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## Q & A – Milton J. Perkins

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Perkins

*Editor's note: Milton J. Perkins is vice president of ActOne Government Solutions Inc., a subsidiary of the ActOne Group, and is responsible for pursuing, managing and delivering workforce and commodity solutions to federal, state, county and municipal and quasi-government clients.*

*Perkins has more than 40 years of human capital experience. Prior to ActOne, he served as chief human resources officer for Mint Dentistry, vice president of HR for Kasasa and accountability and human resources officer for Vanguard Integrity Professionals. He has also worked as head of global talent management for Hewitt Associates, senior director of workforce solutions for Agile-1 — another subsidiary of the ActOne Group — and RAS leader for EDS, among others.*

*He holds a bachelor's in management and computer certifications systems, a master's in human resources and a doctorate in management, with published research on environmental variables impacting virtual employee engagement. He additionally earned his SHRM people analytics specialty credentials and holds certifications as a SHRM senior certified professional, senior professional in human resources and certified professional coach. He has completed human resource leadership studies at the Disney Institute, the Society for Human Resource Management, the Executive Leadership Development Program at Babson College and the PDI Assessment Center.*

*Perkins is one of three off-island speakers scheduled for the 2019 SHRM Guam Chapter Annual Conference on Aug. 9.*

### Q: You have been involved with SHRM for almost 20 years. What made you get involved with the organization?

**A:** SHRM is the largest professional HR association, worldwide. As such, it produces the largest body of knowledge related to our profession. As with any other profession, a professional body is required to oversee the framework for the occupation, practice or vocation, and define the knowledge, skills and abilities required to master the complex set of knowledge and skills through formal education and/or practical experience; SHRM is our professional body. As a scholar-practitioner, there was no other choice other than to align myself with the astute organization to access, help develop and advance contemporary knowledge related to our profession. My commitment to the profession and SHRM also included a two-year stint as SHRM's North Central regional director.

### Q: In your role at ActOne, what would you say is the greatest challenge working with the government as your primary client?

**A:** ActOne Government Solutions provides next-in-class talent and commodity solutions to federal, state, county, city and quasi-government agencies. We have experience with organizations such as the U.S. Department of State, the Department of Energy and the Department of Defense, to name a few. The greatest challenge we face is having procurement, contracting and functional department leaders agree with a solution we present, and having them be forced to work through a rather slow request for proposal process. Additionally, we have been challenged by many RFPs being developed as set-asides in categories for which we do not qualify, i.e., SBA small business, service-related disabled veteran owned business, hub-zone, etc. We periodically will work with an innovative contracting team who can contract with us source or direct contract, but many times our conversations result in a lengthy RFP process, despite the fact all parties agree our solution is the best solution. Lastly, we have developed a very successful and assertive partnership program through which we can partner on RFP responses to set asides, when required.

### Q: ActOne is one of the largest Minority and Woman-owned Business Enterprise organizations; what is unique about working for an MWBE organization?

**A:** ActOne Government Solutions provides a broad portfolio of talent acquisition/staffing, HR consulting, business services, commodities and talent/vendor management services/consulting solutions. Our illustrious CEO, Janice Bryant Howroyd has led us for more than 50 years in this industry. The greatest benefit to working with us is we have nearly 50 years of dedicated experience in the talent arena and we have defined a value proposition that is irrefutable, almost to a point of 'if our solutions do not create a quantifiable cost/benefit, we will not contract with you.' Janice's persistence and keen eye for talent has made the ActOne Group the largest minority and women owned talent-focused business in North America and has earned her the moniker of one of the most successful businesswomen in the history of our country.

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Many government and private-sector organizations understand the business case for diversifying its employee and supplier base. There is lots of research proving diverse enterprises are more engaged and productive in comparison to organizations with less diversification. To that end, if an organization adopts these data-proven strategies, and has goals thereto, working with ActOne Government Solutions can help them meet their diversity goals, as well as other key performance indicators.

**Q: You have a multitude of experience working in talent acquisition, why would you recommend an employer use a talent acquisition agency over hiring in house?**

**A:** The cost/benefit of doing so. Most organizations have a limited number of employees dedicated solely to talent acquisition, if at all. Even when they have dedicated talent acquisition staff, those staff members must be responsive to other internal initiatives. ActOne Government Solutions, and similar talent acquisition agency staff members focus only on talent acquisition/staffing, all-day, every day. This is the fulltime specialty of everyone involved with the agency; the candidate is the center of the universe. That being so, having an extensive talent network and talent-focused infrastructure allows clients to have someone (comical mantra) 'do their mess for less.' If an organization can totally or partially outsource work that can be handled for a lower investment, I would recommend doing so. For instance, utilizing ActOne Government Solutions' Recruitment Process Outsourcing model, the cost per hire for talent (for all levels of talent) averages a couple of thousand dollars per head, with a time to fill of less than 30 days. In contrast, SHRM reported the average CPH for most companies is over \$4,100, with a TTF of 42 days; Glassdoor reported a U.S. CPH of around \$4,000, with a TTF of around 52 days.

**Q: What advice would you give to a business looking to develop its HR strategy?**

**A:** Understand and be training on a comprehensive and emergent process for strategic planning, aligned with the organizational plan. I utilized a six-step process for strategic planning. What I have observed as a consultant is most HR plans are not aligned with organizational plans, goals and objectives and there is no process for planning (at the organizational or department levels). Most organizations and HR make minor adjustments without an analysis of things on the horizon. For instance, how many readers can describe their talent build, borrow or buy strategy, aligned to the organization's mission and goals? For those who can describe it, has the plan been communicated in a compelling way to each individual contributor and are their metrics and analytics defined?

**Q: You have spoken about unconscious/conscious biases and microaggressions in the workplace. How should employers handle these types of offenses?**

**A:** I think organizations need to train managers and employees about diversity, inclusion, equity, biases and microaggression as an avoidance or risk mitigation effort. Handling related offenses is reactive; why not be proactive and avoid these outcomes? Nonetheless, education is not only a safe harbor, but also affords employees the ability to behave better in the workplace. With five generations and a more diverse workforce, organizations that seek a competitive advantage should reach out to experts or have internal staff trained on how to develop and deliver content and training on this topic. I am an advocate of monetizing and measuring everything in HR to key performance indicators of the organization. Doing so with this type of learning and development is no different.

**Q: Employee retention can be a challenge for many companies. What would you say are the best practices for employee retention?**

**A:** Retention starts with recruitment. I think acquiring talent is like courtship; you never pursue a relationship with someone with the thought of losing them. To that end, truly understanding what candidates and new hires are seeking, as well as the organization's needs, and aligning them is critical to retention. Teaching managers to meet with their direct reports frequently to not only discuss productivity, but also how the employee's desires might be changing is critical. Having HR help design retention interview guides is a great tool. Lastly, focusing on employee engagement as an organizational key performance indicator (and the practical tactics thereto), will have a dramatic impact on retention. There is a positive Pearson Correlation Coefficient between engagement and retention. That is, as engagement increases so does retention, productivity, client satisfaction and client retention, to name a few. Lastly, HR practitioners and managers might want to review SHRM Foundation and Gallup studies related to employee engagement and retention, like the Gallup Q12 study.

**Q: You've published research on environmental variables impacting virtual employee engagement. With many companies choosing to hire remote workers, how can they better engage these workers?**

**A:** First, organizational leaders must be progressive enough to better match the needs of a much more diverse workforce that embraces working alternatives different than older generations. Many Gen X, Y and Z feel work is something that is done, rather than simply a place you go (for jobs that allow flexibility). As noted in my research, there are a few practical areas where organizations can focus to increase engagement and related productivity of virtual employees — increased communication, autonomy, development, clarity and succinct goals.

**Q: You hold a number of HR certifications and have led the SHRM-SCP/CP certification preparation course. How can HR certifications such as these further the career of a professional in the HR field?**

**A:** Just like any profession wherein certifications illustrate the mastery of a codified body of knowledge related to the profession, HR certifications will afford the professional with the opportunity to study, understand and increase their mastery of the Body of Competencies and Knowledge associated with the listed certifications. In addition to receiving the coveted certification, the professional will gain knowledge that will allow them to design and deliver better solutions for their organizations. Having greater knowledge to deliver better results is what I consider the benefit of certification.

**Q: Is there anything about your work we didn't ask about that you feel would interest the business community?**



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A: Since Peter Capelli's 2000 published research, "Market-Mediated Employment: The Historical Context," I have been intrigued by the "business" of HR, and the strategic implications of managing the human capital infrastructure to business key performance indicators, versus HR operating as a shared operational and administrative service. I would recommend readers begin to operate and embrace HR as a strategic component of any enterprise (for profit, not-for-profit or government), and better utilize people analytics to illustrate the value of human capital infrastructure to the journey of the organization, its mission, vision, goals and objectives. Remember, everything important in an organization is measured, but not all things that are measured are important. HR must be able to show the impact of employee-focused initiatives to the business, mitigate risks by being proactive, studying and mastering content related to our new competency model, and investigating/researching and addressing any issues that can result in business discontinuity. **mbj**


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