

# Agency of the Future: Common Misconceptions Holding You Back and How to Break Free



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# Introduction

Chances are a manager, senior leader or general counsel has told you what can't be done and what's not possible given current constraints. Maybe you're the bearer of that news.

But what about limiting beliefs — those unwritten rules or assumptions — that aren't found in policy? Or beliefs that have crept into the fabric of your agency because of a misconception? Maybe there's a longstanding belief that you can't manage employees without seeing them in the office or that innovation is too costly, time-consuming or unnecessary.

How do you break free from those misconceptions and help your agency embrace new ways of working and operating in 2021 and beyond?

Who better to answer that question than the government employees in the trenches, doing the work, challenging assumptions and leading from all levels and in both technical and nontechnical roles.

In this guide, we clarify and correct limiting assumptions and common misconceptions often ingrained in agency culture. We specifically highlighted beliefs that are holding employees and organizations back from modernizing and advancing in key areas such as employee experiences, technology, product management, finance and budgeting, and leadership. For each misconception, we explore:

- **What the misconception is and how it's communicated**
- **What's at stake if this way of thinking continues**
- **How to reframe thinking around this issue**
- **Talking points to lead constructive conversations that dispel the misconception**

But before we dig into each of those bullet points, let's take a quick detour to frame the conversations in this report.



**Nicole Blake Johnson,**  
Managing Editor, GovLoop

# What's on the Other Side of Red Tape?

To help you get into the right mindset before exploring this report, I'm sharing an online conversation I had with individuals who work in the government community — both public and private sector. I wanted to understand their personal definitions of a common term that sparked my research for this project. I wanted to know how they define "modernization."

## **I asked:**

How do you define modernization in government? I'm not just talking IT or looking for jargon that you'd find in reports. How do you, in your everyday job, think about #modernization in an inclusive way that makes others care about it? This can be keywords or a few sentences.

Their responses were thoughtful, personal and selfless. They confirmed that modernization cannot and should not be relegated to a technology line item in the budget, a new policy, a workforce reorganization or a conference theme. Their responses are reminders of what is on the other side of misconceptions: a more modern and inclusive government that serves all, not some, and that incentivizes creative thinking and empowers employees to courageously cut through that red tape.

## **Here's a sampling of what they shared (view all comments [here](#)):**

**Willingness to lead change.** "Modernization is an attitude. Am I willing to lead my colleagues and organization to new ways of doing things to serve the public, and am I personally willing to learn new skills to enable that leadership? You can't modernize if you answer 'no' to either of those questions."

-Adam Korengold, analytics professional in government



**Employee empowerment.** "Getting out of the way of your subordinates; maximizing telework/remote work opportunities; mandatory peer partnership; recognizing exceptional performance over longevity."

-Housing and Urban Development Department employee

**Meeting needs.** "To me, modernization means becoming fully present to what the current moment requires."

-Jill L. Barrett, Life and Professional Coach, Organizational Consultant

**Mindset shift.** "Modernization in government is a way of thinking. It's moving away from the mindset that memos and meetings drive good business. It's understanding that building digital tools for employees that prioritize time and outcomes leads to better public tools rather than chasing shiny public services that are on poorly laid foundations. It starts with looking in the mirror for each of us and making a commitment to challenge [our] assumptions."

-Shayne Martin, Director, Office of Communication & Engagement for the Southwestern Region, U.S. Forest Service

**User-centered design.** "The key is user engagement (user-centered design), but it's tricky because the new methods need to be recognized and be consistent with the processes they will replace, but users may not understand or accept them – which is why they need to be involved in the design and deployment processes."

-Frank L. Greitzer, PhD, Founder and President, PsyberAnalytix

**Inclusiveness.** "Modernization means involving the voices of those who are working for you now, at all levels, to help shape the policies and programs for the future... allowing feedback, reviews and suggestions along the way from those who matter most. Your internal customers (the workforce) and external customers (people you serve). Modernization = Transformation!"

-Mika Cross, Federal Workplace Expert



*Let us know: How do you define modernization in government? What about your constituents? Your manager and agency senior leaders? Share your thoughts with us via [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) or at [info@govloop.com](mailto:info@govloop.com).*

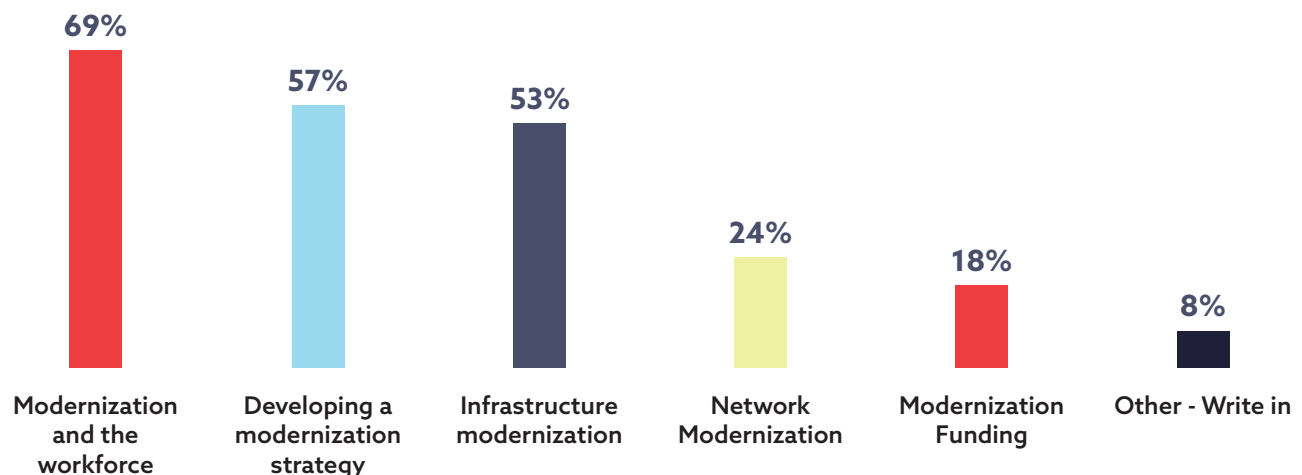
# Modernization beyond the executive branch

In October 2020, a bipartisan special committee released nearly 100 recommendations in a final report that serves as a roadmap for modernization in Congress. The goal is to make the more than 230-year-old institution more effective, efficient and transparent. To give you a sense of how this committee defines modernization, here are some of the key issues that the recommendations cover:

- Make the Office of Diversity and Inclusion a permanent part of the People’s House. The 116th Congress authorized the office to recruit, hire, train, develop, advance, promote and retain a diverse congressional workforce.
- Standardize and expand benefits offered to congressional staff, and regularly adjust those benefits to attract and retain top talent.
- Improve the support, resources and tools available to new members of Congress. This includes continuing education and just-in-time learning to help members better retain information.
- Make Capitol Hill, congressional websites and legislative documents accessible for all Americans.
- Increase the quality of constituent communication.

Interested in this topic? Check out the work that [Lorelei Kelly](#) is doing. She leads [modernizing Congress research](#) at Georgetown University’s Beek Center for Social Impact and Innovation.

**In December 2019, we asked the GovLoop community what they are reading and/or wanting to learn more about as it relates to modernizing legacy IT.**



# Modernizing in a Crisis

## **5 conditions that boost innovation**

So how do you get to the other side of the red tape and lay hold of all the benefits that a modern government can offer?

For many in the public sector, answering that question dramatically shifted from a casual conversation to an absolute necessity in 2020.

Even agencies that already considered themselves innovative were forced — by health, economic and racial equity crises — to think differently, challenge assumptions and act swiftly.

Defaulting to “no” wasn’t an option.

Gradually, the crippling fear of change and failure seems to be losing at least some of its grip on organizations, but rooting out entrenched assumptions can’t be a one-time event or solely crisis-driven if the goal is lasting impact.

Former Sacramento Chief Innovation Officer Louis Stewart offered these words of advice for government workers: “The first best practice is starting from yes. Try not to start from a place where you’re scared to try new things.”

A [November 2020 article in MIT Sloan Management Review](#) explored the answer to a question that we at GovLoop have been documenting in the past year: “Why is it that innovation seems more possible during a crisis?” The writers identified five interdependent conditions that characterize a crisis and boost innovation, based on their work with public and private sector organizations.

- 1.** A crisis provides a sudden and real sense of urgency.
- 2.** This urgency enables organizations to drop all other priorities and focus on a single challenge, reallocating resources as needed.

- 3.** With this singular focus and reallocated resources, it’s now everybody’s job to come together to solve the problem, bringing a new diversity of viewpoints and perspectives.

- 4.** This urgency and singular focus legitimizes what would otherwise constitute “waste,” allowing for more experimentation and learning.

- 5.** Because the crisis is only temporary, the organization can commit to a highly intense effort over a short period of time.

I strongly recommend reading the entire article because it gets to the heart of the deeply rooted issues and biases at play with each of these five conditions. One in particular that resonates is the reality that “people are far more likely to change their behavior to avoid a negative outcome than they are to change behavior to gain a positive outcome,” the authors note. “This phenomenon is known as prospect theory.”

The article also explains how leaders can use what they’ve learned to effectively generate innovation in non-crisis times.

In the following pages, you’ll hear directly from public servants about the common misconceptions they’ve heard throughout their careers and how those limiting beliefs impact modernization\*. They also provide talking points to help you change the narrative at your organization and lead change from where you are.

*Interviews were edited for length and clarity.\**



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## Industry Perspective

# 4 Steps to Take Your Agency From Information to Insights

*An interview with Mark Hughes, Chief Strategy Officer, and Stephen Moore, Chief Technical Officer, AlphaSix*

There's no denying the benefits of big data in government. So why, then, does it feel like an aspirational goal for even the most well-intentioned organizations?

For one, charting the course from information to evidence-based insights requires a clear vision. There must be senior-level commitment to overcome organizational inertia, or the tendency to do what's always been done, said Stephen Moore, Chief Technical Officer at AlphaSix, a data management firm.

Chief Strategy Officer Mark Hughes added that leading data-driven modernization isn't without challenges. But these efforts should be seen as an attainable outcome for agencies, he said, citing the IRS and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as examples.

**"[Modernization] doesn't have to be daunting," Hughes said. "But at the same time, don't buy a tool or fancy software package thinking that you have modernized. It won't be successful. You have to do the foundational work, such as identifying outcomes, potential use cases and stakeholders."**

Here are some practical tips for moving from information to insights at your agency.

### 1. Know the end goal

It's critical that you clearly identify how any new investments contribute to your larger goal.

"In the past, we've seen organizations buy and install new technology without understanding how and if that technology would be used," Moore said. "They ended up with a bunch of blinking lights in the data center, but they didn't really have anybody invested in making use of it."

### 2. Prioritize security

Security can't be an afterthought. It must be an integral part of every step of your modernization journey, from who has access to what data and systems to how information is securely shared.

### 3. Embrace an adaptable framework

There isn't one silver bullet for analyzing and making sense of data. But an adaptable analytic framework is the starting point for extracting more value from big data today and preparing for a data-driven future.

"You don't have to lock data into black box systems or rebuild how you collect, process and store data for every new visualization tool you want to use," Moore said. Data will change over time, but the analytical framework you use can evolve and grow as needed.

### 4. Plan for professional development

As data needs and capabilities evolve within your agency, employees should also be well-positioned to support those changes. Hughes recommends using a staffing matrix that provides clear paths for growth opportunities, whether that be IT staff or nontechnical employees developing their data skills.

"Big data can be made easy," Hughes said, citing successful partnerships that AlphaSix has had with agencies such as the CDC. What started as a project to better store data evolved into a larger modernization effort. That positively impacted the culture around data and expanded career opportunities for employees.

The ultimate goal is helping agencies capture, secure and leverage strategic data assets to transform their information into timely, meaningful insights.

# Who owns modernization?



## An interview with

**Brian Whittaker** formerly served as Executive Director of 18F and Deputy Director at the IT Centers of Excellence, both of which are housed at the General Services Administration (GSA). Whittaker's background centered on collaborating with agencies and partners to identify and prioritize their modernization initiatives, and to break down what's at stake and view these efforts through a broader lens.

### Limiting belief:

**Modernization lies at the doorstep of the chief information officer, and therefore the CIO is solely accountable.**

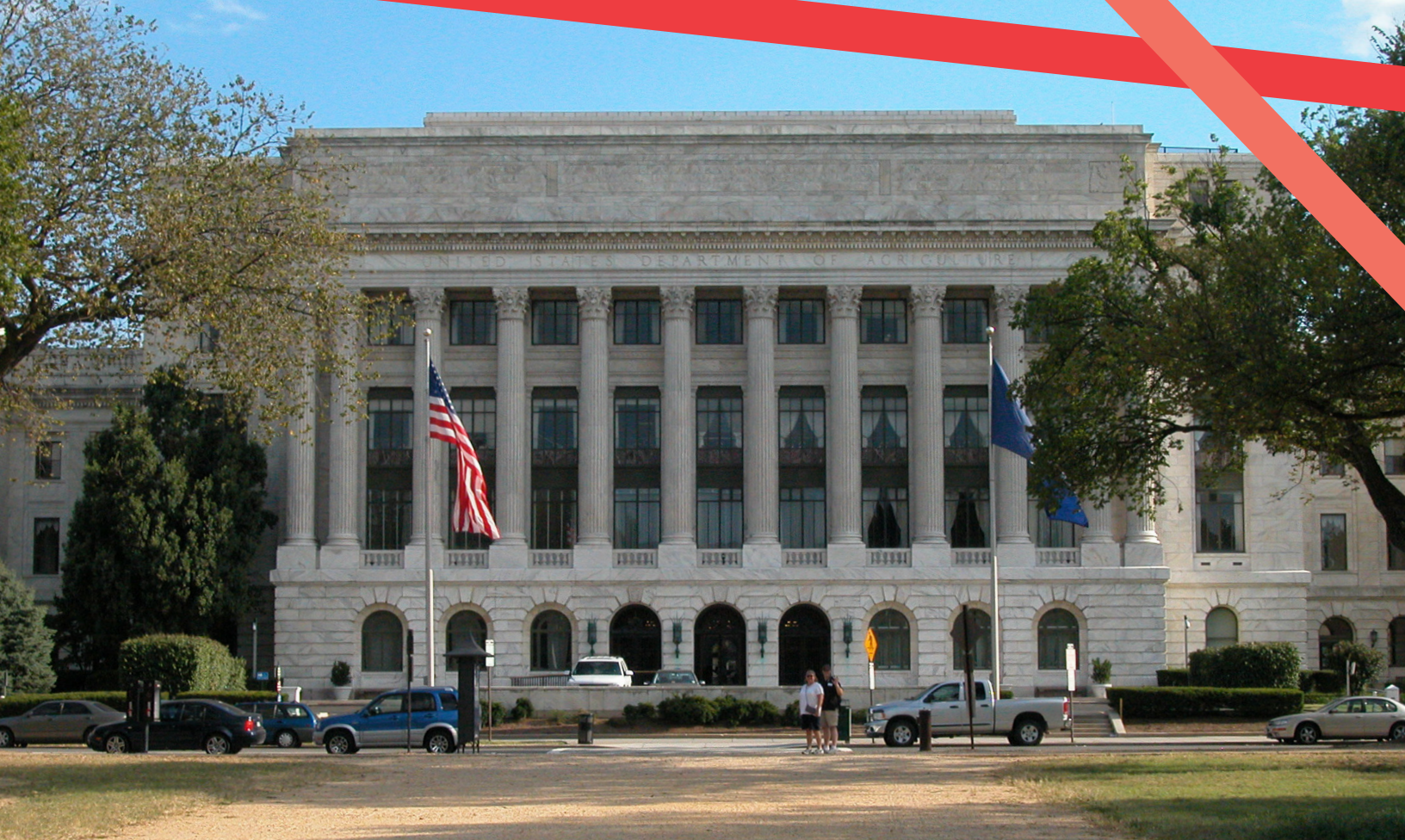
**The reality is:** It takes many functions across an entire agency and department to make modernization a reality. When the headlines say, "Systems are failing," and you look to your left and your right, who are you going to grab first? It is a natural impulse and a logical thing to call the CIO. But there are also underlying elements like the acquisition process and the human resources (HR) process. There are multiple areas where an IT project can be unsuccessful.

**The consequences are steep:** Consider the unemployment websites nationwide that were crashing at the start of the COVID crisis. Did the agencies running them acquire the proper tools? Did they have the people to develop the requirements for that tool? Did they have the appropriate skill sets to maintain those tools? A lot of our country is at risk. People aren't able to get their benefits, and haven't been able to for a long time. So we have to come together and understand that this is much broader than an IT problem.

**Reframe the conversation:** Depending on the agency or department or bureau, I think oversight of modernization should be pivoted to either a chief operating officer or deputy secretary. Those are the people who have oversight of enough groups to collaborate and prioritize.

**What's possible:** Where I've seen IT modernization be most successful are at USDA [Agriculture Department] and OPM [Office of Personnel Management]. It was really a group of the CIO, the chief human capital officer, the head of acquisition and the program side all coming together to prioritize. At USDA, the secretary had an IT strategy in the form of a memo. When we came in from the Centers of Excellence, there was no confusion about why we were there. We had the memo. Everybody had the memo.





## Advice to cut through red tape

**For senior leaders:** Come up with a mechanism to capture data and perspective, and prioritize where you start. Tap your chief data officer (CDO) and maybe your chief privacy officer and figure out how to implement a voice-of-the-customer tool or even a voice-of-the-employee tool. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. You can hear from them about their burdens and pain points, and you can focus on those.

**For aspiring leaders:** Modernization's right in front of you. It's an opportunity to improve a process, to get a thing done faster, to delight the general public. Document your hack; document your best practices. Share those with your leaders. It can start with the people on the front line making something as simple as a process improvement that catches on and spreads across the entire bureau or agency.

## Recommended reading

The state and federal versions of [de-risking guides](#) by 18F, GSA's digital consultancy group, provide instructions for stakeholders who fund or oversee government technology projects, including budget specialists, product owners and legislators. It walks them through how to budget for, procure and oversee software development projects.



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# Why AI is an Asset to Your Modernization Goals

*An interview with David Bargh, Cloud Solution Manager, SAP NS2*

Every agency's data journey is different. It often varies based on mission, culture, internal processes and workforce skill sets. But there's a common challenge that isn't unique to any one agency, large or small.

**"The issue is that agencies often have isolated applications that only address specific needs," said David Bargh, Cloud Solution Manager at SAP National Security Services (NS2). "However, to find real value in that data, they need to move toward an interconnected set of solutions that enable them to take advantage of artificial intelligence (AI)."**

Real value has come in the form of augmenting critical decision-making across mission areas, Bargh said. He has seen the firsthand benefits of improved services as agencies integrate AI into their modernization efforts. At SAP NS2, the team collaborates with government customers to offer an array of analytic solutions that create a data environment conducive to security, productivity and interoperability.

Bargh detailed three key areas that agencies should prioritize to deliver data-driven outcomes.

### 1. Data integration

Bringing data together across all functional lines of business and mission areas to achieve a single view of agency performance is vital, Bargh said.

"A key challenge that we see in many agencies is integration," he said. "An actionable step there is to provide or have a data platform available so you can put information into context."

For example, agencies must understand their budgets — whether for travel or training expenses — in greater detail. Just knowing what you spend on training isn't enough. How do those costs break down across lines of business, and can you quickly reallocate funding if needed?

### 2. Areas of improvement

"Most agencies today can meet their responsibilities, but how do they improve and reimagine success?" Bargh said. "The greatest area that I've seen for improving and expanding services is artificial intelligence."

It's not just about having a great data platform or great integration. How are you going to analyze that data? Using AI, agencies can learn and glean insights from their data, ultimately making better decisions.

Back to the budget example mentioned in the previous section, AI can play a critical role in making reallocation decisions and projections based on current and historical data and other factors.

### 3. Augmenting decision-making

The ultimate goal for agencies is to make sound decisions in a timely manner.

Whether the end user is a doctor providing patient diagnoses, a field office worker making environmental decisions or a soldier needing real-time data feeds, the margin for error is slim. They need reliable information to augment their current knowledge about a situation or issue, Bargh said.

As agencies grapple with the increasing number of retirement-eligible employees, they'll also need sound and timely data to make workforce decisions and address knowledge gaps.

Agencies' data journeys often differ, but the building blocks for success remain the same, Bargh said. "Real value is achieved when agencies can connect their data, apply AI to that data and augment their decision-making."

# Conducting user research



## An interview with

**Cyd Harrell** is an independent civic design consultant and author of “A Civic Technologist’s Practice Guide.” Her background is rooted in the user research discipline, and she has also worked in product management. Much of her work focuses on bringing both design and product management practice to people in government who make those kinds of decisions.

## Limiting belief:

**We are a government organization and don’t think user research is something we can do.**

**What’s at stake:** You really miss a connection with your constituents around the service that you’re building or providing, and that can lead to a lot of things, including employee discouragement, if people don’t see how improvements that they’re making affect the actual public, or difficulty in management making decisions because they don’t have good information.

**What’s missing from the conversation:** I really believe that everybody who makes design decisions — and you could say the same for product decisions — deserves to have design practice and design communities. There are a lot of public servants making what are actually design decisions: how to present something to the public, how to design a digital product or a digital service. Even people who write communications or signage for use for the public are making design decisions. They have great instincts and a lot of smarts, but may not have had exposure to design practice or design community.

- **Acknowledge the discomfort:** That’s a real thing. You may be told information about how your product or service works that is unpleasant, and I think one of the important things to recognize is that if you are in a career government position, you can get in trouble for that. That’s a career risk. And so taking that on requires supportive management.
- **Shift your mindset:** It requires a shift sometimes in mindset toward being excited to find out that information and using it to get better. Sometimes there’s a political appointee in charge who doesn’t understand or who is very rigorous about the way that they evaluate people against goals. The idea of getting bad feedback from the public, which is a pretty universal result of any user research study, is legitimately risky.



**Reframe the conversation:** What I try to do is make a safe way for them to experience the process and show them the values through doing that. Invite them to do a dry run of your protocol with an alumnus of the organization. In convincing people that it's worth doing research, get really clear on those research questions and show how your research plan leads to getting that valuable answer to those questions.

## Talking points to cut through red tape

**Communicate your work.** Sometimes demonstration sessions are not the first step. Be transparent about your protocols, what questions you're going to ask and how you'll do it, how people can immediately opt out if they don't want to participate in research, how the information is presented to participants, and more.

**If you get permission to run a small study,** or a big study, share with your broader team at the end of every day what you did. You might say, "Here are some of the interesting things that we found out, and we'll be enlightening this more later."

## Keep this in mind

// **The big research question is what you want to know, not what you ask in an interview. In fact, asking your research question directly is often the worst way to learn anything."**

— Mule Design



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## Industry Perspective

# How Modern Agencies Outgrow Their Data Backup Strategies

*An interview with Jeff Reichard, Senior Director, Enterprise Strategy, and Salim Ruffin, Senior Manager, System Engineering for Federal, Veeam Software*

As modern IT organizations innovate faster, legacy backup solutions and recovery infrastructure cannot support forward-looking initiatives. It's time to take your data protection to a new level with a modern, future-ready approach that will set you up for success — today and in the coming years.

This will be a common theme throughout 2021. The shift to remote work in 2020 forced many agencies to begin or accelerate IT modernization initiatives, often involving the adoption of public cloud services. Now they need to ensure that their data backup strategies work in this new environment.

**“The planned and forced IT modernizations that we’ve seen accelerated because of COVID have also been an accelerant for data protection strategy changes,” said Jeff Reichard, Senior Director, Enterprise Strategy at Veeam Software, which provides a cloud-based data management platform.**

GovLoop spoke with Reichard and with Salim Ruffin, Senior Manager, System Engineering for Federal at Veeam, about three key factors that agencies should consider when developing a new backup strategy.

### 1. Service resilience vs. data availability

Agencies often move applications and data to the cloud because cloud service providers (CSPs) can deliver superior uptime. The problem is that service resilience is no guarantee of data availability.

**For example, Office 365 provides a resilient platform for email, Ruffin said, but “I think we’ve all had times when we deleted emails that we later regretted.”**

In fact, in a recent Veeam survey of organizations worldwide, 37% of respondents said they had experienced data loss due to user error or accidental deletion. The agency, not the CSP, is on the hook for protecting itself against such loss. As agencies extend applications and data to the cloud, they need to ensure their backup solutions extend as well.

### 2. The complexities of cloud native

As part of their modernization efforts, a growing number of agencies are adopting cloud-native technology, such as containerization and Kubernetes, which makes data backup even more complex.

Containers are small bundles of code that can be easily deployed to different platforms, while Kubernetes is an open-source platform for automating the deployment of containerized applications. Those applications might be drawing data from any number of sources — all of which must be addressed by a backup solution.

### 3. Data portability

One of the benefits of containerized applications is that they are easy to move from one cloud platform to another — or from the cloud to on premises and back again. That provides agencies with the flexibility to shift workloads as their requirements change. But it also creates data backup headaches.

To ensure high data availability, agencies need a backup solution that spans the entire application environment, from physical to virtual, and cloud and cloud-native platforms, Reichard said.

Agencies might be tempted to bank on their legacy data backup solutions as they move forward with modernization. But, realistically, given the demands of the evolving IT environment, that is a choice that they cannot afford to make.

# Hiring and degree requirements



## An interview with

**Bill Hunt** is technology-policy enthusiast who currently works for the U.S. government. Previously, he spent 20 years building award-winning software and teams in the private sector.

### Limiting belief:

**The most qualified job candidates have degrees.**

**The reality in government:** Writing code is one thing, but you have to know how a product is managed and a project is managed, which are two separate disciplines. In government, you have to understand how budgets work and security requirements, and everything that goes along with it. A classroom isn't going to teach you any of that.

**There's hope:** NIST (that is, the National Institute of Standards and Technology) finally changed the NICE framework (a set of building blocks for describing cybersecurity work) to eliminate those education requirements that had been there forever. But, unfortunately, a lot of agencies have adopted that framework as-is and haven't made that update yet for their postings for these positions. I rarely, if ever, see any sort of serious technical position in government that doesn't have at least a degree or other comparable requirement in there.

**Consequence of inaction:** It creates a barrier to entry for people who don't have these degrees. Even if you're saying it's not required, it's that level of expectation. There's been a number of positions that I tried to apply for where there's still a requirement that you have that educational background, just to say that you have the piece of paper. I don't think that that's resulting in better candidates coming in necessarily.

**What's at stake:** It limits the diversity of your candidate pool. So you're only getting so many viewpoints.

**The need for diverse perspectives:** If you haven't been in the trenches and seen what it's like to be on the receiving end of these government services, that's a disconnect between you and the mission. The other side of this is that by having a less diverse pool, you're probably going to be far less aware of systematic inequality that you're creating. There's a lack of real knowledge around automation of these systems [such as artificial intelligence and robotic process automation] and the inequalities they build.



**A new outlook:** At the bare minimum, agencies need to use blind hiring techniques – removing names, email addresses and phone numbers, and education from these resume evaluations. There are some new initiatives that are coming

down the pike that are worth at least thinking about: having experts in whatever the domain is that you're doing the hiring for, particularly around technology, evaluate the candidate, go through the resumes and do the interviews.

## Talking points to cut through red tape

**For job candidates:** Get really comfortable with your impostor syndrome. All of us have it. Even if it doesn't seem like you perfectly fit the requirements, you should still apply, particularly if you're coming from a nontraditional background, not a typical "white man in technology." This is the opportunity where we need your skills, and you should join us and help us.


 **Bill Hunt** @krusynth · Nov 9

I see many of my former technology-colleagues now suddenly eager to return to government- or join for the first time- and I'm very excited to work with you all again!

That being said, here are a few thoughts from someone who stuck around for the hard parts over the last 4 years.

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**For hiring managers:** When it comes to hiring, don't overlook the people that don't necessarily match what you think is the right candidate. Do more actual interviews than just discarding resumes. Double-, triple- and quadruple-check the number of actual in-person, phone and video chats that you're doing with people to get to know them. Do multiple rounds. Because, again, it's the people you're hiring, not the resume.

 **Bill Hunt** @krusynth · Dec 11

In short: don't ask questions that have a single, expected answer. If you know what the answer is, you've created a knowledge-based test - and just like with authentication, you've created a bad one. 7/7+

1   5

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## Industry Perspective

# Government Transformation Demands a Modern Data Experience

*An interview with Nick Psaki, Principal System Engineer for North American Federal, Pure Storage*

Simple, fast and accessible are words that historically have not been associated with government technology systems. Ask any agency leader who balances the burden of legacy IT with demands to rapidly meet mission needs.

But they'll also tell you that those realities are shifting. Key to this turning tide has been a renewed focus on one of their most valuable assets: data.

**"Government technology transformation demands a modern data experience," said Nick Psaki, Principal System Engineer for North American Federal at Pure Storage. "Our focus is helping the government realize its vision for enterprise data capabilities."**

Psaki and his colleagues view their customers' pain points and goals from the perspective of a data company. The reality is that IT environments have grown more complex, but agencies can't afford to be stymied by costly, inaccessible or unreliable systems.

With this in mind, Psaki detailed five priorities he has gleaned from agency customers as they focus on enterprise transformation in 2021 and beyond.

### 1. Security

Recent high-profile attacks against government agencies and their ecosystem of partners have magnified the ongoing importance of security. It's foundational to agencies' enterprise infrastructure, which is the backbone that supports virtually everything they do.

### 2. Simplicity

"Government customers are looking for ways to streamline," Psaki said. "They want to treat their enterprise as a unified service, whether they're modernizing on-premise infrastructure or accelerating a move to the cloud."

Simplicity is core to the Pure Storage model, he said. "We make acquisition and implementation as easy as possible, whether you want to buy outright [or] subscribe to a service on premise or in the cloud."

### 3. Scalability

If there's one thing agencies learned from 2020, it's that predicting future workloads can be a precarious task. They need scalable systems that can support small use cases and rapidly expand to meet the demands of enterprise production.

### 4. Sustainment

Technology needs to be sustainable for agencies. "They shouldn't be paying for yesterday's technology with today's dollars, for tomorrow's operations" Psaki said. The question becomes how can they upgrade technology in a nondisruptive way to enhance operations without incurring additional costs?

He highlighted the Defense Information Systems Agency's milCloud 2.0 as an example. MilCloud 2.0 is an integrated suite of cloud-based infrastructure services that rapidly and securely connect to Defense Department networks. It's built on best-of-breed technology and standardized on Pure Storage's all-flash data service platform to support high-performance enterprise workloads, DevOps and advanced use cases, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning and real-time analytics.

### 5. Speed

Datasets are getting larger, forcing agencies to be more agile as new applications and services roll out. They need protocols for accessing data quickly from storage devices, for transferring data to applications, and for receiving data from sensors and various devices.

"We provide a singular platform for addressing all those data service needs," Psaki said. "The goal is to create a modern data experience that drives enterprise transformation."

# Budgeting in local government



## An interview with

**Dan Hoffman** is the City Manager for Winchester, Virginia. He has a background in HR and management, with a specialty in using technology to positively impact change. His skill sets complement the strengths of Winchester's deputy city manager, who also serves as the chief financial officer.

### Limiting belief:

**Jurisdictions' budgets can support deep cuts, therefore they should operate with an austerity mindset.**

**The reality is:** When we sit down with people and actually go through our budget, especially a new elected official, they'll see there's not much there to cut. You might find a little bit here, a little bit there, but you're not going to find double-digit cuts that we might have found back in 2008. A lot of jurisdictions are not in great financial shape. Winchester's very fortunate, but we're going to have to be creative about our revenue sources and not get too over-reliant on federal assistance and CARES [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act] money going into 2021.

**Thinking small isn't sustainable:** I have always been a fan of the old phrase that austerity is the mother of invention, bootstrapping, the lean startup methodology. That's basically everything I espoused when I was a chief innovation officer: Fail fast, start small, iterate. That's still very true. But the "thinking small" mindset works only until you scale up. At some point, to see a benefit, it has to go to scale. That requires an investment. They can't stay small forever and still reap the reward.

**What's at stake:** If you take that austerity budget mindset that says, "We don't have it, and I'm not going to ask because the council may be mad at me," you're going to have the status quo. If you're not making the case for the return on that investment, shame on you as a city manager. The city council might tell me no, but when you're a city manager, the worst thing you can do is not have the conversation.



## Talking points to cut through red tape

**Engaging the public:** Many jurisdictions have citizen academies. Ours is called INSIGHT Citizen's Academy. If someone doesn't believe that there is a lean budget, or if they feel like there's waste somewhere, come talk to us. Sit down with us. We're happy to sit down with any resident and talk to them about the budget. Just come with an open mind and come with constructive questions. We've converted a lot of naysayers, through things like INSIGHT Citizen's Academy, who were outspoken critics of ours in the past.

**Talking with elected officials:** The benefit we have with elected officials is that I think the vast majority of them take the time to sit down and understand. They may not like it. They'll be vocal about it, but at least they'll

understand why. I think as a city manager, that's the goal. I'm not always going to be able to say yes to an elected official or to one of my directors, but at least I need them to feel heard and ensure they understand why I've made that decision. From there, you can have an informed, professional, adult conversation. If you don't even try to make the case, or if you don't try to listen, there's not going to be a lot of trust, and they'll believe that there is waste or that you haven't fully thought through all of the different unseen options.



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## Industry Perspective

# Creating a Culture for Modernization to Thrive

*An interview with Steve Grewal, Federal Chief Technology Officer, Cohesity*

Conversations about modernization in government span decades. Lawmakers have passed policies to spur it, funding structures have been tested to support it and there are models for cabinet-level agencies to follow.

**“But, ultimately, successful and widespread modernization is about execution and creating a psychologically safe environment where folks are open to taking risks and leadership supports them,” said Steve Grewal, Federal Chief Technology Officer at enterprise data management firm Cohesity.**

As a former federal IT executive, Grewal knows that change management can either skillfully guide or derail those efforts. “There are a lot of moving parts around modernization — from contracting to technology considerations — and it’s important to have a shared understanding of the end state.”

Data is that foundational layer for building a shared vision, taking well-informed risks and moving the ball forward. Grewal shared practical ways that agencies can support modernization through solid data practices and psychologically safe spaces for challenging the status quo.

### 1. Manage data, innovate efficiently

“You have to look at the data layer as you consider modernization,” Grewal said. As employees’ workloads expand and public services increase, so does the potential for data breaches and service outages.

That’s why agencies must prioritize a sound data protection strategy that underpins modernization efforts. Take the Defense Department (DoD), for example. Cohesity’s DoD customers are constantly examining their data footprint across facilities, remote offices and installations. They realize that the pace of innovation is fast, and the best-of-breed technology today may be obsolete in the near future.

### 2. Have open dialogue around the issues you’re trying to solve

Depending on the size, scope and complexity of your modernization initiative, you’ll likely have incremental touchpoints where it’s essential that you confirm that the project is on track, Grewal said. The pandemic has put into perspective how critical it is for government IT teams and the business units they support to collaborate openly, honestly and often, beyond obligatory engagements.

“In the context of those partnerships, it’s important to fail fast and learn and course correct,” he said.

“Historically, it could be months or even years before a work product was delivered, only to find out that it did not hit the mark.”

### 3. Determine how you will measure modernization

Think through the efficiencies and tangible outcomes for tracking progress, Grewal said. How do you quantify success? For example, are you able to deliver the same level of capability at a lower cost?

Or are you providing greater capabilities that might require an upfront investment but leads to improved mission outcomes? In that case, you might measure the number of transactions made, response times and other metrics tied to user experience.

Either way, expectations should be explored, communicated and verified through metrics.

“We don’t have a crystal ball,” Grewal said. “One thing we can agree on is that data is your top strategic asset, whether we’re talking improved service delivery, infrastructure upgrades or digital transformation.”

# Sharing project responsibilities



## An interview with

**Nikki Lee** is a Product Manager at 18F. She helps state and federal government agencies build capacity for product management inside their organizations and sort out thorny technical problems.

### Limiting belief:

**Nontechnical teams in government cannot successfully lead technology projects.**

**The backstory:** There's this myth that government needs to outsource IT mainly because their staff is not capable of leading technology projects. And that results in program staff taking their hands off the steering wheel, and it forces the IT teams, who are often vendors, to figure it out with minimal input. This fear and uncertainty causes people to step away from important work that they ought to be doing.

**More on that issue:** Technologists like myself haven't done a good enough job being inclusive in the way we talk about our work and in the way that we incorporate other people who maybe aren't as familiar with building software. I put the onus on us as technologists to do a better job of showing that we can explain things in plain language and that there are areas where we need input from nontechnical collaborators.

**How limiting beliefs are communicated:** You'll hear people say everything ranging from "I can't do IT" or "I don't understand IT" all the way to a really direct "I don't like technology, it's not my area of expertise." And often people will extend that to their team at large and say, "Not only do I personally not feel comfortable with technology, but we as a group don't have technology skills."

**Know the warning signs:** If you're working in government and the only real contact you have with the vendor after an award is made is about documenting performance, I would say that's a warning sign that you're probably holding back and letting your discomfort guide your distance.





**Know the goal:** The ultimate thing that you want to be doing is having program staff and IT staff acting like a true team together. And you want to be in a place where you're able to acknowledge that everybody on the team is holding a piece of the bigger picture. The only way that you can guarantee that you'll be building the right thing is if you bring all of those perspectives together.

**Understand the why:** Your program staff, who is closest to the policy, is going to own the why of a project — the why is this project happening and what difference in the world it's going to make. Your technical staff, who have deep expertise in building software, are going to own the how of the solution. And then the place where you really meet in the middle and have 50/50 ownership is defining what it is that we're going to build together.

## Advice to cut through red tape

**For technical employees:** The conversation needs to be about making our work accessible and making our work understandable and approachable to an audience that isn't super confident and comfortable with technology. Continuously reinforce with your coworkers that you need input from program staff.

**For nontechnical employees:** Take more strategic ownership of your work. When you're talking to technical staff, help them understand the mission and the program priorities as much as possible. Just like technical folks should be explaining things in plain language, they also need feedback from their nontechnical teammates. Remind yourself: Technology helps us achieve the mission, and so there's no reason that we should be disconnected from technology projects that further our mission.

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## Industry Perspective

# How Automation Helped Modernize One Agency's Culture

*An interview with Christopher Rice, Senior Solutions Architect, Red Hat*

Sometimes it's easy to overestimate the change we hope technology can bring. From an agency perspective, for example, implementing a new tool doesn't necessarily mean existing performance impediments, such as silos or a disempowered workforce, will go away.

But at one agency, automation and containerization proved to meet the mark and actually helped transform intra-agency collaboration for the better. These two capabilities not only helped modernize IT but the agency's culture as well.

Christopher Rice, now Senior Solutions Architect at Red Hat, worked at this agency as a lead architect. Rice told GovLoop the story of how automation and containerization helped the agency "melt walls" and take a 30-day process down to 30 seconds. (The text has been edited lightly for clarity and length.)

### **First, Automation: 30 Days to 30 Minutes**

This agency was as stovepiped as an agency can get. The Windows team only did Windows, the network team only did networks, and so on. Nobody talked to each other.

It would take us 30 days between processes, procedures, red tape, scripts, engineering time and human hands to build a single server — even if it was virtual. Thirty days.

We were approached by Red Hat to try the Ansible automation platform, Ansible Tower, and we gave it a try. Within two years, we had a single automation platform that the Windows and Linux teams were fully utilizing.

What this meant was that we still needed subject-matter experts for Windows and Linux. But the Windows guy could talk to the Linux guy in the same language when they were asking for help.

**The culture change was almost immediate. We could see it. It just started rolling.** Different divisions inside the agency started coming in and asking what we were doing. So we actually started bringing on the applications teams.

Now, the operations guys are talking to the app guys about how they're integrating their automation into the same process of getting servers out and providing services to the end customer. Everybody is talking the same language, and it melted walls without having to spend a lot of effort doing it.

Our entire 30-day process afterwards took us down to 30 minutes, with no human hands, fully secured and fully automated.

### **Next, Containerization: 30 Minutes to 30 Seconds**

It was stellar. Under a year, we were able to change 30 days to 30 minutes. Now, that same agency is taking 30 minutes to 30 seconds with OpenShift containers.

Containers are significantly smaller. They're much easier to attach the storage and deploy your applications on. But not only are they going to build a server within 30 seconds — they're also going to make that application cloud-ready through containerization, and they can utilize it whether it's in AWS or Azure.

Now, the infrastructure guys have the option to use hybrid cloud. And they've been able to bring it down from what would take 30 days to 30 seconds, which I think is phenomenal.

# Digital Modernization and Cost Savings



## An interview with

**Bryan Shone, PhD**, is the Director of Policy, Resources and Analysis in the Office of the Chief Information Officer, Headquarters Department of the Army. In his role with the Army, Shone uses data and analytics to enable informed decision-making to support digital modernization.

### Limiting belief:

**The primary goal of digital modernization is to reduce costs.**

**The backstory:** When I arrived in the Army, the talking points revolving around cloud computing were focused primarily on how migrating data and applications to the cloud would immediately reduce costs to the Army. As Army senior leaders spoke with industry partners and operators about the potential of moving data and applications to the cloud, the discussion quickly shifted from a simple “lift and shift” of data to reduce costs to the importance of cultivating decision-making at all echelons to improve mission effectiveness and enhance security of our data.

**Mixed messages:** We conducted a messaging campaign to describe the renewed motives associated with migrating data and applications to the cloud. This shift was reflected in broader federal government discussions pertaining to the transition from Cloud First to Cloud Smart concepts. This has required us to develop a compelling business case that helps the Army enterprise understand that cloud migration is not driven by the desire to reduce costs, but more to improve effectiveness and security.

**The reality is:** The Army’s digital modernization vision is centered on the concept that data will increasingly be used as the primary ammunition for the future fight. Setting the conditions and establishing the infrastructure to posture the Army for success in this future fight will require investments up front. The Army must reprioritize its existing resources to afford these near-term investments.



**Areas for improvement:** We need to focus on divesting legacy systems and underperforming programs to free up resources for modernized capabilities. We must analyze software and hardware usage rates and their overall utility, and then prioritize those key enablers in accordance with the Army's priority missions. We must also examine as-a-service models to determine where the Army can leverage industry expertise to deliver more effective and secure solutions.

**What's at stake:** If we truly want to modernize the Army, difficult decisions will need to be made. Not only are significant amounts of resources at stake, but — more importantly — the effectiveness of our Army is at stake. The effectiveness of our future Army will be directly linked to our ability to maintain decision superiority at echelon.

**New way of thinking:** For the last 18 months, communications across the Army as it pertains to cloud computing and digital modernization have become much more accurate and consistent. Leaders understand that digital modernization — just like any other critical capability set — will require a reprioritization of resources. The Army is identifying ways to harvest savings through IT category management and IT investment accountability to reallocate resources to our top digital modernization priorities.

**Rethinking traditional processes:** Digital modernization does not always conform to traditional processes used by the government. For example, upgrading our digital collaboration tools during COVID-19 has required the Army to flex on a monthly basis to the latest technological advancements and customer demands. This required us to leverage Agile acquisition approaches. Digital modernization will always be a continuous process.

**Developing the right team:** Modernization spans all aspects of an organization. Leaders who are truly committed to propelling modernization expand far beyond chief information officers. In the Army, for example, there is a dedicated command for modernization — Army Futures Command. Also, chief data officers have become more important given the increased reliance on data and analytics.

**The bottom line:** Modernization — particularly digital modernization — is not solely a cost-savings endeavor. Just as it takes a reprioritization of resources to modernize an aircraft or a tank, it takes a reprioritization of resources to modernize our digital infrastructure. To say that digital modernization is purely a cost-savings initiative is a myth.





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## Industry Perspective

# How APIs Can Securely Speed Your Agency's Digital Efforts

*An interview Kevin Flanagan, Public Sector Strategy and Product Marketing Lead, MuleSoft*

Juggling the immediate digital needs of your program office or department with long-term IT upgrades can feel like an either-or proposition.

But what if you didn't have to choose between today's technology demands and tomorrow's needs? What if you could provide value to the public much faster?

These aren't far-fetched goals, said Kevin Flanagan, Public Sector Strategy and Product Marketing Lead at MuleSoft.

**"When it comes to roadmap prioritization, IT modernization and providing new digital solutions does not have to be an either-or decision," he said. "That belief is starting to change, and I think COVID-19 has been a driving factor."**

Working extensively with government agencies, MuleSoft uses an API-led approach to help them connect disparate data and new digital solutions with various backend applications and systems required to deliver government services.

APIs, or application programming interfaces, are software intermediaries that allow two applications to talk to each other. MuleSoft helps agencies manage the full API life cycle on a single platform. That means they can securely, methodically and rapidly deploy digital solutions that align with their long-term roadmap, while allowing for flexibility when needs shift, Flanagan said.

He highlighted three government case studies that illustrate the benefits of an API-led strategy.

### 1. Speed adoption of digital services

Modernizing IT systems with an API-led approach unlocks data and enables faster adoption of digital solutions to meet citizens' needs. The Indiana Department of Child Services is proof. In the midst of an ongoing cloud migration project themselves, the

agency took advantage of reusable APIs to launch its COVID-19 solution — which tracks everything from health care data to personal protective equipment (PPE) availability — in a mere eight hours.

### 2. Support timely data sharing

"Flexible, fast infrastructure enables government agencies to set up quickly, share mission-critical data securely with private and public organizations to support new digital solutions, and reuse assets to more quickly respond to future needs," Flanagan said.

This is critical for entities like New South Wales Health Pathology, an Australian statewide health organization that delivers reliable pathology to the public. Using APIs, the agency reduced costs, digitized pathology results and sped access to patient data while supporting faster clinical decision-making. When the pandemic hit, the agency reused APIs from previous projects to set up an automated COVID-19 test result delivery system statewide in less than two weeks.

### 3. Accelerate cloud adoption

Access to compliant, secure cloud technologies is critical for accelerating cloud migration and complements API adoption. For example, the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services used a secure, cloud-based platform to stand up a comprehensive PPE management system. It gives the state a single, automated, consistent place to go for ordering, filling, distributing and measuring California's PPE needs.

An API-led approach can change the speed of digital transformation for government agencies, Flanagan said. "Agencies don't have to wait to complete a significant IT modernization milestone to provide new digital solutions."

# Shared personal values



## An interview with

**Sandra Aughter** is the Deputy Associate Director for Capabilities (ADC) at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA). ADC has a large portfolio, which includes research and development, innovation activities, the CIO office, and adoption of new technologies supporting geospatial-intelligence requirements. Her portfolio also includes AI, automation and augmentation efforts to better use data across NGA.

### Limiting belief:

**Leaders at government agencies don't share the same personal values as employees.**

**The impact:** I think where it's limiting is recruiting the tremendous talent that's out there. If there are misperceptions about what we represent, and the fact that they don't see a connection between what's happening within the federal government and the Defense Department, in particular, with their lifestyle, there's less of a chance that people actually want to be a part of government.

**The expectation:** When I came into NGA 20 years ago, I came in with an understanding that this was a commitment for the rest of my working life. In the past, we would not have felt comfortable saying, "Hey, this is important for me to be involved in my kids' activities " or to do these extracurricular activities/hobbies that are not directly related to work. Employees that are coming in over the last 10 years or so are looking for that balance.

**A new perspective:** If we're able to accommodate, then we should. I do think that the recent environment with COVID, and not physically being in the SCIFs [or secure rooms] and telework have increased the understanding that there is that level of flexibility.

**Communicating the message:** Those are values that I think we need to share more and let people know that we can be mindful of all of the things that make you complete as a human being and still be able to serve. We put in long hours; it's not easy work. It can be stressful, but recognize that there's a balance and that you want employees to bring their whole selves to work and, at the same time, to make sure that they're healthy.





**Shifting workplace dynamics:** We're absolutely doing telework. At the very beginning of the pandemic, we were at 85% telework. This was the first time in my 20 years that I was doing work from home. They used to have our calendars on the classified side, so now I have it on the low side. We had to adjust laptops and computers. The director has been doing town halls. Once a week, he's in touch with the workforce. I think the extent to how much more inclusive things have been, because of the fact that we've been able to work in that unclassified environment, has been tremendous.

## Talking points to cut through red tape

Some of the changes that we're anticipating making, we had not even thought of before. We decided they were too hard. We just needed to figure out how to get to yes, if this is something that we value.

**Questions to ask:** If this is something we value, what are we willing to do to get to that place? What if we were open to being a particular kind of agency that embraces these changes? What must be done to make this possible?



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## Industry Perspective

# Clarifying 3 Identity and Access Management Myths

*An interview with Molly He, Senior Product Marketing Manager, and Rob Forbes, Senior Cloud Architect, Okta, Inc.*

Widespread remote work means the security perimeters agencies typically placed around their networks are obsolete. With traditional network perimeters disappearing, government IT personnel are under increasing pressure to mitigate risks and protect their agencies' security.

Enter identity and access management (IAM). IAM frameworks provide agencies with the policies and tools they need to verify the users and systems accessing their networks are trustworthy.

**"Identity is not just about protecting people, it is about protecting things like servers that matter to your agency because they are mission-critical," said Molly He, Senior Product Marketing Manager at Okta, Inc., an IAM provider.**

Unfortunately, IAM technology is aging across the public sector, and myths abound about modernizing IAM tools.

He and Rob Forbes, Senior Cloud Architect at Okta, Inc., explained away three myths about IAM modernization.

### 1. Myth: IAM applies only to people

Typically, agencies have associated IAM with verifying users' identities. Going forward, however, IAM will also authenticate the devices and resource endpoints that are essential to agencies. Endpoints are any device that connects to a network remotely, such as laptops or smartphones.

"Think of the broad picture of identities and how they're being used and leveraged," Forbes said of applications, devices and users. "It is the methods and avenues they are taking to access the data."

Subsequently, Forbes recommended agencies consider a single platform for managing access to their networks and identifying the connections across these systems.

### 2. Myth: More tools ensure more security

Complicated IAM can create security risks for agencies. Reducing the amount of IAM tools agencies govern can help protect their data, He said.

"Having a central point of control is critical," she said. "Right now, identity is fragmented at a lot of federal, state and local organizations. Security is a major threat to business continuity if you don't do it right."

For example, many cybercriminals are not penetrating agencies' cyberdefenses. Instead, many hackers are stealing users' access credentials and menacing agencies' data that way.

### 3. Myth: Cloud cannot hold data

Forbes suggested that many agencies are unaware of cloud computing's potential for modernizing IAM. Cloud's decentralized, on-demand IT means agencies can scale IAM services as needed.

**"Stepping away from the notion that data can't be in the cloud is a mind shift," Forbes said. "Stopping modernization due to that thought process is not productive. It is a competitive disadvantage to be stuck in your own data center if you haven't modernized already."**

Ultimately, providers such as Okta, Inc. can help agencies practice IAM intelligently using cloud's affordability and flexibility. Whether in-person or remote, cloud-based IAM can aid agencies with monitoring their networks and the entities traveling on them.

"You're modernizing not just to mitigate security risks or reduce costs," He said. "You're future-proofing by making your technology flexible and inexpensive."

# Evaluating team effectiveness

## An interview with



**Blake Carlton** is an Organizational Development and Effectiveness Specialist. He is experienced in process and operations improvement, training and development, innovation, and strategic thinking and planning, both domestically and internationally and across sectors and industries. He improves the outcomes of mission-driven organizations by analyzing their entire system, including their people, processes, and tools/technology and providing recommendations to relevant stakeholders and leadership.

**Limiting belief:**  
Scrutiny of team effectiveness might lead to changes that will make my job obsolete.

**The reality:** There's the resistance, and I think fear of the unknown. Some people in the government, and even some of the managers, might not really fully understand tools like human-centered design, or they might not really be interested in sitting around for a couple of hours of brainstorming. They have enough on their plates, and they just want to get back to work.

**How that fear is expressed:** They might say this kind of thing doesn't interest them. They don't want to be put on the spot and asked questions about the work they do. There are a lot of different reasons why people might be resistant. Maybe they feel like they're being investigated to a certain degree, exposed for whatever work they're doing or not doing. Some people may just feel like this is a waste of time. They ask questions like, "Why are we always trying to innovate and change things? Let's just stick with what we've got."

**Job security concerns:** Then there are concerns that if we shake things up, jobs might become obsolete. For example, if we introduce robotic process automation into our work processes, they're worried that they won't have a job.

**The right tool for the job:** There are tons of tools that you can use as needed to drive change, such as Lean Six Sigma or Agile. But know how to utilize the circumstances that you're in, consider the work you do, consider the people involved — a people, process and technology approach — and apply the right framework to the system that you're dealing with. Use that approach to best understand how to go about making the changes, innovations and strategic thinking.



**Explain the why:** The why of change helps people understand why we do what we do and who that actually affects. And then maybe that helps us to be more efficient. It helps us to be more efficient because then we could cut out things that we're doing that we haven't realized we're doing unnecessarily. But, also, it provides

more clarity and empowerment to the staff members. If you have a sense of what you're doing and why you're doing it, it gives you a bit more ownership over your day-to-day work.

## Talking points to break through red tape

**Identify wrong thinking:** I'm a cog in a machine, and as part of my job, I just hit this button every day.

**Reframe thinking:** I hit this button and there's a reason why I do it. I'm going to suggest to my boss that we hit this button in a different way because hitting it up here takes longer than if I hit it down here.

**Result:** Now you're participating in the strategic planning of the whole group by making that one suggestion and fully understanding your role.

**Be strategic:** Be strategic about how you communicate and whom you're communicating with. Set the stage ahead of time when sharing new ideas



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THE BEST RUN





# The Future of Co-Innovation for Agencies and Software Providers

*An interview with Guru Sarma, Federal Cloud Solutions Director, SAP*

The cost and speed at which government agencies can solve pressing issues through innovation have never been more critical.

In April 2019, the federal government took a fresh look at laying the groundwork to meet those types of demands, launching a new initiative and memorandum that moved shared service missions into central offices. Quality Service Management Offices, or QSMOs for short, are designated federal organizations that lead in areas such as finance and grants.

Although the concept of shared services isn't new, what makes this effort unique is that it creates a marketplace for commercial providers to offer standardized Software-as-a-Service solutions to government. The vision is for agencies to embrace a common configuration baseline for software services, which will empower them to more easily and rapidly implement modern solutions.

"The eventual goal is to enable financial management professionals to spend more time on analysis and provide better service to their customers, and less time on traditional transaction processing and system maintenance," said Guru Sarma, Federal Cloud Solutions Director at SAP.

Sarma shared best practices for agencies and their industry partners to consider as they co-innovate under this new model.

### 1. Ensure all agency stakeholders are informed

Although COVID-19 has shifted agency-vendor interactions from largely in-person to virtual, the substance of those conversations still must remain robust. For example, companies should still provide a sufficient understanding of their offering and roadmap.

"It's important that information is not just exchanged in a standard procurement process but also via regularly

scheduled interactive enablement sessions," Sarma said. It will encourage the open exchange of ideas, clarify constraints and spark ways to arrive at a good middle ground to help reduce the cost of operating and running IT solutions.

"As we, and other vendors, make our solutions available as a SaaS offering, there cannot be gaps in continuing to meet federal requirements in the new model," he added.

### 2. Embrace the configuration baseline

Working closely with the QSMOs and federal agencies, it is extremely important for software vendors to understand and align on the minimum baseline configuration. They can build to these standards, making the shared services marketplace an attractive option for companies to partner with agencies.

### 3. Make the marketplace attractive

"To keep the marketplace attractive for both agencies that would like to take advantage of a common baseline and agencies that want to maintain more control and need exception accommodation, cloud service providers like SAP should offer both private and public cloud offerings of their SaaS model," Sarma said.

Depending on the offering, vendors should work closely with agencies to meet their specific security requirements, particularly if they exceed FedRAMP requirements.

**"SAP is bringing modernization globally, and we're bringing this to the doorsteps of our government customers," he said. "We want to reduce the cost of running your business while enhancing opportunities to expand your horizons for business process modernization, process automation, smart analytics and intelligence."**

# 3 ways to challenge assumptions

One way to overcome limiting beliefs is by challenging foundational assumptions. It can be uncomfortable, to say the least. But left unchecked, limiting beliefs can support narratives that derail progress, hinder innovation and negatively impact morale.

The Interaction Design Foundation, an online global design school used by industry, government and academia, has a [nifty template for using ideation methods to challenge assumptions](#) related to design, services and problems.

Below we highlight three how-tos from that template with minor modifications.

## 1. List assumptions.

*Remember that everything is a perspective. A one and only "truth" does not exist. Even this statement is a perspective – or a belief.*

Typical assumptions include:

- That it is impossible to do something, particularly within constraints such as time and cost
- That something works because of certain rules or conditions
- That people believe, think or need certain things

Take a step back from the challenge you're tackling and ask important questions about the assumptions you have about the product, service or situation you're trying to innovate.

## 2. Challenge assumptions.

*Assume that you can overcome and challenge all assumptions.*

- Ask "How could this be not true?" and "What if we could do this twice as well in half the time?"

## 3. Find ways of making the challenge a reality.

*The real challenge is to make it happen in reality, which is why ideation is critical. Asking questions can move you from idea to buy-in from colleagues and even senior leaders.*

Many of the assumption-busters you may come up with may seem silly, until you come up with something that really makes the entire team sit up straight and take notice.

# About GovLoop

GovLoop's mission is to inspire public sector professionals by serving as the knowledge network for government. GovLoop connects more than 300,000 members, fostering cross-government collaboration, solving common problems and advancing government careers. GovLoop is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with a team of dedicated professionals who share a commitment to the public sector.

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