

Désirée Santiago

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Strategic Human Capital Leader & ICF Associate Certified Coach

Neuroscience-Informed | Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach

Experienced HR and leadership professional with a proven track record of leading complex, high-stakes initiatives; building scalable people programs; and delivering measurable results in demanding environments. Known for fostering collaboration, strengthening leadership capability, and aligning talent strategy to organizational goals. Now partnering with leaders to navigate change, clarify their leadership identity, and intentionally evolve into more authentic, effective, and resilient versions of themselves.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Character Arc Leadership Coaching | Montclair, Virginia

03/2025 - Present

FOUNDER & LEADERSHIP COACH

- » Founded and lead Character Arc Leadership Coaching, delivering ICF-aligned, neuroscience-informed leadership coaching to professionals navigating growth, transition, and increased leadership complexity.
- » Apply Gallup CliftonStrengths® methodology to help leaders identify, articulate, and strategically apply their natural talents to improve decision-making, presence, and leadership effectiveness.

Partner with leaders to clarify purpose, strengthen executive presence, and author authentic leadership narratives that align strengths, values, and career direction.

Utilize solution-focused, evidence-based coaching practices to support sustained behavior change, resilience, and performance outcomes.

Credentials: ICF Associate Certified Coach (ACC) • Gallup Global Strengths Coach • Neuroscience Certified Coach

Department of Defense | Alexandria, Virginia

01/2019 – 09/2025

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, EMPLOYMENT INTEGRATION & STRATEGIC CIVILIAN RECRUITMENT (GS-0201-15)

- » Spearheaded a strategic recruitment program for the DoD civilian workforce, increasing recruitment effectiveness through targeted outreach and innovative marketing strategies.
- » Revamped DoD's civilian employer brand, boosting brand recognition through a revamped website and targeted social media strategies, improving followers and reach by 1000% in 3 years.
- » Increased participation in DoD Recruiters Consortium by 30% in 2 years, enhancing recruitment capacity by fostering collaboration among 600+ recruiters through shared resources.
- » Championed the acquisition of third-party solutions, augmenting DoD's recruitment capabilities through data-driven insights and effective contract management.
- » Developed content and training, briefings and facilitated workshops.
- » Led innovative projects as HR Transformation Team Chief of Staff, including developing a framework for measuring and enhancing personnel systems accountability across the DoD.

Department of Housing & Urban Development | Washington, DC

01/2017 - 01/2019

DEPUTY DIRECTOR, HUMAN CAPITAL SERVICES (GS-0201-15)

- » Directed human capital operations for a Cabinet-level agency. Fostered a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement and recognized as an Organizational Culture Champion.
- » Led implementation of a Workforce Reshaping Process across HUD, optimizing organizational efficiency for the Department. Persuaded management to adopt this data-driven approach.
- » Championed a data quality initiative that improved the integrity of HUD's human capital data by 15% in 90 days, empowering data-driven decision-making by management.

Financial Crimes Enforcement Network | Vienna, Virginia**01/2015 - 01/2017****HR OPERATIONS MANAGER (GS-0201-14)**

- » Top Secret clearance. Led a team of HR specialists and contractors at FinCEN, overseeing all aspects of human resources management for the bureau.
- » Optimized organizational efficiency and effectiveness through 3 strategic position management reviews in 6 months, offering recommendations to streamline work by 15%.
- » Delivered timely and effective HR services; developed HR procedures, guidance, and tools to ensure compliance and streamline operations.

Natural Resources Conservation Service | Washington, DC**01/2012 - 01/2015****HR INFORMATION SYSTEMS MANAGER (GS-0201-14)**

- » Developed and executed comprehensive information system plans, aligning HR operations with agency needs, resulting in improved staffing and classification outcomes.
- » Improved HRIS data integrity by 10% in 8 months through rigorous data analysis and best practice implementation to enhance organizational decision-making capabilities.

EDUCATION**Masters of Public Administration in Management**

12/2013

George Mason University | Fairfax, VA

CERTIFICATIONS**Associate Certified Coach**

12/2025 - Present

International Coaching Federation

Neuroscience Certified Coach

10/2025 - Present

BrainFirst Institute

Gallup Global Strengths Coach

05/2025 - Present

Gallup

Senior Professional in Human Resources

06/2010 - Present

Human Resources Certification Institute

SKILLS

» Business Strategy	» HR Risk Management	» Strategic Human Capital
» Data Analysis & Visualization	» Organizational Design	» Talent Acquisition
» Employer Branding	» Recruitment Marketing	» Workforce Analytics
» HR Information Technology	» Risk Management	» Leadership Coaching
» HR Operations	» Social Media in HR	» Training Development
		» Facilitation