

How the U.S. Air Force Can Incorporate New Data Technologies into Its Talent Management System

Framework and Use Cases for Technology-Enabled Talent Management

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The U.S. Air Force (USAF) and the other military services have a long history of innovation in human resource management (HRM). The recent industry boom in data-related technologies has prompted USAF leaders to sponsor research on how these technologies could further improve HRM decisions. This report describes the common theme of this research portfolio, which is that adopting HRM practices that are *technology-enabled* could lead to more-effective talent management. Of course, technologies exist on a spectrum, and the USAF, like all other organizations, already relies on some technologies to perform HRM functions. However, by pursuing the latest technological advances, the USAF can continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of HRM processes.



APPROACH

To help policymakers understand the contrast between technology-enabled practices and practices already in place that make use of rich data, the authors describe industry practices that fit under the umbrella of technology-enabled talent management and present a framework highlighting their distinctive features. They focus principally on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and other analytic techniques to derive insight from data at speed and scale. They also present use cases in which recent research has demonstrated technology-enabled practices in the USAF context, discuss barriers to further implementation, and present an implementation structure for moving toward greater adoption of these practices.



CONCLUSIONS

- Large industry firms, such as IBM, use technology-enabled techniques to improve employee experiences by customizing talent management decisions at a large scale.
- All firms face challenges in applying technology-enabled techniques to talent management, but features of USAF talent management processes and associated data place the organization in a good position with regard to technical feasibility.

- Recent research has demonstrated the functionality of elements of technology-enabled business practices, and particularly of AI, in most areas of talent management.
- Legacy policy structures, existing culture, and limitations in the USAF data infrastructure stand out as barriers to fully leveraging emerging technologies for HRM.
- A structured implementation approach to adoption of technology-enabled practices would address (1) organizational and policy foundations; (2) the technological foundation; (3) data curation, data management, and data services; (4) analysis systems, methods, and services; and (5) enterprise integration and deployment.



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