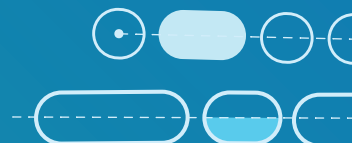


# Solving public sector HR onboarding challenges with desktop automation



The HR onboarding experience has a big impact on whether government agencies can achieve their missions.

Research shows that 90% of workers choose if they will stay in a position or start searching for a new job while onboarding. Unfortunately for most government agencies, many new employees make the decision to start searching due to lengthy and inefficient onboarding practices that result in a poor experience—so poor that nearly 28% of them quit their jobs within the first three months.

These high churn rates leave HR staff continually scrambling to backfill open positions, which drives up recruitment and training costs, and creates talent gaps that make it extremely difficult for agencies to effectively serve citizens, small businesses and local communities.

But there is a solution: A desktop automation solution designed for highly regulated environments can securely automate HR onboarding tasks and workflows, ensuring an incredibly efficient onboarding process that can help increase new employee retention by over 80%—and optimally position agencies to achieve mission success.

Read on as we explore public sector HR onboarding challenges, their impact, and how desktop automation solutions can help overcome them. We'll also dive into what to look for in a desktop automation solution and deployment best practices.



## Executive summary

The HR onboarding experience has a big impact on whether government agencies can achieve their missions.

Research shows 86% of workers choose whether they will stay in a position or start searching for a new job while onboarding<sup>1</sup>, and 69% of employees who have a positive onboarding experience are more likely to stay with a company for at least three years<sup>2</sup>.

Unfortunately for most government agencies, reliance on manual, paper-intensive processes results in a lengthy, inefficient onboarding experience riddled with communication challenges, uncertainty around job responsibilities and other issues. Modernizing processes with automation and other technologies is often resisted due to security concerns. This leaves new employees highly frustrated and dissatisfied—so dissatisfied that nearly 28% of them decide to jump ship within the first three months<sup>3</sup>.

This high churn rate means HR staff are continually restarting the hiring process. This drives up costs and ultimately results in long-term talent gaps that make it extremely difficult for agencies to effectively serve citizens, small businesses and their local communities.



# 79%

**of government decision-makers believe using these automation solutions will improve efficiency in the public sector<sup>4</sup>**

Many federal agencies are starting to realize they can address these issues with desktop automation solutions that are designed for use in highly regulated environments and do not compromise security, compliance or governance. KPMG research shows that 79% of government decision-makers believe using these automation solutions will improve efficiency in the public sector<sup>4</sup>. And agencies that have already implemented them are proving this to be true: For example, one GovLoop report reveals that agencies using automation see a 195% increase in annualized hours saved<sup>5</sup>.

Desktop automation solutions automate onboarding tasks and processes related to background checks, employment contracts, equipment requisitions, welcome letters and a lot more. This empowers agencies to deliver a highly efficient, streamlined onboarding experience that creates a welcoming and positive environment where new hires have everything they need right when they need it.

As a result, new hires are much less likely to seek new jobs—in fact, research shows that a strong onboarding program can increase new employee retention by over 80%<sup>6</sup>. This minimizes talent gaps and costs, ultimately enabling agencies to better serve their communities and achieve mission success.

In the following pages, we'll explore public sector HR onboarding challenges, their impact, and how desktop automation solutions can help overcome them. We'll also dive into what to look for in a desktop automation solution and deployment best practices.

## Public sector HR onboarding challenges and their impact

Citizens have come to expect the same level of speed and convenience from government agencies that they experience in the public sector when shopping online, ordering takeout or doing pretty much anything else these days. However, many agencies struggle to meet these expectations—especially when it comes to employee onboarding, which is typically an extremely time-consuming and inefficient process.

While many government agencies are actively planning or executing automation initiatives, HR onboarding is an area that isn't always prioritized—but it should be. This manual, paper-intensive process is fraught with inefficiencies, delays and errors that contribute to high employee churn rates and prevent agencies from being successful. Let's take a closer look.

### Paper and siloes drive ineffective onboarding

The federal HR onboarding process begins when a job offer is accepted and continues throughout the employee's first year. Delivering a great onboarding experience requires timely, seamless communication and collaboration between multiple stakeholders—which is exceptionally difficult for agencies relying on manual processes.

The onboarding process requires HR staff to manage numerous tasks involving a dizzying array of documents,

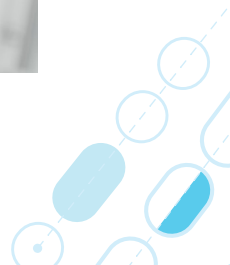
including tax forms, employment contracts, equipment requests, non-disclosure agreements and the list goes on. When these tasks are handled manually, the sheer number of documents makes for a slow and tedious process.

To make matters worse, agencies typically have multiple siloed systems that don't communicate with each other. This means HR staff must continually pivot between different programs to enter data, process forms, secure approvals and a myriad of other things. Along with that, they need to stay on top of all stakeholders to make sure tasks are completed on time and nothing falls through the cracks.

This is a difficult endeavor even on the best of days. Delays, missed deadlines and a lot of frustration are inevitable.

Also inevitable are data entry errors, misplaced paperwork and other issues requiring employee time and attention to resolve—up to three hours a day according to one study.<sup>7</sup> And if data entry errors are not caught immediately, the consequences can be very unfavorable: For example, confidential communications may be sent to the wrong address, or a paycheck might be deposited into the wrong bank account.

As you can imagine, this is an extremely poor experience for new hires and HR staff alike.



# 12%

of employees feel their employer's onboarding process is adequate

## Ineffective onboarding drives high churn rates

Only 12% of employees feel their employer's onboarding process is adequate or successful<sup>8</sup>. Manual processes deliver a protracted, fragmented and confusing onboarding experience characterized by numerous issues, including:

- Delays in receiving equipment and training
- The inability to access required programs and accounts
- Slow responses to employee inquiries
- Confusion around job responsibilities

This often leaves new hires feeling unproductive and unwelcome during their first days on the job, which leads to high levels of frustration and dissatisfaction. Research shows that 56% of employees who receive ineffective onboarding feel negatively about their organizations<sup>9</sup>, and poor experiences drive just under 30% of new hires to quit within three months<sup>10</sup>.

## The toll of poor onboarding on HR staff

New hires aren't the only employees experiencing job satisfaction and retention issues—HR staff is right there with them. The long list of tedious manual tasks that must be completed for every new employee can leave HR teams feeling overwhelmed, undervalued, unmotivated and unable to focus on more strategic initiatives. High new employee churn rates significantly magnify these issues by pulling staff into a frantic cycle of never-ending recruitment and onboarding.

## Reactive hiring and mounting costs

Low employee retention results in ongoing staffing shortages, making it extremely challenging for government agencies to effectively serve their communities. Agencies wind up with a “reactionary” approach to hiring that's focused on backfilling

existing positions rather than a strategic approach to identifying future talent needs, which further exacerbates talent shortage issues.

High employee churn also forces agencies to spend more money on recruitment and training, leaving less money to fund new initiatives benefiting citizens and small businesses.

On average, employee turnover costs an agency 30-50% of an entry-level worker's annual salary, 150% of a mid-level worker's annual salary and up to 400% of a high-level worker's annual salary<sup>11</sup>.

While these challenges may appear daunting, the good news is that it's possible to address all of them with desktop automation.



## How desktop automation tackles HR onboarding challenges

Automation is increasingly becoming a top priority for the public sector, and for good reason: it enables agencies to significantly improve service delivery by automating repetitive, error-prone manual tasks that impede operational efficiency and productivity. Gartner analysts forecast that 75% of governments will have at least three enterprise-wide automation initiatives launched or underway by 2024<sup>12</sup>.

For the highly regulated public sector, however, not just any automation solution will do. Federal agencies require solutions that ensure data security, governance and compliance by providing centralized control and auditability over all automations. This is where desktop automation solutions come in.

### What is desktop automation?

Like most automation solutions, desktop automation solutions are designed to automate short, repetitive tasks and workflows. The difference is in how automations are triggered. Unlike many “unattended” solutions where automations are triggered by software robots, desktop solutions require users to initiate automations from their workstations.

While unattended solutions are ideal for many industries and use cases, they don’t provide the level of security

required by the public sector. Misconfigured or poorly designed robots, weak authentication and other vulnerabilities inherent in many unattended solutions put federal agencies at risk for data breaches and operational disruptions, not to mention a damaged reputation.

Desktop automation solutions provide an enhanced level of security by requiring authorized users to input their login credentials prior to triggering automations. Digital workers complete tasks in tandem with their human counterparts to provide the best onboarding experience possible for both existing staff and new employees.

Automations can be triggered in real-time for onboarding processes related to background checks, employment contracts, equipment requisitions, creating email accounts and pretty much everything else. Common onboarding automation use cases include:

- Document management: Automations can trigger the sending of new hire paperwork, extracting data from completed documents and integrating it into required systems.
- New hire orientation and training: Workflows can be triggered to automatically schedule live orientation and training, as well as send emails to new hires containing onboarding checklists, important resources and other information.
- Task tracking: Automated workflows can alert stakeholders about assigned tasks and deadlines to ensure all onboarding tasks are completed on schedule.

### HR Onboarding Automation Use Cases

- Access card requests
- Account creation
- Background checks
- Employment contracts
- Equipment requisitions
- New hire orientation
- Paperwork processing
- Phone extension setup
- Training and HR review scheduling
- Welcome letters

### Beware of ungoverned citizen development

It’s important to note that all desktop automation solutions are not alike. Some allow ungoverned citizen development, meaning any user can create and deploy their own automations without any oversight.

These solutions do not provide any visibility into what is being created when and by whom, and there are no controls to ensure automations are compliant with internal policies or federal regulations. The number of security and compliance risks this introduces is a government agency’s worst nightmare.

However, agencies that stick with a desktop automation solution providing centralized control and auditability can reap the many benefits of automating their onboarding processes without encountering these issues.

## How desktop automation enables mission success

A desktop automation solution with centralized control and auditability empowers agencies to achieve mission success by helping them retain talent, and by enabling federal workers to focus on initiatives that benefit their constituents, instead of dealing with talent shortages and other issues caused by poor onboarding practices.

### The link between desktop automation and new hire retention

Using desktop automation to power HR onboarding processes enables agencies to provide a substantially better onboarding experience by significantly reducing onboarding time horizons and ensuring nothing falls through the cracks.

Automated workflows ensure equipment is set up and accounts are accessible before new hires report for work, and that orientation and training are scheduled in a timely manner. This creates a welcoming environment in which new employees feel valued, understand exactly what is expected of them and can quickly start contributing.

The positive onboarding experiences desktop automation solutions help create have a dramatic impact on new employee satisfaction and retention. Here are just a few related statistics:

- A structured onboarding program can improve employee retention by over 50%<sup>13</sup>.
- Employees who have effective onboarding feel up to 18 times more committed to their employers compared to employees who feel their onboarding was less effective<sup>14</sup>.
- 89% of employees who had a good onboarding experience feel very engaged at work and are 30 times more likely to be satisfied with their jobs compared to employees who felt their experience was suboptimal<sup>15</sup>.

### Desktop automation improves HR satisfaction and productivity

Automating onboarding processes can also positively affect HR staff retention by enabling team members to shift repetitive manual tasks to digital workers, who never lose focus or make mistakes. One study reveals that

over half of employees using automation feel it reduces stress, creates time for important tasks and enables more strategic work<sup>16</sup>. The same study also shows that enabling employees to collaborate with digital workers can increase productivity by as much as 75%.

These positive impacts increase job satisfaction and ultimately reduce the risk of HR staff seeking out new employment.

### A win for employees and agencies alike

The significant improvements in new hire retention driven by desktop automation mean HR staff is no longer scrambling to backfill existing positions. Instead, they can take a strategic approach to workforce planning that ensures agencies have the right talent at the right time. And all the money that's no longer being spent on recruitment and training can be reallocated to other initiatives that directly benefit the constituents they serve.

It's a win-win for everyone: new hires, HR staff and the communities they serve.

**“Before implementing a desktop automation solution, it took more than six weeks to incorporate and complete the data relating to a new hire. Now, we have accelerated the onboarding process and in just two days we have all the tasks confirmed so that the employees can start working.”**

**-Silvina Montemartini, head of RPA, Banco Santander**

## What to consider when evaluating desktop automation solutions

Deciding which desktop automation solution is best for automating agency onboarding processes can be a difficult endeavor. Here are some key things to consider when evaluating different options:

### Centralized control and management

Ensure the agency can retain centralized control over automation design so authorized users only run approved, validated processes complying with security, data governance, IT and other standards. Enabling just about any worker to create automations unchecked delivers suboptimal outcomes and incurs substantial data security and compliance risks. It takes just one disgruntled or naive employee sharing data with an unauthorized third party to create a slew of sticky problems with long-term ramifications.

### Auditability

Look for a desktop automation solution that enables full auditability and traceability by logging all user activity. This enhances security and enables compliance with agency standards and federal legislation. An example is the Federal Security Modernization Act (FISMA), which requires agencies to monitor systems to detect abnormalities, and pushes for a risk-based security posture by automating reporting requirements among other things.

### A no-code approach

High-tech workers are in short supply. Choosing a solution with a no-code approach means that developing automations doesn't require coding knowledge. This enables agencies to leverage tech-savvy employees outside of their IT teams to implement and manage the platform with minimal training.

### Scalability

Being prepared for hiring surges and other situations where more digital hands are needed on deck quickly requires a scalable solution that can rapidly activate new digital workers within minutes. Scalability combined with centralized control ensures that tasks are executed identically by all digital workers.

### Ease of use

Getting employees to adopt new technologies is rarely a walk in the park. However, if the solution you select has an intuitive user interface that doesn't require extensive training, adoption will be faster and easier.



**“It’s important that as we scale automations, we can maintain best practices and reuse efficient processes already developed, ensuring that tasks run exactly the same for thousands of workers performing similar roles.”**

**— Head of IT & Infrastructure, Government Agency (EMEA)**





## Conclusion

For the public sector, achieving mission success is often an uphill battle due to persistent staffing shortages that make it extremely difficult to provide communities with the fast and convenient experiences and services they expect. HR onboarding practices play a major part in this problem: Manual, paper-intensive processes result in a lengthy and inefficient onboarding process ending in high new hire churn rates, thereby causing long-term talent gaps and driving up costs.

Increasingly savvy federal agencies are realizing that achieving mission success requires making HR onboarding automation a top priority. They're turning to desktop automation solutions such as SS&C | Blue Prism® Desktop to help stop perpetual employee churn by enabling the delivery of an efficient and welcoming onboarding experience.

With Desktop, repetitive HR onboarding tasks and workflows are quickly and accurately handled by digital workers, which significantly reduces onboarding time horizons and ensures new employees have everything they need exactly when they need it.

The solution delivers the high level of security, compliance and governance federal agencies demand by providing centralized control and auditability for all automations.

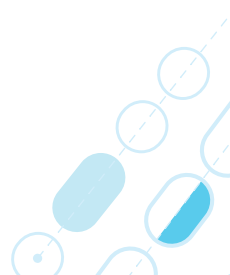
Get in touch today to see how you can achieve mission success by addressing your toughest HR onboarding challenges with SS&C Blue Prism.

## About SS&C Blue Prism

SS&C Blue Prism allows organizations to deliver transformational business value via our intelligent automation platform. We make products with one aim in mind — to improve experiences for people.

By connecting people and digital workers, you can use the right resource, every time, for the best customer and business outcomes. We supply enterprise-wide software that not only provides full control and governance but also allows businesses to react fast to continuous change. Exceed customer expectations, stay competitive, accelerate growth.

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