



Make the first moments that matter memorable

Employee-friendly recruitment and onboarding digital experiences help governments compete for top talent



Think about the human experience

Sharon and Lamar are interviewing for a wide variety of public and private sector positions in a job seeker’s market. Both have sought-after digital and analytical skills. Lamar has worked in the private sector more than 20 years. Sharon has only worked part-time jobs while she was in school. Lamar has Wi-Fi and a computer at home for job searching while Sharon only has her phone. They each value different benefits, from work flexibility and time off to career development and retirement. Both believe a smooth recruitment process can foreshadow how the onboarding and overall employee experience might go. In an environment where employers compete for the best talent, Sharon and Lamar can choose the job offer that best meets their day-to-day and long-term expectations. These expectations start the day their job search begins.

Employee experience is especially critical to government agencies in a competitive job market because it drives recruitment and retention. The Partnership for Public Service 2020–2021 Impact Report shows nearly three in four young people who left federal jobs in 2019 had been employed fewer than two years.¹ This article explores ways to help federal, state, and local governments build their workforce with recruiting and onboarding digital experiences that meet candidates’ and workers’ expectations.

Why modern government is important

Government agencies in the U.S. must modernize in order to keep up with changing user needs, regulations, and health and public safety requirements. Leaders of modern governments rethink business processes and service delivery models to more effectively achieve their mission. This article is one of a series that features how modernizing affects the government workforce and the user experience, improves security and public trust, and accelerates the digital journey. KPMG team members offer insights intended to help guide governments in their modernization efforts to encompass all processes, technologies, policies, and the workforce so each works together to create connected, powered, and trusted organizations.



¹ Frank Konkel, “Report: Biden Administration Must Prioritize Workforce, Tech Modernization,” Nextgov, August 13, 2021.





Create effective digital experiences to improve first impressions

Government organizations have one opportunity to make a positive first impression on prospective employees. Making the most of each interaction during recruitment and onboarding, the first moments that matter, can help attract the right workers to build a workforce. With 9.8 percent of the nation's 9.2 million job openings being federal, state, and local government positions,² these first impressions are critical.

While recruitment and onboarding are only part of what organizations need to attract, engage, and retain talent, they are the moments that define whether qualified candidates will apply for and accept a job. Organizations also must invest in career development, be known as a digital-focused brand, offer a flexible work environment with the latest employee-facing tools and technologies, and provide interesting and challenging work. Two additional articles explore these areas: [Work from anywhere can work for anyone](#) and [Government workforce for the accelerating digital era](#).

Recruitment is the first chance to engage candidates

"Since 2013, the public sector has seen an 8 percent drop in applicants."³ While that number may not sound alarming, when coupled with dramatic increases in the number of job openings and decreases in available talent, the gap is

widening. A user-friendly digital employee experience that starts with recruitment can help attract top candidates.

Creating this experience requires **rethinking processes and technology to improve access to job opportunities and time to hire**. Finding out about permanent federal government jobs is particularly cumbersome, and often requires sifting through huge numbers of vacancies on the USAJOBS website.⁴ This would be a deal-breaker for prospects like Sharon. The interview process length is also a major factor to candidates in today's employee-driven job market. The average U.S. government new talent onboarding process is 98 days, more than triple the U.S. average.⁵

As consumers, job candidates are used to one-tap ordering and self-service everything. **A modern employee experience** allows them to access and filter open positions from their mobile device. They can easily review employee benefits, career development opportunities, and learn about the organization's culture to help determine if the organization offers what they value. Screening questions and application submission specifically relates to the position they seek, and all messages are personalized. Learn more about strengthening the employee value proposition by reading [Candidates as Consumers](#).

For example, the **state of Tennessee created TennCare to drive its service experience design, including employee recruitment**. People go to one website to find all of the state's open positions, the hiring process, benefits, and information about the state's agencies. They simply sign up as an external candidate, active state employee, or as someone looking for an internship, and their experience is customized to their needs and preferences.

² "Job Openings and Labor Turnover Summary," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, July 7, 2021.

³ "Time to Hire Report 2020," NEOGOV, 2020.

⁴ "Public Service and the Federal Government," Brookings Institute, May 27, 2020.

⁵ "Frank Konkel, "Report: Biden Administration Must Prioritize Workforce, Tech Modernization," Nextgov, August 13, 2021.



When deployed correctly, technology can automatically generate the next steps in the workflow throughout the process. Candidates can see available interview times, schedule interviews, interview via video conference, and review and accept offers online. Technology can also improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

Technology can help organizations **further their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) goals** to identify employees who are representative of the communities they serve. For example, automated scans of job postings can search for problematic terminology. HR departments can teach artificial-intelligence-powered resume scanning tools to identify prospects with the qualities needed for the role and those of the organization's highest performers. Chatbots can also help pre-screen candidates. Artificial-intelligence-driven technology comes with a caveat. HR professionals must be sure unconscious bias does not exclude applicants when organizations use these or any technologies in talent acquisition. Regularly explore talent processes that may have structural inequities or digital experiences that may frustrate candidates, especially those where candidates are rejected or abandon the application process.

Taking these actions will also help federal agencies observe a recent White House executive order that calls for organizations to "identify strategies to advance DE&I and accessibility and eliminate, where applicable, barriers to equity in federal workforce functions, including: recruitment; hiring; background investigation; ... and onboarding programs."⁶

Prebuilt technology solutions can facilitate more equitable experiences and equip organizations to get the **full value from their technology purchases**. Deployment methods should address process, people, and technology as well as data, service delivery, and specific government organization objectives.

Also consider the **experiences of current employees who are involved in recruiting and onboarding**. Many government organizations have a collection of technologies and services with varying degrees of standardization that makes it difficult to create seamless experiences. Systems and processes often do not integrate, so efforts to share candidates between agencies and departments are manual. With a digitized and optimized HR operating model, recruiting efforts can focus on strategic talent while recruiters and managers rely on transparent automated processes and workflows.

Government agencies need to make a good first impression. Between 2001 and 2017, the number of graduates in the study going into local, state, and federal government jobs dropped 15 percent.⁷ Human-centric processes and technologies help ensure candidates such as Sharon and Lamar have positive recruitment experiences. When the first impressions are positive, government job opportunities will be more attractive and keeps a candidate exploring open positions longer. This moves a candidate closer to interviewing and accepting a new role as a government employee.

⁶ "Executive order on DE&I, and accessibility in the federal workforce," White House, June 25, 2021.

⁷ "Fewer graduates are choosing government jobs," The Hill, May 14, 2019.



Onboarding sets the tone for careers

Once a candidate accepts a job offer, onboarding begins. What used to be a series of administrative steps are now moments that matter and an opportunity to set the tone for a new employee's career. The average cost per hire was \$4,425 according to the latest SHRM survey,⁸ so organizations should continue to view onboarding as a critical first step to achieve a return on that investment.

When building a modern employee experience, **look closely at onboarding from various new employees' points of view.** Identify where they experience delays and frustration or have to request assistance, then include remedies in the onboarding service design. Tennessee's TennCare app, for example, smoothly moves a candidate to onboarding after they receive a job offer and accept a position.

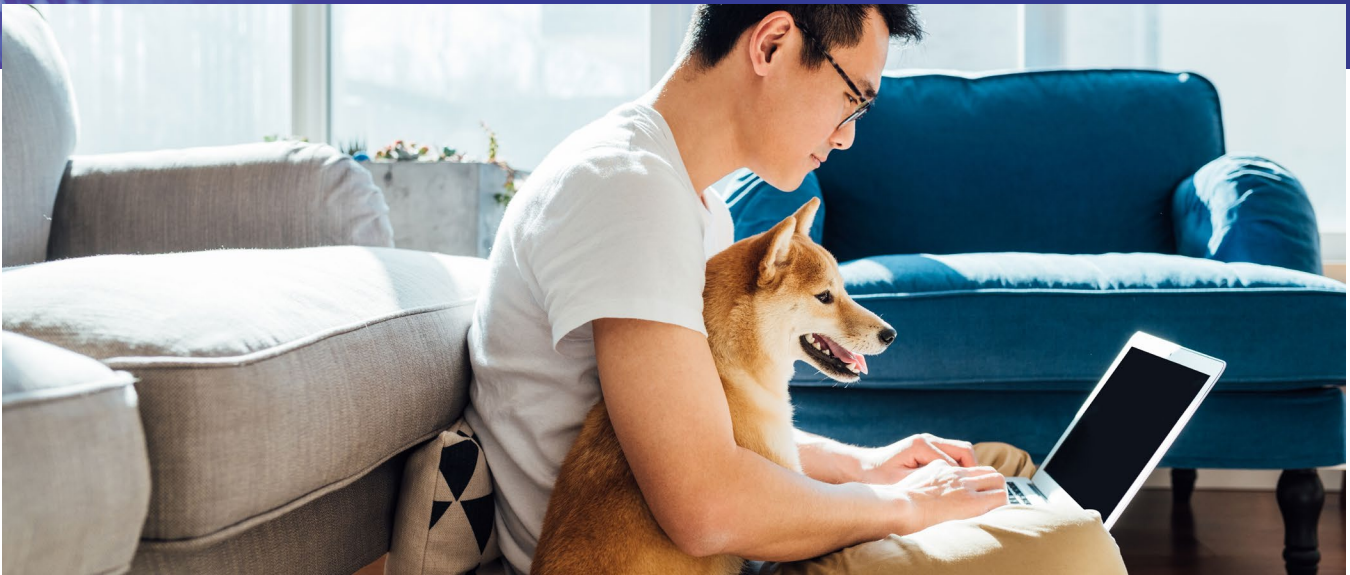
Instead of a manual process that the human resources department runs, **managers in some modern organizations lead digital onboarding experiences.** These experiences are easy to navigate, searchable, and include a workflow and checklist customized to each new employee's specific needs. Digital experiences create a smoother process for HR, managers, and the new employee. As new employees begin onboarding, they interact with a chatbot

that guides them through each customized step. These steps may include setting up their workplace preferences, completing required forms, acquiring equipment and an office workspace, and training. While new employees learn new responsibilities, they can easily find answers using chatbots to become productive faster. When creating chatbots, it is important for all questions to be answered so new employees feel heard.

New virtual and hybrid work models have dramatically changed onboarding. Now it is necessary to tailor the employee experience to each role and individual's preferences and situation, whether they work from the office, in the field, at home, or in a hybrid setting. Many organizations have developed a remote worker support model to address any onboarding issues so virtual employees do not feel stranded. Support should be simple, provide 24/7 self-service, and be available via chat, notifications, and automated services.

When technology integrates services across an organization, each new employee's onboarding experience is smooth and leads to a more engaging, innovative, and productive career.

⁸ "2017 Talent Acquisition Benchmarking," SHRM, 2017.



Design with a digital-experience-first mindset

Designing a digital service experience is a valuable approach for any size organization and can create a user-driven experience across the entire employee lifecycle, starting with recruitment and onboarding. By combining user experience design with a holistic operating model approach, the experience is personal to the employee and mapped to their journey. Three practical steps to start designing a digital service experience are:

- 1 Define the moments that matter. These moments can be categorized across the employee lifecycle, such as find (recruitment, onboarding), perform (hosting an event, promotions, leave of absence), grow (coaching, career development, building a team), and move (transferring, retiring, or separating).
- 2 Create a digital interaction model showing the services required for each moment. The model is a blueprint for automating the entire experience for this moment. A variety of commonly used platforms can enable automating these experiences.
- 3 Develop a single point of entry landing page or storefront where future and current employees can easily seek services and track progress for primary moments that matter.

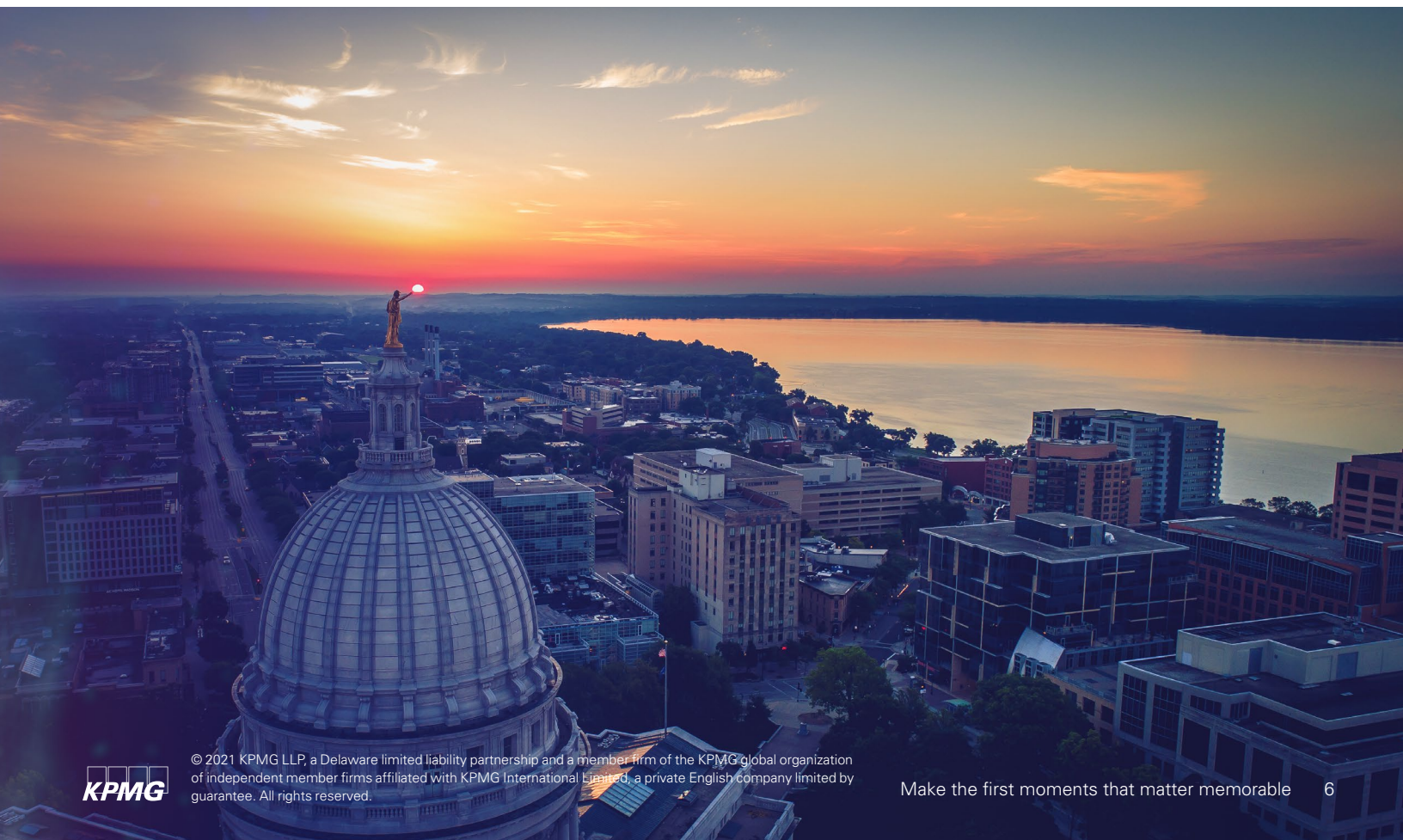
Treat the first moments like they are significant

Organizations that design and deploy modern digital experiences for moments that matter enhance the service delivery model and make work more attractive to future employees such as Sharon and Lamar. They also can improve how work gets done across functions that support the experience so employees are more satisfied throughout their careers.

About KPMG

KPMG has worked with federal, state, and local governments for more than a century, so we know how agencies work. Our team understands the unique issues, pressures, and challenges you encounter in the journey to modernize. We draw on our government operations knowledge to offer methodologies tailored to help you overcome these challenges and work with you from beginning to end to deliver the results that matter.

The KPMG team starts with the business issue before we determine the solution because we understand the ultimate mission. When the way people work changes, our team brings the leading training practices to make sure your employees have the right knowledge and skills. We also help your people get value out of technology while also assisting with cloud, advanced analytics, intelligent automation, and cybersecurity. Our passion is to create value, inspire trust, and help government clients deliver better experiences to workers, citizens, and communities.



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