VISUALIZING HIRING METRICS AT OPM DURING COVID-19

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) manages the government's civilian workforce. OPM's stated mission is "to recruit, retain, and honor a world-class force to serve the American people."

HR Solutions (HRS) at OPM engaged Excella to aid in creating a report that helps track key metrics important to the agency's overall goals. This report will ultimately help deliver on the mission of HRS at OPM "to provide exceptional human resources products and services to meet the dynamic needs of the federal government."

Challenges

As the COVID-19 pandemic grew in scale and severity, OPM wanted to know how the outbreak was affecting key metrics in the agency's goal of managing the civilian workforce. OPM was looking for a recurring report that helps them understand how the pandemic is affecting planning activities and their ability to meet other agencies' needs in hiring high-quality candidates.

Some of the metrics OPM expressed interest in tracking included:

Job Announcements Posted	Applications Completed	Website Traffic to USAJOBS Main Portal and COVID-19 Specific Pages

This later expanded to monitoring data of specific agencies, helping place recently furloughed staff due to the pandemic and identifying opportunities for selected participants to work at other federal agencies so they can expand their skills and provide needed expertise.

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Approach and Solution

Excella supported a team of federal employees who worked to identify and collect the datasets needed to create one centralized report that focuses on key weekly hiring metrics and how they were affected during the pandemic. To be successful, these datasets need to be easily replicated so the report can be used on an ongoing weekly basis. After collecting the data from multiple sources, Excella worked with OPM in creating mock-ups of data visualizations. OPM selected the graphics and charts from the mock-ups that report on their most critical data to be included in the recurring report. The report would be delivered on a weekly cadence, rather than ad-hoc as they had done in the past, to allow users to identify any change or trends in key metrics during the pandemic compared to previous years. The report could then give senior leaders accurate, up-to-date data to make quick, actionable, data-driven decisions.

The first edition of the report was submitted as an email writeup. OPM asked Excella to turn the report into a one-page document to easily share all of the relevant information throughout the agency. Excella's data visualization experts decided to create a Tableau dashboard to condense the information, provide a format that was more digestible for users, and make it simple for federal employees to update on a weekly basis using data visualization best practices. While many businesses collect data for reporting purposes, sometimes they miss out on ensuring the report can be easily understood. Failing to incorporate data visualization best practices and our knowledge of how humans read, think, and interpret can hinder the effectiveness of the data being presented.

By replicating the originally selected graphics and charts in Tableau, Excella improved readability and standardized formatting for the various datasets. Our data visualization experts organized the report in an easily understandable format to allow a more comprehensive view of the data for stakeholders that was previously only available through manual data collection from disparate sources and ad-hoc requests. The report regularly prompts questions from senior leadership and is used in their own reporting and to push forward initiatives internally and with external clients.

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Outcomes

The new Tableau report is now directly distributed every week to 16 stakeholders at OPM and has informed other distributions and communications to senior leaders at the agency. The report is used in collaboration with other federal agencies to help them achieve their goals and view actionable data directly relating to their situation. Previously, the manual data collection process would require at least eight different disparate reports and now the reporting time has decreased significantly, allowing the report to be continually updated and distributed on a weekly basis.

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**Client response to the deliverable has been extremely positive.
Some selected feedback includes:**

"This is valuable information for the leadership team in monitoring trends related to COVID-19 hiring."

"It is a great representation of how we can measure our work."

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