



# Unifying Government Communications With Cloud



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# Introduction

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Today, government agencies cannot afford to stay stagnant when it comes to IT modernization. Budgets are getting leaner, citizens are increasingly demanding streamlined services through better technology, and employees are requesting new ways of empowerment.

For agencies, moving to the cloud is the best path to modernize, reduce costs and create efficiency. Agencies that fully embrace cloud can simplify their processes, tools and workforces, giving both citizens and employees the user experience that they're demanding.

One example of this is cloud-based Unified Communications, or UC. The right UC technology gives organizations one suite for handling all their communications that can boost collaboration agencywide.

Migrating communications infrastructure to the cloud also offers a variety of benefits for agencies, including making meetings more productive through shared workspaces, accelerating how work gets done by embedding communications into workflows, and staying connected with employees whether they are in the office or teleworking.

These topics were among those discussed during “Cloud-Centric Modernization: Exploring the Pain-Points and the Promise,” a recent roundtable hosted by GovLoop, ConnellyWorks and Avaya Government Solutions. Avaya Government Solutions builds open, converged and innovative solutions to enhance and simplify communications and collaboration – in the cloud, on-premise or a hybrid of both. At the event, government professionals and industry experts discussed their challenges and solutions in moving to the cloud, particularly in communications.

The following pages highlight discussions from the roundtable, including cloud security, customer experience (CX) and workforce reform. We also discuss insights from a survey of government employees about cloud and modernization conducted by GovLoop and Avaya.

Our event featured several government and industry attendees who helped direct the conversation:

- **Keith Trippie**, former Homeland Security Department (DHS) Senior Executive Service (SES) and founder of GotUrSix TV
- **Mitch Robinson**, Senior Director Cloud Sales, Avaya Government Solutions
- **Craig Haskins**, Chief Customer Officer, Avaya Government Solutions

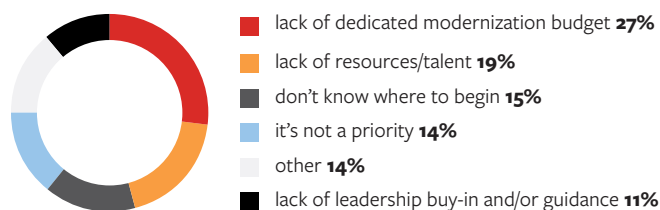
# The Time for Modernization via the Cloud Is Now

## Takeaways

- Cloud's prevalence in the private sector is making it difficult for agencies to ignore the technology's potential benefits to their missions.
- Despite cloud's upside, agencies are struggling to adopt the technology primarily because they lack a dedicated modernization budget.
- Agencies should accept cloud as necessary but look before they leap when deploying the technology.

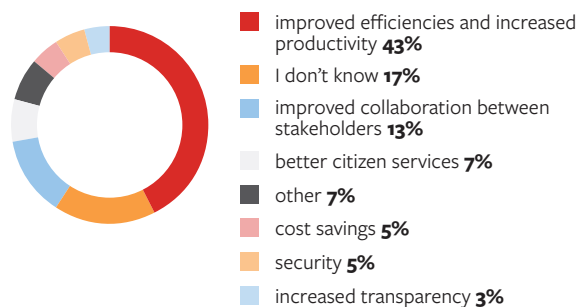
**Figure 1**

What is your agency's biggest pain point when it comes to modernization?



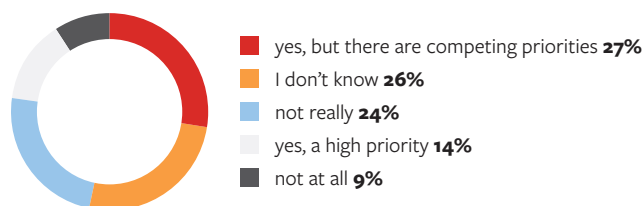
**Figure 2**

What does your agency see as the biggest benefit for modernization?



**Figure 3**

Is moving workloads to the cloud a priority for your agency?



Cloud is well-established in the private sector, and scores of major companies routinely use the technology for modernizing and delivering popular services. It's a reality that has agencies scrambling to keep up with the customer experience (CX) citizens are receiving from private-sector organizations.

"Most of what we touch daily is in cloud," said Mitch Robinson, Senior Director of Cloud Sales for Avaya Government Solutions. "There's a willingness to accept the fact that cloud's inevitable. But getting there is difficult, and you need good partners to do so."

The GovLoop and Avaya survey of 81 federal employees illustrates why agencies are struggling with cloud and IT modernization. Twenty-seven percent said that lacking a dedicated budget is their organization's biggest pain point for modernization. Nineteen percent, meanwhile, cited their lack of resources and talent (See Figure 1).

Overcoming these two hurdles is critical for agencies looking to reap the benefits of modernization using cloud. Forty-three percent said that improved efficiencies and increased productivity are the biggest benefits of modernizing for their agencies. Thirteen percent, meanwhile, said that improving the collaboration between their agency's stakeholders would deliver the most value (See Figure 2).

While agencies nationwide grapple with concerns such as these, President Trump has made IT modernization a major focus. The [President's Management Agenda](#) (PMA) released in 2018, for example, calls IT modernization a "key driver of transformation" for the federal government. The PMA's three modernization priorities include enhancing mission effectiveness, reducing cybersecurity risks to the federal mission and building a modern IT workforce.

Despite the buzz around cloud and its benefits, only 14 percent said that moving their workloads to cloud is a high priority, and in fact, 33 percent said it was not a priority (See Figure 3).

Craig Haskins, Chief Customer Officer for Avaya Government Solutions, said that now more than ever, agencies should strategize about how to adopt cloud without disrupting their missions – and not necessarily just because it's a focus of the administration, but because it's what users expect and need today.

"What's the rationalization for cloud adoption?" he asked. "Economics? Security? There are many good reasons for going to cloud, but just because there's a directive isn't one of them."





# Modernization Can't Happen Without People

## Takeaways

- **Modernization can only succeed if the process transforms workforces and the workflows they use alongside technology.**
- **Leadership support is essential for making modernization an agencywide effort that accomplishes organizational goals.**
- **Modernization shouldn't leave any workers behind, and reskilling and retraining employees keeps them in step with their evolving agency.**

Cloud adoption and modernization can't happen without humans. And IT modernization will fail at your agency if the overhaul doesn't include people and their routines.

"I would argue that modernization is more on the business side than the IT side," said Trippie, who retired from DHS's SES program. "If you don't have the team with you, it makes it more difficult to hit your target."

Trippie encouraged agencies to make modernization a team effort involving all their stakeholders, including human resources, IT and leadership.

"[For example,] there are many government employees who've only done IT one way," he said. "They don't necessarily see themselves in the afterlife of a post-modernization environment."

Robinson added that employees whose roles modernization changes deserve reskilling, while all workers need training on new tools like UC.

“The cloud is going to force lots of change,” he said. “When we’re selling cloud, there’s a lot of fear about what’s going to happen to people’s jobs at these agencies.”

Modernization is valuable, then, as it helps organizations improve their workforces and workflows. For example, cloud-based UC supports closer communication between parts of an agency that were once isolated from one another.

GovLoop’s survey, however, found that agencies are struggling with modernizing their communications. Fifty-eight percent, for example, rated their agency’s modernization efforts as a low to medium priority on a scale of one to 10 (See Figure 4).

At the same time, 56 percent ranked their organization’s ability to collaborate effectively between four and seven on a one to 10 scale, with one being “terrible” and 10 meaning “awesome.” (See Figure 5).

Only 28 percent said that their agency has the proper processes and tools for effective collaboration (See Figure 6).

Forty-seven percent, meanwhile, rated their agency’s agility and flexibility on collaboration between a four and seven on a scale of one to 10, with one denoting “terrible” and 10 representing “awesome.” (See Figure 7).

These results suggest that many agencies could improve their workforces’ collaboration and communication.

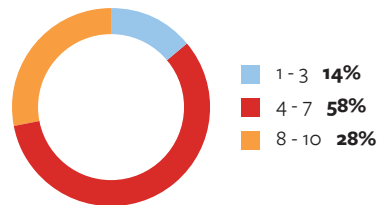
Moving to UC helps agencies address some of these inefficiencies by fostering more collaborative, productive communications between employees. A workforce that is more closely connected while reskilling and retraining employees for cloud adoption is the outcome.

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**Mitch Robinson, Senior Director Cloud Sales,  
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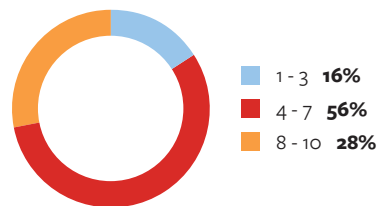
**Figure 4**

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate modernization efforts as a priority within your agency? (1 being it’s a super low priority, 10 being the most important priority?)



**Figure 5**

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your agency’s current ability to collaborate effectively? (1 being terrible and 10 being awesome)



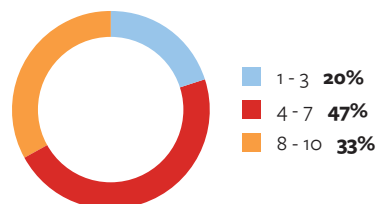
**Figure 6**

Do you think your agency has the proper tools and processes to collaborate effectively?



**Figure 7**

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your agency’s flexibility and agility when it comes to collaborating? (1 being terrible, and 10 being awesome)



# The Business of Modernizing is Perpetual

## Takeaways

- Cybersecurity and modernization are both ongoing and related efforts for agencies.
- Cloud can reduce the burden on humans by automating system security patching and updating.
- Complying with the latest government standards keeps agencies secure and helps them constantly monitor cyberthreats.

There's no finish line for agencies to cross on either cybersecurity or modernization. Despite this, strengthening both areas still makes organizations and their workforces healthier.

"Instead of looking at modernization as an event, look at it as a business of perpetual modernizing," Haskins said. "Something new is always coming out. Security is the same issue. We never stop changing the tire."

Traditionally, Haskins noted, government IT has tried avoiding cybersecurity incidents and service outages. Cloud assists agencies, Haskins continued, with avoiding both pitfalls.

"You can de-risk both outages and cybersecurity by putting them in cloud," he said. "You're also making sure you're not on the front page of the newspaper for security. You put more of your energy into the mission."

Agencies constantly fear that a cybersecurity incident will expose the sensitive citizen data entrusted to their workforces. Cloud provides peace of mind, Haskins said, by automating security patching without interrupting services.

"Getting that core plumbing out is one of the biggest benefits of cloud," he said of system patches and updates that were formerly done manually.

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Craig Haskins, Chief Customer Officer,  
Avaya Government Solutions



Consistency and security are especially critical for tools like UC. For example, service hiccups can slow down both internal and external communications at agencies. UC suites, meanwhile, must offer secure communications across multiple mediums.

"UC's frictionless, and it provides true mobility," Robinson said. Haskins cautioned agencies against finishing their modernization stories without chapters on constant cybersecurity vigilance and compliance with related government standards.

## The Benefits of Cloud-Based Unified Communications

UC benefits agencies, as it groups every form of communication they have under one umbrella for their employees. Email, IMs, voicemail and other formats are all available in one interface for workers. The result is streamlined collaboration and communication across agencies that remains uniform, no matter who's using UC where.



# How Customer Experience and Collaboration Can Be Improved

## Takeaways

- o **Agencies that score small wins with projects involving cloud can plant the seeds of success for greater victories.**
- o **Public-sector organizations that fully utilize cloud can deliver private-sector CX to citizens.**
- o **Cloud can bring agency workforces closer together by enabling UC and other collaborative tools.**

Cloud is most celebrated for fortifying cybersecurity and boosting service delivery, but these aren't the only benefits it brings.

Customer experience, for instance, is one area where cloud can help agencies thrive. Cloud is an adaptable technology that can make public services simpler, faster and more satisfying for citizens.

"When you enter a McDonald's, the CX is quick, simple and repeatable," Trippie said, referencing the fast-food chain. "Imagine if every government agency had an experience like the private sector does today for their customers."

Private-sector companies such as Uber and Apple have become wildly popular by making their services accessible and simple for users. UC is one area where agencies can follow suit by offering a unified experience and interface for their users.

"You can have an app that does all your communications for you," Robinson said, listing email, voicemail and video calls as separate contact methods UC includes. "All that's teed up and ready to go, and UC scales up tremendously."

Robinson added that cloud's flexibility for supporting tools like UC is one of cloud's best assets. Cloud can prove its usefulness by hosting one communication medium, he said, before fully anchoring UC.

"You don't have cloud-based voicemail?" Robinson said of a potential use case. "Maybe that's an easy place to start."

Ultimately, UC illustrates how cloud can enable reliable communications at organizations using both internal and external channels.

"If you're a Border Patrol [USPB] agent, you're out in the field and you have comms ability, it can help your agency make business decisions using your information," Trippie said. "UC also helps several million civilian government employees do their jobs better for taxpayers."



# How Avaya Government Solutions Helps

Different agencies have different legacy IT infrastructures, which means every cloud journey will be unique. Avaya Government Solutions recognizes that every agency needs a cloud adoption pace that suits them.

“There really is an elegant way to move into cloud,” Robinson said. “Our people can come in and examine your network top to bottom.”

Robinson added that Avaya Government Solutions’ cloud-based UC helps agencies energize their employees, boosting productivity and producing more mission success.

Cloud-based UC powered by Avaya allows agencies to create a seamless engagement experience for citizens and employees. Regardless of where they are working or the device they are using, giving users these communications and collaboration capabilities will set your agency apart. To help with this, Avaya builds open, converged and innovative solutions to enhance and simplify communications and collaboration – in the cloud, on-premise or a hybrid of both.

“We’re here to transition customers to cloud without pain,” Robinson said.





## Conclusion

IT modernization doesn't just upgrade agencies' technologies – it transforms people and routines, too.

But the changes and challenges that IT modernization brings can be significant. Cloud gives agencies a smoother, simpler journey by supporting nearly infinite tools for improving their workers' lives.

In particular, unified communications on the cloud streamlines agencies' communications into one effortless platform for employees.

Ultimately, happier public servants perform more reliably for citizens, who finally get the satisfying experiences and necessary information that they deserve.



### About Avaya Government Solutions

Our mission is to transform federal networks and help our clients become agencies of the future. We offer collaboration, communication and professional services solutions that support citizens, government employees and warfighters. Our portfolio includes secure, certified hardware and software solutions for unified communications, contact centers, data networking, video and mobility. Each is available as an on-site, managed or cloud-hosted solution. With our technology platforms and professional services support team, agencies can streamline communications, deliver mission success and bring the right people together with the right information at the right time.

For more information, please visit [www.avayagov.com](http://www.avayagov.com).



### About GovLoop

GovLoop's mission is to "connect government to improve government." We aim 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 connect and improve government.

For more information about this report, please reach out to [info@govloop.com](mailto:info@govloop.com).



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