

Joyce Lain Kennedy - Careers Now  
by Joyce Lain Kennedy

First to report on workplace technologies and trends, Kennedy's amassed reader praise for three decades. Her Q&A covers high-interest topics, from state-of-art job searches and recruiter secrets, to career change pitfalls and the networking lifestyle. For business, features and classified sections.

## CAREERS NOW

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## SEVEN TOP TIPS TO FIND A FEDERAL JOB

By Joyce Lain Kennedy

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DEAR JOYCE: I graduated from college a year ago and am having a hard time finding a job with promotion potential. I feel stuck in my present job with nowhere to go. I keep applying for federal jobs but haven't had any responses. What does it take for me to be given a chance to succeed in the federal sector? - K.B.N.



Today's answer comes from Kathryn Troutman (resume-place.com) in Washington. Troutman is a leading adviser on federal employment. Here are Troutman's top seven tips.

1. Know what's available. There are about 15,000 jobs listed on [www.usajobs.com](http://www.usajobs.com) every day. Another site: [www.avuecentral.com](http://www.avuecentral.com). Additionally almost every agency has its own resume builder system and database. Be ready to copy, paste and follow directions to the last dot.

2. Fill in all the blanks. Be certain that you're not skipping over required information on your federal resume. Remember, a federal resume is more comprehensive than a private sector resume. Federal resumes typically run two to three pages.

Government human resources specialists consider the resume to be your application, examination for the job and sometimes the interview. That's why your federal resume should include lots of details about your experience and skills.

3. Qualify for federal job titles. Read the "duties" and "qualifications" carefully on federal vacancy announcements. It seems obvious, but many people apply for jobs above their qualifications and never hear back.

4. Incorporate vacancy announcement language. Federal human resources reviewers read your resume for important key words. If the announcement describes the position as requiring "researching, analyzing and compiling information for briefings" use these words when true in your resume. You may not have the "briefings" experience, but if you have done research, analysis and compilation of information, say so.

5. Include compliance details. Every vacancy announcement lists certain required information. This includes

your Social Security number (yes, this is mandatory for government resumes), citizenship status and any military experience, as well as addresses and ZIP codes for colleges and employers.

6. Prepare two resume versions. You will need an electronic version to submit online into databases. And you may need a paper version to fax or mail to some agencies. Be ready with both.

7. Polish your “writing test.” Knowledge, skills and abilities narratives, short essays and examples are frequently requested with federal applications. These usually are 350 to 450 word statements of experiences that demonstrate a specific skill. These statements are very important and graded by the HR reviewers.

Troutman’s bestselling book, “Ten Steps to a Federal Job” includes far more detail, including the description of a winning formula to apply and interview for Uncle Sam jobs.

Troutman’s newest work, “Student’s Federal Career Guide” is a must read for undergraduate and graduate students who are entertaining the possibility of working for the feds. This richly detailed book also explains that not all who enter the portals of internship are students.

Federal internships are paid and carry benefits; after two years, depending on the internship, you search for a permanent position. A useful Web site: [www.tenstepsforstudents.org](http://www.tenstepsforstudents.org).

DEAR JOYCE: In my job I do both professional level and administrative support work. My manager plans to hire another person for work similar to but different than mine.

I am capable of and would prefer to do the professional functions of both jobs if I could get an administrative assistant to handle the clerical part. How can I achieve this restructuring in my department? - B.L.

Using a classic strategy, construct parallel vertical lists of the duties of both jobs. Then draw a horizontal line through the middle of the two lists, which are placed side by side. For instance, you would have eight professional duties and eight support duties.

This comparative technique makes it easy to spot affinity in the duties of both positions: the professional functions in the top half of the lists and the support functions in the bottom half of the lists.

Using this visual, convince your boss that hiring a less-well-paid person to do the bottom half would result in a savings - perhaps enough to fund a raise for you.

(E-mail career questions for possible use in this column to Joyce Lain Kennedy at [jlk@sunfeatures.com](mailto:jlk@sunfeatures.com); use “Reader Question” for subject line. Or mail her at Box 368, Cardiff, CA 92007.)

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