

CIOReview

The Navigator for Enterprise Solutions

JULY - 2014

CIOREVIEW.COM

Company of the Month



Darren Geros
Co-founder, eMite

CIO Tech Solution & Consulting Providers for
Public Sector 2014
20 Most Promising Tech Solution & Consulting Providers for Public Sector

Newgen Software:

Driving Citizen-Centric, Transparent and Efficient Governance in Public Sector



Diwakar Nigam
MD and CEO

CIO REVIEW
44790, S Gimmner Blvd.
#202, Fremont, CA-94538



The CIO Toolbox: Alignment, Data and Cloud

By Craig P. Orgeron, Executive Director, MS Department of IT Services, State of Mississippi



Craig P. Orgeron

For the public sector Chief Information Officer (CIO), the driving force behind much innovation is the ever-dynamic expectations of citizens. The ubiquity of technology, delivered on diverse platforms which saturates much, if not most, of daily life sets a high bar for how government delivers services, and solves problems. The delivery and management of Information Technology (IT) as a core competency of the government has been questioned repeatedly by elected officials, industry thinkers, and academics. That questioning seems most pertinent to the current state of technology delivery in the public sector. The ability to recruit and retain the talent needed to deliver high-end technology solutions across disparate agencies that are not always keen on enterprise solutions is a constant challenge, and with public sector salaries lagging, as well as shrinking benefits, the future is murky.

Yet, despite the mode with which technology will be delivered in the public sector—either directly by government works, with tactical private sector partnerships, or through strategic outsourcing—the fact remains that information technology will pervade service delivery and problem solving in the government sector. In all solutions, cyber security will be a vital, foundational component to be addressed, and will likely remain a topic that keeps many CIOs—public and private sector—awake at night. There are several areas of focus which seem to point to the changes and challenges ahead—management and governance, business intelligence and analytical solutions, and cloud services. As rudimentary as this short list may seem, it reveals the below-the-surface paradigm shifts potentially impacting the public sector.

Although fundamental to the core, basic management and governance will remain the key to success in the public sector. And while there is no one right way to organize a technology operation in the public sector, the elemental item to note is the diffusive environment of the government, and often decentralized, quasi-independent nature of the budgeting and oversight functions. Yet, when pairing the typical public sector operational environment with the speed and volatility of the technology marketplace, misalignments represent missed opportunity to deliver well-conceived, enterprise-wide solutions. The key takeaway may be that this gap in alignment will likely



grow, and as a result drive change in public sector technology delivery modes primarily in sourcing decisions, and subsequently in the recruitment and retention of public sector workers with knowledge in technology, skills, and abilities.

In a related vein, and in conjunction with a well-aligned enterprise, the utilization of business intelligence tools across the

“
The days of owning and operating vast data centers may morph to more agile, hybrid models centered on public-private partnerships”

public sector is established. However, the real movement in this space is the opening of silos of data to be shared, and subsequently conflated to produce a much more potent store of quantitative potential. There are substantive examples now of innovative practices in this space, though the much more common practice is the continued creation of vast amounts of data in silos, never fully utilized to solve government problems. Conflated, longitudinal data can be powerful tools, when fully leveraged. The key take away is that the sharing of data can be an issue of control, or rather, the loosening of control by agencies, so that it can be put to good use—though clearly, the creative use of data to solve public sector problems represents a powerful paradigm shift.

Aligning the enterprise and creating conflated, longitudinal data stores can forge greater synergy to tackle and solve complex problems. Of course, solutions must be developed and implemented in the solving of public sector challenges—and, how

better to deliver those solutions than via cloud services. There is, understandably, much hype surrounding what cloud-based services can deliver, minus the details surrounding security and exit strategies. But cloud, or some future incarnation of cloud, is here to stay as the rapid commoditization of a myriad of computing platforms. Even more intriguing are the blended service models being wrapped around cloud offerings, blurring service delivery lines even further. For public sector technologists, proper and thoughtful alignment, tackling problems with data, and the use of a host of cloud services—when approached holistically—represents a new world. The commoditization of computing will likely alter the technology-focused government agency – what will be the role of the Chief Information Officer (CIO)? The market forces driving computing commoditization forward will push the CIO to focus on business delivery guidelines, deciding how both mission-critical and non-mission-critical systems will be deployed and operated. The days of owning and operating vast data centers may morph to more agile, hybrid models centered on public-private partnerships along business delivery lines-of-business in the public sector.

The panacea for public sector technology ills is, of course, multi-modal, and is complex in breadth and depth. Many up-and-coming technology products are marketed as the magic elixir, the much-needed solution that will affix a technology halo to the many challenges faced in the public sector. In truth, progress forward is much messier, littered with a litany of fits and starts. Aligning the enterprise, creating conflated, longitudinal data stores, and leveraging cloud services taken together can alter the path of traditional thinking in public sector technology organizations, and offer a pragmatic framework for solving many of the government’s intractable issues. And, for the public sector CIO, the push will continue to be away from managing the nuts and bolts technology organization, and towards the achievement of strategic value—which seems like an arduous undertaking, without an aligned enterprise, analytical tools, and readily consumable computing resources.