

Desk Audit: A Conversation About A Subject You Know Well – *Your Job*



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Desk audit! The term can elicit very strong responses from employees, particularly those who haven't been a participant. Some have compared the news that an analyst from the Division of Personnel is coming to audit their position with a trip to the doctor or dentist, or sirens and the sight of flashing lights in the rear view mirror, or an invitation from the IRS to stop by and discuss their last return. Those who have experienced a desk audit know that it is, fundamentally, an in-depth conversation about a subject they know very well, their job.

Staff in the Employee Services Section of the Division of Personnel are routinely called on to review an existing, filled position to determine its proper allocation level within the Uniform Classification & Pay System's classification plan. Such requests for review are frequently initiated by the employee, others by the agency, and in some cases, by a classification analyst. Regardless of how the review is initiated, the analyst's goal is to make an appropriate allocation determination based on a review of the duties, authority and responsibilities assigned to the position on a permanent basis.

The classifier begins by reviewing the new Position Description Form (PDF), which is designed to capture detailed information from the position incumbent (the employee), the immediate supervisor, and agency management. The analyst also supplements this information through the review of current organizational charts, available programmatic and background information, official class specifications, any established allocation guidelines, and information gleaned from PDFs previously submitted and on file for the subject and related positions.

Oftentimes these sources provide information of sufficient depth and clarity that the analyst can make the appropriate determination at that point. However, occasionally questions arise during the review which require resolution before the analyst can make an appropriate allocation determination.

The questions can occur for a variety of reasons, including: duty statements which are overly brief, overly broad, or utilize "canned" statements taken from the class specification; missing estimates of the amount of time spent in the performance of identified functions; heavy use of technical terms and/or acronyms with no corresponding clarification; marked and unexplained changes in the type and/or level of responsibilities assigned; lack of agreement between the employee and supervisor as to the nature or level of assignments and delegated authority; duty statements that reflect encroachment of another position's responsibilities; etc.

With these points in mind, in many cases an agency's review of the PDF prior to its submission, and where needed providing clarification or amplification, can avert subsequent delay associated with the need to request additional information. Lacking that, the analyst will attempt to obtain clarification and resolve the matter by requesting additional information from the employee, supervisor, manager or appointing authority as necessary. Normally, only when such efforts do not result in resolution does the analyst indicate a desk audit is needed.

Desk audits have been conducted for many years, and essentially involve the classifier arranging to conduct a detailed interview with the employee about the job. That is typically followed by an interview of the immediate supervisor or manager, in order to gain the agency's perspective and obtain any additional information pertinent to the review. While historically desk audits were conducted face-to-face, today they are sometimes conducted by telephone, in order to avoid travel expenses.

Desk audits. They aren't a mystery, and they shouldn't be frightening. Like other techniques, they are a tool for the specific purpose of helping to maintain our classification system.

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