White Paper

A New Model for Government

A Global Perspective on the 21st Century Workplace

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Introduction

Nations around the world face large—and growing—fiscal imbalances driven by aging populations, which will dramatically increase healthcare and retirement costs. As an example, in the United States, "The government is on an unstable path," says *The Federal Government's Financial Health: A Citizen's Guide to the 2007 Financial Report of the United States Government*. This report, prepared by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and Office of Management and Budget, with the assistance of the Government Accountability Office (GAO), puts the challenge in stark terms:

> "Unless action is taken to bring program costs in line with available resources, the coming surge of entitlement spending will end in a fiscal train wreck that will have an adverse effect on the U.S. economy and on virtually every American."[1]

In 2080, the total cost of U.S. government will be more than three times the revenue.[2]

Confluence of Challenges Poses Unparalleled Complications

Government executives and legislative bodies around the world are confronting many other challenges: weak economies, high unemployment, the continuing war on terror, increasing economic competition from emerging world powers like China and India, rising energy costs, environmental concerns, and unknown new problems and threats. As the baby boom generation retires and healthcare costs rapidly rise in the United States, for example, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid programs—as well as interest on the national debt—will account for a growing portion of government cost, creating immense budget pressure on initiatives to fund the other challenges.

Interest on the U.S. debt in FY11 totaled $260 billion—about what was spent by the U.S. Departments of Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, and Justice combined. Any one of the challenges cited above would be a large enough agenda for a presidential administration. Their convergence creates an environment of unparalleled complication for the president and government management.

Addressing these challenges will require a "changed" government, a 21st century government transformed to operate on demand. With confidence in government at a historic low, the time for action is now.

Moving Toward a Transformed Government

Although the outline of a "21st century government" is becoming clearer, the literature has yet to describe a real model.

What are some of the elements of such a government? New forms of coordination and control will evolve. Governments will place a premium on the skills of orchestration and facilitation, and on the ability to recognize the credibility and authority of sources of policy insight and advice outside the formal structures of the public sector. New accountability methods will be developed to match the radically dispersed and collaborative nature of public purpose work. Governments will need to make their own workplaces flatter, more connected, and less hierarchical—more in tune with the values and behavior of the talented people that need to be attracted to the public sector.[3]

Changing Workplace

Consider how the world has changed in the last 30 years. In the 1980s, people came to work at a central office, and the major role of a central logistical agency like the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) was to manage or build the multitude of federal buildings and offices to house all those workers. Telework was largely unknown. Research was conducted through books and libraries.

Contrast that with the world today and what an information technology consulting firm, Gartner, Inc., terms "Future Worker 2015." [4] Long-distance travel is common. Personal computers and cell phones are ubiquitous. Telework is routine. Business partners are as likely to be on different continents as in different cities. Research reports are built with graphics, sounds, and multimedia that have been gathered within minutes on the web or through electronic interactions.

In a 21st century government, human resource and management policies could become a differentiator in the government's ability to attract the best workers (regardless of where they live and when they work) and to support their expectation of working with the same productivity, multitasking, and mobility tools with which they grew up.

Changing Workforce

As baby boomers in the federal workforce retire, their replacements will come from a new, younger generation of workers. This group was dubbed the "Net Generation" by Don Tapscott in his 1998 book, *Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation*[5] and its 2008 sequel, *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation Is Changing Your World,* for being the first generation to have lifelong exposure to the Internet.

The federal Chief Information Officers Council in the United States recently completed a study in conjunction with nGenera Insight (formerly New Paradigm, Tapscott's firm) entitled "Net Generation: Preparing for Change in the Federal Technology Workforce." [6] Discussing this new generation of federal employees, the report said:

> "As a generation, they are over 80 million strong, larger, in fact, than the baby boomer generation. They cannot be ignored as the major source of talent to recruit, develop and retain over the next decades. Additionally, there is much to admire about this generation. They are ambitious and innovative, enjoy teamwork, and understand technology." [7]

Based on previous research by Tapscott, the report discussed eight norms of the Net Generation that could form the basis for a revitalized, innovative government workplace.[8] The eight norms are:

1. **Freedom:** They are not the only generation wanting more flexibility in the workplace, but they may be the driving force behind the routinization of more flexible schedules in the workplace.
2. **Customization:** Living in a custom-created world is second nature to the Net Generation.
3. **Scrutinizers:** "Net-Geners" will demand trusting and transparent relationships with their organizations.
4. **Integrity:** They will not embrace an organization that has questionable ethics or that does not appear to translate words (policy) into action (practice)—and they will not follow questionable leadership.
5. **Collaboration:** The Net Generation has grown up in an interactive world. They are used to pulsing their social networks for information and feedback, and working collaboratively on tasks.
6. **Entertainment:** Enjoyment of the job and the workplace is also very important to Net-Geners. They want to learn new things and be a part of the action, and they expect to have fun while doing it.
7. **Speed:** Net-Geners will look for avenues to speed their productivity and response time wherever possible.
8. **Innovation:** Members of the Net Generation are "digital natives." Having grown up with technology in every aspect of their lives, they're comfortable with a wide range of IT capabilities.

Changing Technology

In a special issue of the quarterly journal *The Public Manager,* Dr. Robert Childs and his colleagues at the National Defense University iCollege (formerly the Information Resources Management College) argue that "a new generation of professionals is reshaping government workplaces, markedly changing the expectations of individual and organizational behaviors." They outline the "future workers'" distinct perspectives and expectations:

> "These digital natives were raised with technologies such as iPods, smartphones, BlackBerries, ultra-mobile PCs, wikis, blogs, virtual worlds, and communities of practice and will use them as readily as digital immigrants use fax and email. While in college, the workers of the future likely employed social networking applications such as Myspace, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Second Life for career development and social engagement; they subsequently will expect such technologies and capabilities to be available and used in the workplace to increase their productivity and match their lifestyles.
>
> "Workers of the future will expect collaboration and instantaneous communication, both face-to-face and virtual, from coworkers and supervisors alike. As a result, leadership will become less stratified, and the lines between home and work and work and play will become more permeable." [9]

So, one can argue that Web 2.0 technologies have ushered in a new era of rapidly expanding content- and information-sharing capabilities. And, over time, they will dramatically change the way organizations work internally and how they interact with their external citizen and customer base. The CIO Council's report notes:

> "Within Government, the call for greater transparency of information and greater functionality of citizen services will fundamentally change the way the government does business externally. The challenge will be to also transform the way each federal organization functions internally, including how they recruit new employees and serve current employees, how they deploy technology and who gets first access to new technology, and finally, how they govern the use of social media in the workplace." [10]

A number of government departments and agencies are increasing their use of Web 2.0 social media technologies for both internal and external applications. Collaborative tools can now be considered mainstream.[11] Examples of Web 2.0 government include blogs and mini-blogs, wikis, mashups, virtual worlds, text messaging/instant messaging, social networking sites, and telepresence. We'll now turn our attention to the last of these tools—tele-presence—with a focus on government implementations around the world.

Telepresence

Telepresence (TP) is a major advancement over video teleconferencing, or VTC, which is the previous-generation technology. It gives government agencies an immersive, true-to-life virtual meeting experience, including life-size displays, dedicated high-speed connections, high-definition video, and directional audio.

Telepresence in the United States

In 2011, the General Services Administration (GSA), the logistics and acquisition arm of the U.S. government, installed a 15-room TP network in federal buildings across the United States. The TP locations are in each of GSA's 11 regional headquarters, plus four other Washington, D.C. metro area locations.

Unlike traditional video teleconferencing, GSA Telepresence offers a true travel alternative, delivering a level of interaction and clarity second only to a face-to-face meeting. GSA Telepresence keeps participants active and engaged. Each room includes advanced collaboration tools, such as a shared screen display and an in-room high-definition camera, enabling every participant to have the same information at the same time. These features make every meeting more productive.

Telepresence can fulfill agencies' conventional video-conferencing needs, such as executive leadership meetings and program reviews, and also provides new and innovative ways to get more done. For example, subject-matter experts can be accessible for multiple meetings around the country within a single day; managers can interview potential candidates from afar; and leaders can address crises face-to-face with their field staff.

Signed in fall 2009, Executive Order 13514, Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance, mandated government to find more sustainable ways of doing business, and required all executive departments and independent agencies to develop strategic sustainability plans. One of the key goals for every agency is to reduce Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions resulting from business travel and commuting.

One way agencies can achieve this goal is by looking for innovative ways to reduce their travel budgets, freeing up resources for operations or capacity-building efforts. GSA's telecommunications experts worked with industry leaders to develop a system that would

help reduce agency carbon emissions, save money, and ease the travel burden on employees. For example, industry carbon footprint calculators suggest that by using telepresence to reduce travel by 10 percent, an agency of approximately 10,000 employees nationwide could save more than 20,000 tons of carbon and $15 million within five years.

Agencies reserve telepresence rooms at a cost comparable to that of a round-trip ticket between common business destinations. GSA Telepresence replaces day trips by air, especially when multiple people use the service to avoid traveling to a meeting.

Telepresence also boosts productivity, since participants no longer need to spend time packing, waiting in line, and sitting on airplanes.

Telepresence Elsewhere in the World

Australia

Against a backdrop of the most difficult global economic conditions since the Great Depression, the Australian federal government found public servants were traveling extensively to support initiatives intended to deliver economic stimulus and reform throughout Australia.

The hectic meeting schedules of public servants from all states and territories were becoming increasingly challenging to schedule. There was a sense that "meeting fatigue" could also begin to undermine the government's ambitious reform agenda.

The Departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and Finance and Deregulation (DoFD) began to investigate whether a significant portion of public servants' travel could be replaced by a nationally deployed suite of immersive, next-generation telepresence rooms.

In late 2008, the Australian government announced it would fund the building of a National Intergovernmental TelePresence System. Initially, 20 Cisco® TelePresence® units were deployed in every state and territory—a total of 92 seats for meeting participants. Since then, the Australian government has ordered three additional TelePresence units.

Canada

The Canadian government is quickly becoming a major telepresence user. Public Works Minister Rona Ambrose, whose department is spearheading the government's telepresence pilot project, says the technology promises to save more than just time and travel costs. "We think it is a great way to address not only the bottom line when it comes to travel costs (and) the environmental footprint, but also work-life balance. People work long hours in their jobs and some have responsibilities all across the country."

The reaction from public servants who have used the telepresence suites has been positive, said Ambrose.

"People really like it. In the past, people always said, 'I don't like to use video conferencing,' or 'I don't like to use teleconferencing because you don't get that feel for people's body language and things like that.' But with telepresence, you really feel like you are in the room with people.

"You can also work on a document live, which is a great thing to be able to do," Ambrose added. "You can't do that over the phone. Just seeing each other matters."

As part of a shared pilot project with Environment Canada, Public Works has set up telepresence suites in eight Canadian cities: Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto, the National Capital Region (Ottawa-Gatineau metropolitan area), Montreal, Halifax, and Dartmouth. Soon there will be two more.

While the telepresence suites are located in Public Works or Environment Canada offices, Ambrose says officials and ministers from other departments can book the suites as well for meetings.

Public Works has budgeted $2.5 million for the pilot project and has already spent $1.8 million. "That pales in comparison to the cost of travel," Ambrose pointed out.

Canada's finance minister was so impressed, he wrote telepresence into the budget he presented:

> "The Government will explore ways to increase its productivity by using telepresence and other remote conferencing technologies more extensively. Telepresence technology is similar to videoconferencing; however, it enables participants to see life-size, full-motion video with high-quality sound. The Government will develop a strategy to expand the use of telepresence technology and other remote meeting solutions. Investments in this technology will be financed by reductions in travel expenses." [12]

Korea

The Korean government has decided to relocate almost every ministry and public agency to a new administrative capital city (Sejong) and 10 local cities. Its purpose is to transform the way government and the public sector work, and to deal with overpopulation in the Seoul metropolitan region, where nearly half of the country's population now lives. A national Smart Work strategy is part of this transformational approach, and the government is building a new digital collaboration system that consists of cloud-based e-government systems, TP, unified communications (UC), and various supporting systems.

As a part of the new digital collaboration system, the government has issued an RFP for developing Sejong City's video-conferencing capabilities.

Conclusion

Governments around the world must now change their business models from those of the last 50 years to approaches that will characterize the 21st century and beyond. They need to uncouple business processes and workers from their government offices, establish mobility and telework policies, and institute programs and business practices that incorporate enabling technologies such as those noted above.

Endnotes

1. *The Federal Government's Financial Health: A Citizen's Guide to the Financial Report of the United States Government,* Department of the Treasury and Office of Management and Budget, www.whitehouse.gov/omb/financial/reports/citizens_guide.pdf
2. Ibid.
3. "Toward a Transformed Government: A Vision for the Future," Alan P. Balutis, *The Public Manager,* op.cit., pp. 66-7; "The Next Government of the United States: Challenges for Performance in the 21st Century," Donald F. Kettl, IBM Center for the Business of Government, 2005, www.businessofgovernment.org/pdfs/KettlReport.pdf
4. "Future Worker 2015: Extreme Individualization," Diane Marello and Betsy Burton, Gartner Group, 2006.
5. *Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation,* Don Tapscott, McGraw-Hill, 1998.
6. "Net Generation: Preparing for Change in the Federal Information Technology Workforce, Washington, D.C.: Federal Chief Information Officers Council, 2010.
7. Ibid, pg.38.
8. Ibid, pp. 38-9.
9. "The Future Workforce: Here They Come," William Boddie, Jeanne Cantardo, and Robert Childs, *The Public Manager,* spring 2008, pg. 22.
10. Net Generation, op.cit., pg.64.
11. See the work of The Collaboration Project, National Academy of Public Administration, www.napawash.org
12. From page 226 of the new federal budget, "Jobs Growth and Long-Term Prosperity, Economic Action Plan 2012," www.budget.oc.ca/2012/plan/pdf/Plan2012-eng.pdf

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