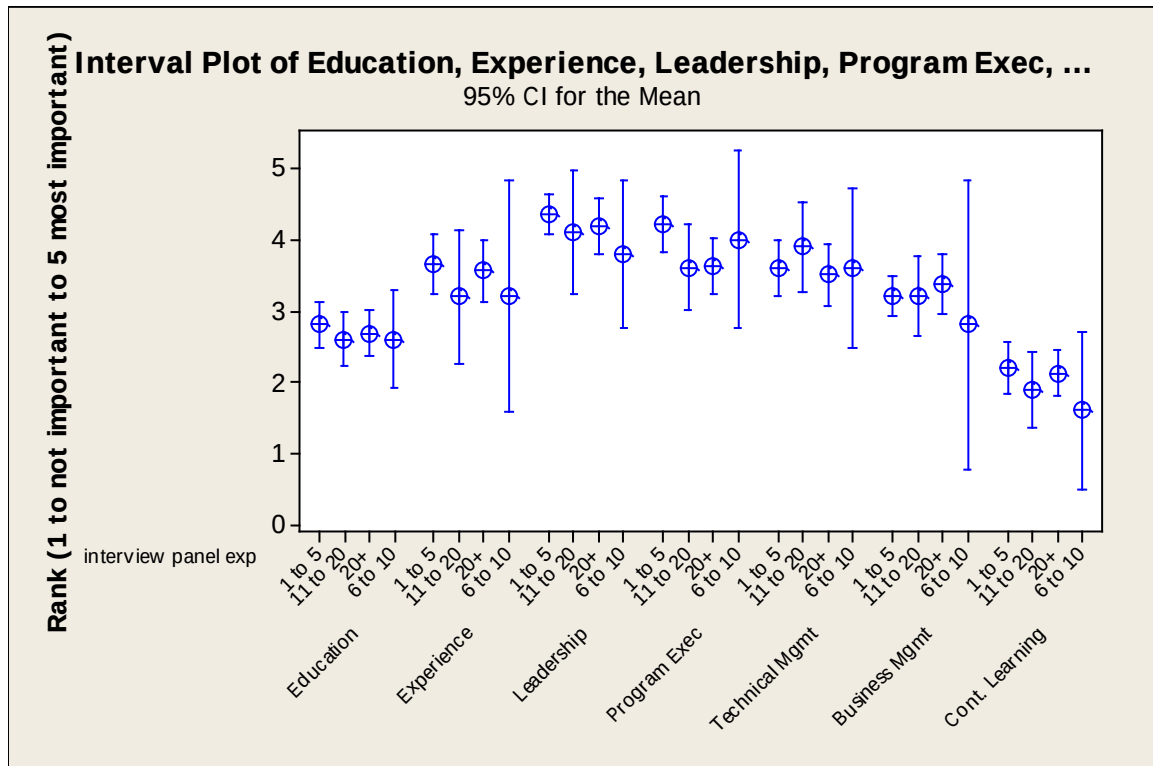


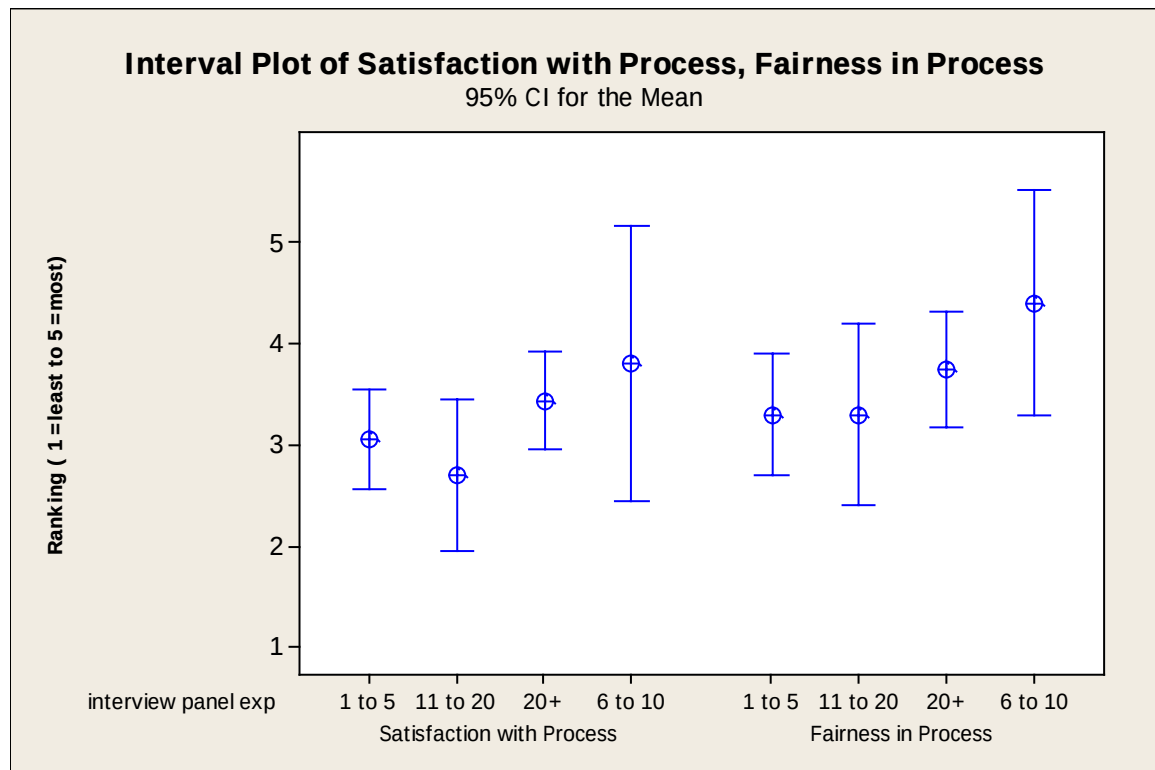
**Appendix C – Median and Standard Deviation of Survey Responses along
Respondents Years of Federal Civilian Service**





**Appendix D – Median and Standard Deviation of Survey Responses along
Respondents Interview Panel Experience**





Author Biography

Aaron Hart is originally from Mason, Michigan. Aaron entered Government Service in 2000, working for the Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center (TARDEC) primarily focused in advanced materials, manufacturing technologies, and alternative energy areas.

In 2008 Aaron started working for the Product Manager Office Heavy Tactical Vehicles (PdM HTV) as a systems engineer, then as a System Acquisition Manager. During which, he successfully achieved several major acquisition milestones; including Urgent Materiel Release (MK1077 flat rack, the Enhanced Container Handling Unit); Type Classification and Full Materiel Release (M915A5 Line Haul Truck). During his tenure with PdM HTV, Aaron managed the acquisition of over 2,600 tactical trucks and numerous pieces of ancillary equipment valued over 1.2 billion dollars.

In 2011, Aaron transitioned to the Robotic Systems Joint Project Office where he led the team to a successful Materiel Development Decision for the Husky Mounted Detection System. In 2013, He took a position as the System Engineering Team Leader for the Program Executive Office Ground Combat Systems (PEO GCS) staff. In this role, he coordinated engineering activities across the Army's combat vehicle programs. Aaron served as the independent technical authority during several design reviews and led the PEO GCS system commonality efforts.

Aaron and his wife Jessica have two wonderful & energetic children, Henry and Sydney (ages 3 & 2 respectively). In his limited free time, he enjoys the sharing his love of the outdoors with his children, completing home improvement projects, and working on his Jeep.

CAREER CHRONOLGY:

- Jul 2015- Present: Defense Acquisition University Senior Service College Fellowship, Warren, MI
- Mar 2013- Jul 2015: System Engineering Team Leader, PEO GCS
- Jan 2012- Mar 2013: Large Robotics and Applique Systems Engineering Team Leader/ Acting Assistant Product Manager Robotic Systems Joint Project Office
- Jan 2011- Jan 2012: Product Integrator for Robotics Systems Joint Project Office
- Oct 2008- Jan 2011: Systems Engineer and System Acquisition Manager for PdM HTV
- May 2000-Oct 2008: Mechanical Engineer for the TARDEC

EDUCATION:

- Master's Degree in Global Leadership and Management from Lawrence Technological University (2016)
- Masters of Science in Operations Management from Lawrence Technological University (2006)
- Bachelors of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Kettering University (2002)