



Starting Your Federal Job Search? Learn Fed Speak First

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Before you apply for a federal job, you have to learn a new language: Government-speak. For a quick lesson, we turned to Monster Federal Career Coach and Gov't/Public Service Careers message board expert Kathryn Troutman.

Start with the announcement title, because in government, even fairly straightforward jobs are given confusing titles. For example, I just read an announcement for a “contact representative” for the VA Health Administration Center. In the private sector, that job is the same as a “customer service representative.” The announcement says the job requires the employee to “explain

pertinent legal provisions” – not really a phrase you see in private industry.

What does ‘explain pertinent legal provisions’ mean?

That means “interpret and explain benefits.” Another section of this announcement says “assist individuals in developing needed evidence,” which means “help them find the right documents.”

Sometimes the announcements can throw you off when they don’t use jargon. One listed job responsibility is to “resolve errors, delays and problems.” Now, who in private industry would ever admit that there are errors, delays and problems? Another section says the job requires you to “determine status of claims.” Basically, you will be answering the phone, listening to what people want and helping them. Bottom line: This job is designed to help veterans get the benefits and services they need. So don’t be intimidated by the announcement — read it, interpret it, and know that you can do this job.

And this is an entry-level job?

This is very entry-level for government. The salary is \$14 an hour plus benefits, whereas in the private sector, entry-level is \$7 or \$8 an hour.

Are there any new skills that a federal job seeker needs to have this year?

Yes, copy-and-paste skills. The government is a copy-and-paste world, because each agency has its own online resume builder, and you copy and paste your resume into all the builders after you tweak it a little bit. So it’s a copy-paste-tweak world for a federal resume writer. If your copy-and-paste skills are good, you can apply for a government job.