

How the Coronavirus Crisis Could Change Cleared Recruitment

AND 5 REASONS IT'S HARDER THAN EVER TO HIRE

Coronavirus and Cleared Hiring

Companies say there will be no ‘back to business as usual’ when coronavirus concerns abate. 44% of respondents in a recent ClearanceJobs survey of cleared employers said they expect an increase in telework even after concerns about the coronavirus subside. But while the way work is being performed is different, that doesn’t mean business has changed for the worse—just 8% of respondents said recruiting and hiring forecasts had changed dramatically for the rest of the year or that furloughs and hiring freezes had been put into effect. In fact, 4% of respondents noted they’ve actually been

hiring more since the pandemic hit.

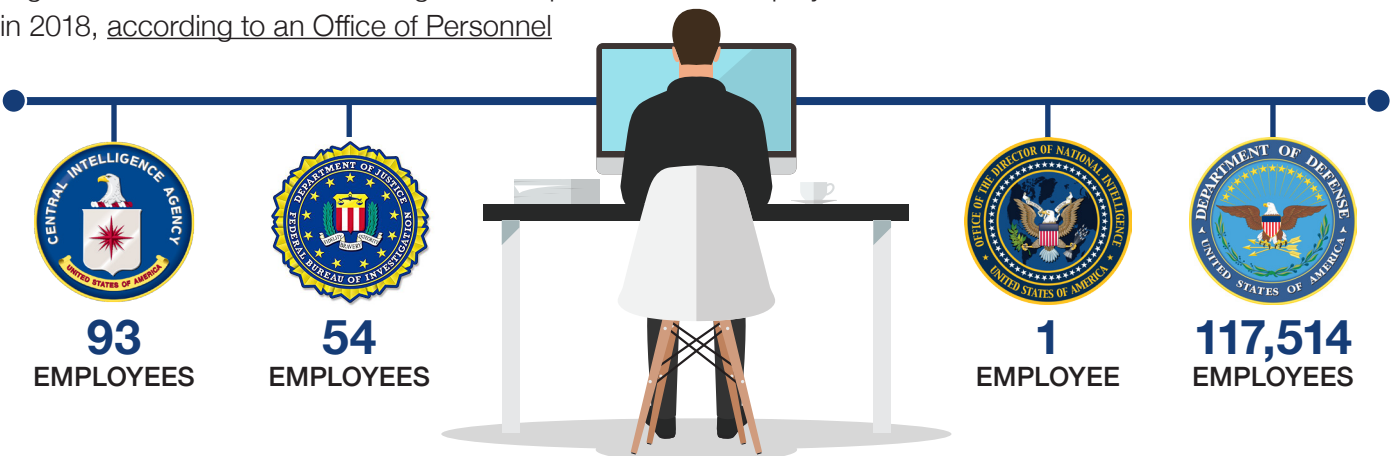
“The agility of the national security workforce has been impressive,” said Evan Lesser, Founder and President of ClearanceJobs.com. “In a time of uncertainty, national security work has proven to be a safe, secure, and responsive work environment for cleared professionals. We’ve really seen defense industry employers and government agencies step up to ensure their workforce is taken care of, and critical national security missions still get accomplished.”

Increasing Options for Telework

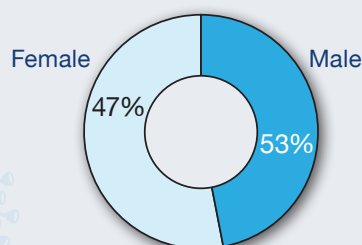
Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, telework was typically seen as a non-starter for cleared personnel. With many government agencies and federal offices shuttering their doors or instituting social distancing, however, professionals who had never teleworked previously found themselves setting up a home office.

Just 22% of federal employees out of the 42% eligible for telework took advantage of the option in 2018, according to an Office of Personnel

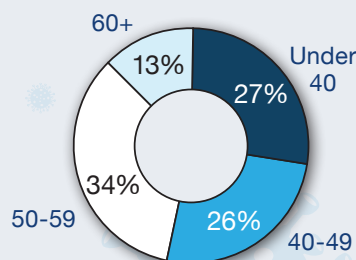
Management Report. The intelligence community had some of the smallest telework percentages, with just 93 CIA employees, 54 FBI employees and one Office of the Director of National Intelligence employee working remotely pre-pandemic. The Department of Defense had significantly higher telework numbers, with 117,514 taking advantage of telework at least situationally. That’s still just 15% of total DoD employees and 40% of eligible employees.



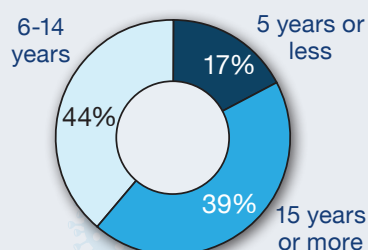
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TELEWORKER CHARACTERISTICS



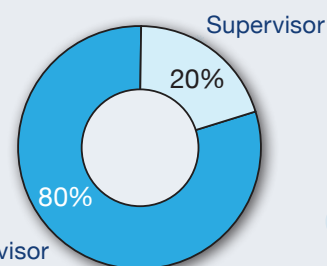
GENDER



AGE



TENURE



SUPERVISORY STATUS

Source: Office of Personnel Management Telework Report.

The majority of respondents in ClearanceJobs' recent survey are teleworking—just 24% said employees were still in the office with some accommodations. 65% said employees were already working from home. The biggest change may be in how telework continues to be implemented even after the coronavirus concerns pass—77% of respondents said they expect their companies to reexamine their telework policies after offices reopen.

"I was surprised—actually shocked—at the adoption level of remote work," said Eric Swanson, vice president at Blackstone Talent Group. "For our commercial clients we had 100% adoption of remote work. On the Federal/Integrator side some of our consultants have had to work at least part of the time in SCIF's and be onsite, but except for that, work from home has been embraced. My take is that this is a gamechanger moving forward!"

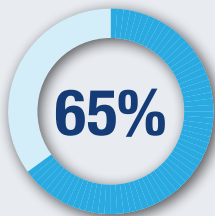
Other recruiters echoed that sentiment. It's speculative how the government may adjust

contract requirements, which typically require contractors to be on site to get paid, but it's likely some of the compromises implemented to make work safe during the coronavirus could be extended. That's good news for employee attraction and retention.

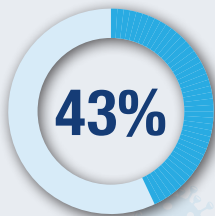
"The government is starting to see that people can be effective working from home," said Matthew Campbell, senior associate and senior recruiter at Vickers Nolan Enterprises. Campbell predicts the current success of telework may prompt the government to expand the option after the pandemic—particularly for contract workers. "I think that would open up a lot of things across the industry," said Campbell. Individuals who may not want to come work in the national capital region could take advantage of telework to do their jobs from other parts of the country—no costly relocation required.

COVID-19 CLEARED EMPLOYER TELEWORK SURVEY RESULTS

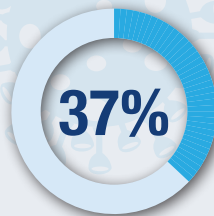
Q1: The COVID-19 pandemic has pressed government contractors to adjust to meet social distancing recommendations, despite concerns with compromising classified information. How has your company responded to this?



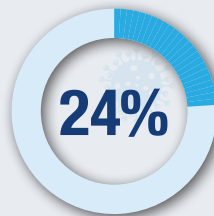
Employees already work remotely when doing nonclassified work.



Partial telework.



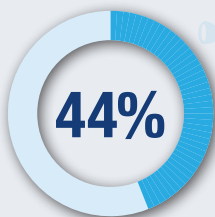
Staggered shifts/ social distancing.



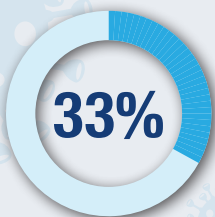
Employees still in office—sanitized workspace + PPE provided.



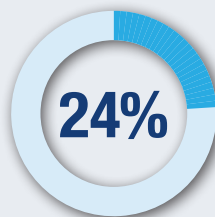
Q2: When the COVID-19 pandemic is over, will your company reexamine your telework policy?



Yes. We'll likely see an increase in people working from home.



Yes. We'll see a change in telework—just not sure how yet.



No. We'll return to pre-pandemic work environments.

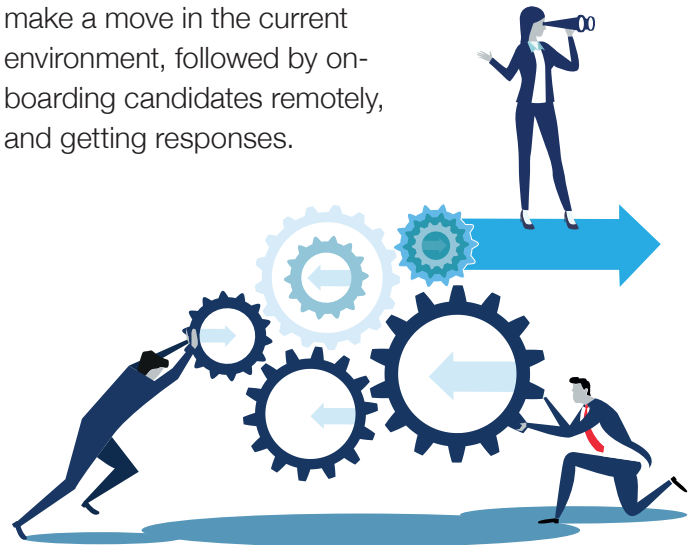
Cleared Recruiting During COVID-19: An Uphill Mission

Skyrocketing unemployment figures may seem like a positive for recruiters who were struggling to fill positions pre-pandemic. But while some furloughs and layoffs have hit the defense industry, those positions are in the vast minority. While the national security workforce has not gone unaffected by the coronavirus, particularly in aerospace industries, the vast majority of cleared recruiters report they are still hiring. Just 8% said they've implemented hiring freezes or furloughs.

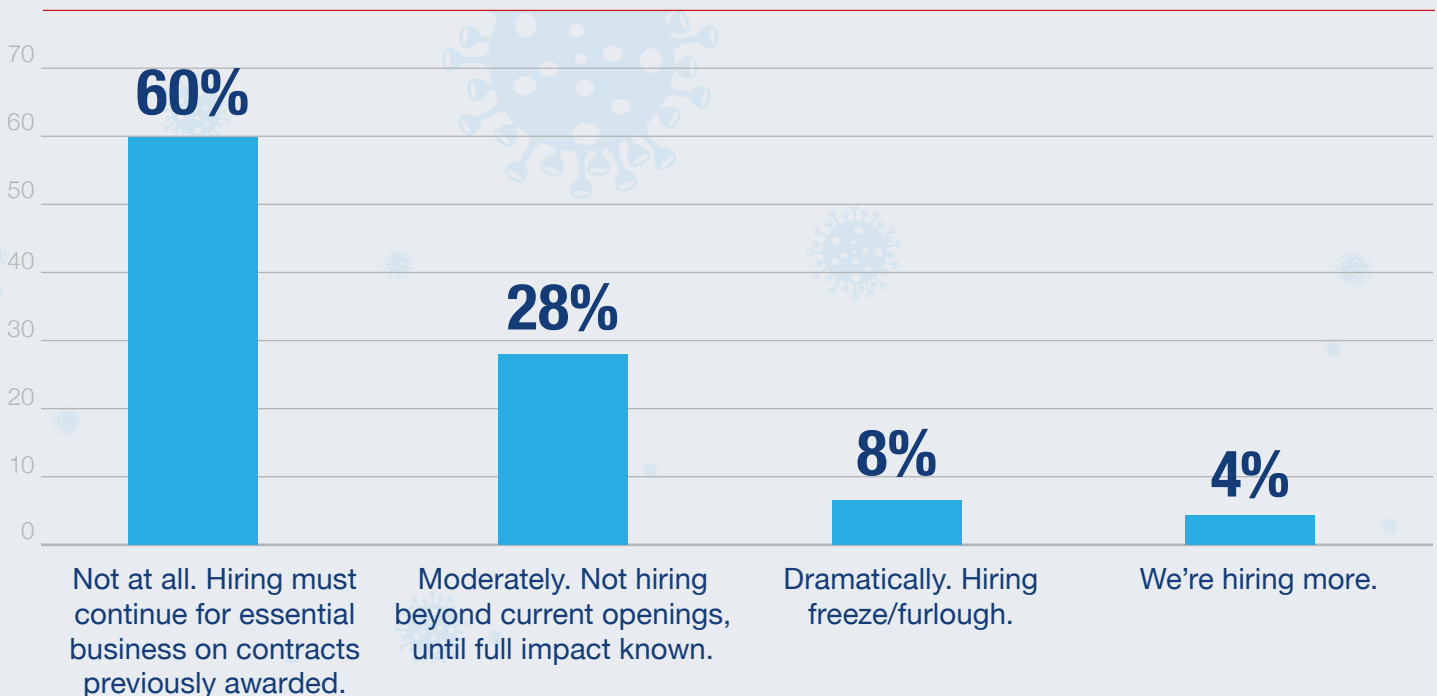
For every layoff, there are new announcements of defense employers looking to fill thousands of positions. Microsoft just announced construction by a new \$64 million software development hub in Fairfax, VA. They're hoping to hire 1,500 positions by the summer of 2021. Other companies, from

Leidos to Northrop Grumman, have also announced significant hiring efforts.

Despite new opportunities, the biggest challenge respondents noted was convincing candidates to make a move in the current environment, followed by on-boarding candidates remotely, and getting responses.



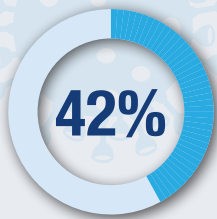
Q3: Has COVID-19 impacted your recruiting and/or forecast for the rest of the year?



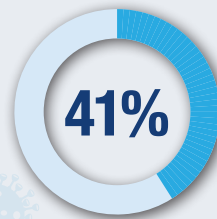
Q5: What has been the biggest challenge of hiring during a pandemic?



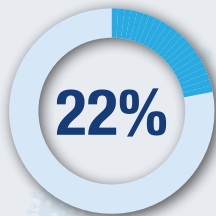
Convincing candidates to make a move in this environment.



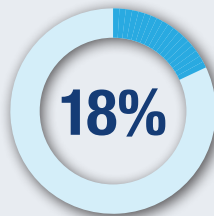
Onboarding new hires remotely.



Getting a response at all.



Convincing candidates we'll do everything possible to keep them safe.



Ensure compliance with contract requirements.



No challenges—recruiting is the same or better.

As the coronavirus health crisis turns into a lingering financial and economic crisis, uncertainty and doubt will challenge efforts to restore business as usual. Employers conveying crucial information to potential employees must keep messages simple, to the point, and actionable.



5 Reasons Positions are Harder to Fill Post-Coronavirus Pandemic

1. Already Passive Candidates are MORE Passive During a Global Pandemic



The pool of talent looking for a new job is slim. And while pre-pandemic, 81% of cleared professionals said they were at least somewhat likely to make a job change in the coming year, according to the 2020 ClearanceJobs Compensation Survey, those same individuals are more hesitant today. Rule number one of a recession—don't take unnecessary financial risks. It's difficult to give up what you know for the unknown of a new employer. That's why recruitment marketing is more important than ever. You're really going to have to woo a candidate before you can win a candidate.

2. Fewer Transitioning Service Members



You're not just competing with other defense industry contractors and federal agencies for talent—today you're also competing with the U.S. military. Reservists and National Guardsmen are being activated for healthcare and national security missions, and a March executive order allowed some service members to be recalled to active duty. An Army spokesperson noted 15,000 service members had expressed an interest in rejoining the service to help with pandemic response. With transitioning service members often making up the largest portion of the cleared candidate pool, losing thousands of potential candidates to voluntary recall or National Guard activation will have immediate impacts on your talent supply.

3. Geographic Challenges



If you thought interviewing for a new position during a pandemic was hard, try relocating. Companies looking to attract cleared talent who may need to move in order to take the job face a variety of hurdles. There are the obvious challenges of trying to relocate home and family (this is a tough time to be putting your house on the market). But there are also the communication struggles of convincing a candidate living in a fairly coronavirus-free state to move to one where the virus is more prevalent.



The coronavirus pandemic has sparked innovations in recruiting, hiring, and onboarding. Organizations across the board have had to transition to a virtual recruiting and hiring process for most roles.

4. Legal Hurdles



Some candidates have expressed concerns about running afoul of the law if they change jobs and relocate. Does a stay-at-home order include your furniture and household goods? If so, that cross-country move from California to Virginia will be a little complex. (Note: most states have deemed moving an essential activity that can still take place under a stay-at-home order. But that doesn't mean it will be easy to sell a house or find someone to buy all of the furniture you don't want to take with you).

5. Slower Speeds



Cleared recruiters today know that speed is the coin of the realm. A candidate who creates a profile on ClearanceJobs on a Saturday morning will have an inbox of recruiter messages and job offers by the afternoon. Unfortunately, speed may not be in your favor with your government customer.

"The [government] onboarding may have been a two-week period, and now it could be three to four weeks," notes Campbell. "There's a big slowdown with that going on now." For skittish candidates, a month may be enough time for them to reconsider the offer and take advantage of another opportunity.

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