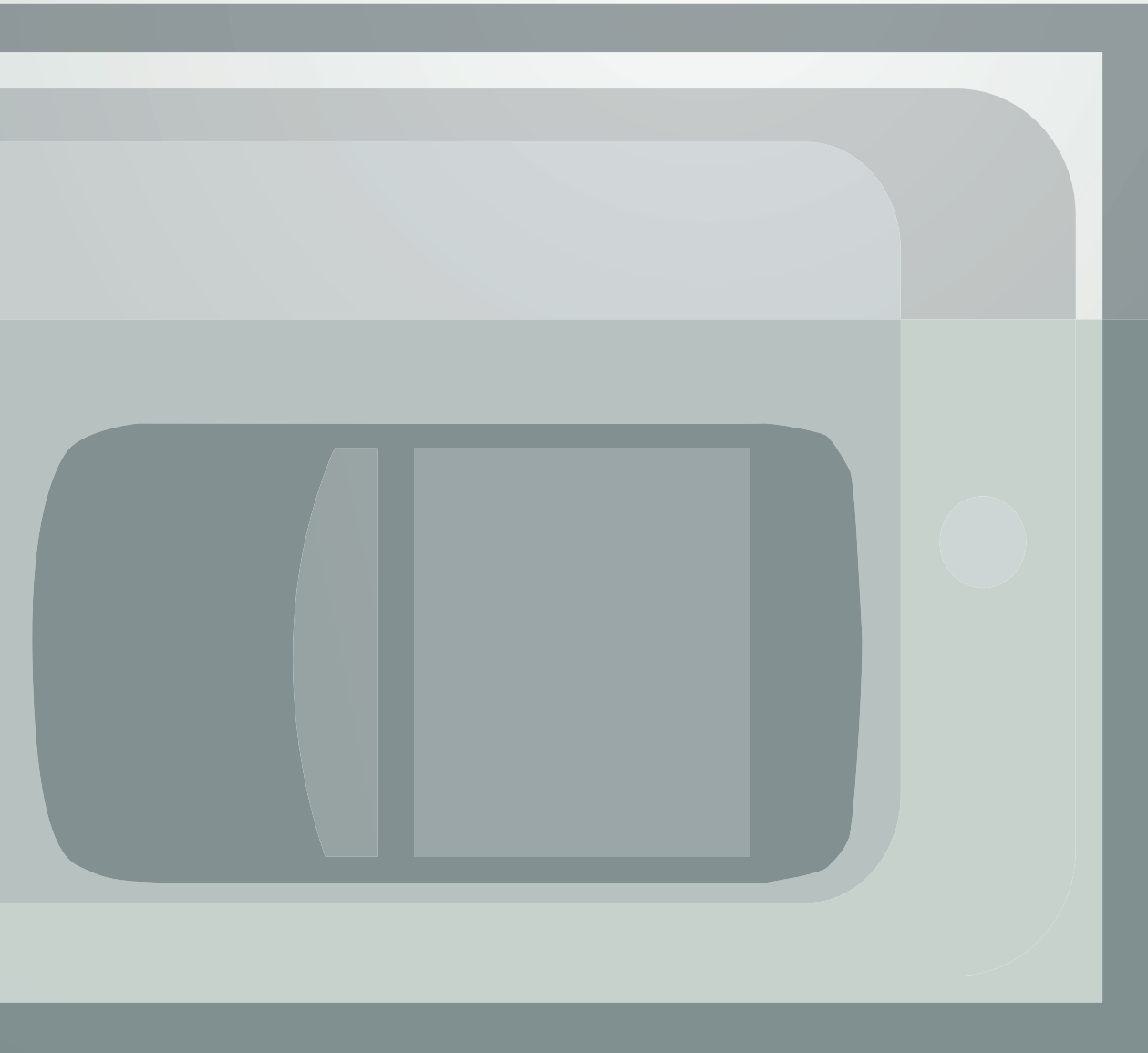


CREATING A MODERN WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT:

# ***THE UNIFIED WORKSPACE***



AN INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE



*The unified workspace allows agencies to meet the complex demands of the workforce. “There are fundamentally five big attributes to the unified workspace, it’s any device, any operating system, any expert, any location, any application. A unified workspace creates that environment,” states Michael Rau, Vice President and CTO, Borderless Network Architecture at Cisco.*



# CREATING A MODERN WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT: THE UNIFIED WORKSPACE

## UNIFIED WORKSPACE OVERVIEW

In today's digital landscape, leaders are looking to technology solutions to enable an increasingly mobile workforce. Government agencies are exploring how to create a work environment that allows employees to work anywhere, anytime and on any device.

Recently, Pat Fiorenza, Senior Research Analyst, GovLoop, spoke with Michael Rau, Vice President and CTO, Borderless Network Architecture at Cisco. Michael Rau's expert insights identifies that the unified workspace is a

solution to meet the complex demands of the public sector workforce. In this report, Rau illustrates how a unified workspace creates a modern office environment. According to Rau, a unified workspace has become a strategic imperative for government to meet the complex demands of the public sector workforce.

As agencies are challenged to modernize and securely transform into a 21st century government, technology serves as a way to facilitate and expedite the required changes. Technology is

redefining and transforming the modern workplace. Increasingly, IT departments are challenged to facilitate a secure and modern work environment. This will allow employees to work where, when, and how they desire. The unified workspace provides agencies the ability to adopt a philosophy of "bring your own everything (BYOE)." Regardless if employees use personal laptops, tablets or smartphones, the BYOE approach allows employees to work on any device, at any location, and at any time.

# CREATING A MODERN WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT: THE UNIFIED WORKSPACE

For most, the workplace is no longer defined simply as an agency commissioned laptop, desktop computer or even the physical office location. The workplace now includes the multitude of devices employees use to access information to be productive and efficient. A unified workplace allows employees to

receive access to organizational intellectual property, servers, collaboration tools, immediate access to colleagues within the agency, and provides a work experience on par with working at a physical location. This work experience is created by seamlessly connecting employees to information and resources.

## 5 BENEFITS OF THE UNIFIED WORKSPACE

Unified workspace allows employees to access information anywhere, anytime, and on any device. The unified workspace also enables government agencies to:

1. Provide a scalable and secure infrastructure, which allows agencies to adopt and leverage new and emerging technologies around a single workflow.
2. Create a work environment consistent with modern workplace trends, as the workplace is no longer defined by a physical location.
3. Increase organizational efficiency and productivity by aligning infrastructure to workforce needs.
4. Attract top talent by providing a platform that allows employees to work and access information on the device and platform of their choice.
5. Seamlessly integrate chat, voice, video and collaboration software to provide a work experience for employees on par with a physical location.

As new technology emerges, agencies continue to explore the correct policies and IT structures to support workforce productivity trends, such as bring-your-own-device (BYOD), virtualization, and remote access. With these trends quickly permeating the public sector workforce, agencies may create conflicting and fragmented strategies in order to encourage adoption of emerging trends. For government, the fragmented approach to workforce technology is no longer a sustainable, or an efficient solution. Since changes to IT infrastructure are not coordinated, inefficiencies often develop, as program policies, strategies and guidelines are not done in coordination.

Often, the inefficiencies seen by fragmentation are the products of poorly designed and disparate IT


architectures. Properly developed IT architectures from a unified workspace can help reduce network vulnerabilities and protect government information, and set a cohesive foundation for related agency wide technology initiatives. By implementing a unified workspace, agencies can overcome the inefficiencies of different workspace models. Unified workspace by its very nature is a properly defined and efficient IT architecture, seamlessly connecting employees into the workspace model they require.

Further, Rau explains that competing initiatives are often detrimental to collaboration efforts, stating, “One of the big things that needs to happen as a workspace environment is being created, is it needs to be harmonized with the collaboration strategy as well. That could be voice services, chat services, vid-

eo services, web content sharing, social applications, so one of the big focuses we have is making our entire portfolio of collaboration services available on any device on any operating system.”

As employees desire to work on the platform and product of their choice, agencies must provide IT infrastructure that is device, operating system and

product agnostic. “We feel that ultimately in this environment the device type and the operating system is the least significant piece of the overall environment provided to the end user,” Rau states. This view is indicative of Cisco’s commitment to open standards and Cisco’s commitment to facilitate interoperability through their services.



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## OVERCOMING ROADBLOCKS

Although unified workspace presents many benefits for government agencies, implementation presents challenges. One challenge is developing a strategic versus tactical plan. As Rau indicates, “What we see a lot is a customer trying to respond to a demand in a very tactical way, without having a clear line of sight to the strategic workspace environment they are trying to create.”

This challenge is common with any kind of technology initiative, regardless if it is a unified workspace initiative, big data program, or cloud-based technologies. As a solution to the challenge of strategic versus tactical, agencies must engage employees upfront. This will avoid implementing a one-size-fits-

all solution that is not customized or tailored for specific agency needs.

The one size-fits-all model rarely works in government. Instead, by engaging with employees and stakeholders up front, IT departments can clearly identify organizational needs, and match technology to fit demands of the user, not the reverse.

With unified workspaces, agencies are also challenged to create new organizational policies and leverage new operational capabilities. Policy development is essential to manage usage, and is also critical to build support and awareness across departments. Unified workspace brings together various mobile

and desktop services within an agency into one work stream. During this process, agencies must overcome any cultural or organizational boundaries that exist in IT. Often, a unified workspace allows agencies to work across the department, and remove any IT siloes that may exist. Overcoming organizational boundaries will allow agencies to create a new, modern and efficient work environment for employees across an agency.

As is the case with all technology initiatives, security considerations are at the forefront of any implementation decision. One of the first steps to any security policy is to understand what devices are on the network and clearly define device ownership, device types, and operating systems. Once this information is well known to the agency, IT can establish a foundation for a robust security policy. Further, knowing the software footprint of a device can help develop a solid security foundation for an agency, this will help define role-based access and what an employee can and cannot access. To remain secure in a mobile environment, IT must create policies based on characteristics of each device on the network.

Today, a savvy employee in a work group can easily go and create their own IT environment, completely outside the agency's IT environment. IT departments may have the attitude, 'We are not going to embrace mobile workforce trends, and will keep our IT environment locked down.' This philosophy will push users outside the formal IT environment into a place with absolutely no control.

Employees are working remotely or accessing information on personal devices, regardless of the IT structures and policies that the agency has developed. If IT departments choose to put a wall around the current mobility trends, employees will still continue to access information outside formal IT structures. With tight controls on data, information, and ramifications if data is exposed, agencies must accept and build IT infrastructure to accommodate workforce needs, before employees feel empowered to access and share information outside the agency's IT infrastructure.

## OPENING UP NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR GOVERNMENT

For government agencies, the unified workspace opens up new organizational opportunities. In a recent report by GovLoop, Exploring BYOD in the Public Sector, survey results from the report shows that there is an increasing demand for flexible workspaces and accessing information from any location on any device.

When asked what the benefits of BYOD are, respondents were able to select all that applied from cost savings, allowing people to work on the most comfortable device, and improved productivity. Respondents were also provided the opportunity to report additional benefits. Of the provided responses, 71 percent responded that *allowing people to work on most comfortable device*, was the greatest benefit, followed by *improved productivity* (58 percent), and *cost savings* (55 percent). Respondents submitted additional benefits such as not having to carry multiple devices, more modern equipment, facilitating telework, and improved usability.

Additionally, the survey finds that 79 percent of respondents report that BYOD initiatives could have a positive impact on employee satisfaction, productivity and engagement. Respondents elaborated on their answers by stating:

- ▶ "It will only help engagement and satisfaction for those who have more current devices that they can use in lieu of the federally-provided equipment. Those who do not will most likely be angrier at the change in policy and disparity in equipment"
- ▶ "Many employees would be able to perform work wherever they wanted"
- ▶ "Having an all-in-one solution aids productivity"
- ▶ "Supports flexible work hours"
- ▶ "Supports telework and other mobility initiatives"

The data from the GovLoop BYOD report shows why unified workspace is needed across government. The survey results also indicate a desire for a flexible workspace, and working anywhere, anytime.

It is clear that government work environments are complex. Some employees may require secure mobile access, laptops, government issued phones, or operate in a tightly provisioned workstation to protect government data and information. “What unified workspace brings to the table is an overall technology framework that allows for an agency to deliver across the broad spectrum of workspace requirements, so instead of being locked into a particular workspace model, it gives the flexibility to adapt and deliver to the requirements of all users inside of the environment,” states Rau.

Further, unified workspace is helping prepare agencies for the emerging workforce. As new employees enter the workforce, there are certain technologies that talented prospective employees expect to have in the workplace, especially in terms of collaboration services and choices of devices. For the public sector, a rich and robust IT infrastructure is now part of the equation to draw and retain talent. Without a clear, easy to use system to collaborate and share, workers may look to other sectors for job opportunities.

The unified workspace has become a necessity to meet the demands of the public sector workforce. Michael Rau provided three best practices and steps towards implementing a unified workspace.

## 1. DEFINE

the Unified  
Workspace as  
an IT Discipline



To meet growing workplace trends, agencies must embrace unified workspace as a strategic response to meet current demands. As BYOD, virtualization and remote access becomes increasingly imperative to fulfilling the mission of the agency, government must create unified workspace as a practice within the agency. “We have to recognize what a unified workspace is, what it delivers, and the fact that it is an IT discipline that needs to be created,” states Rau.

## 2. ENGAGE

the End User



As this report identified, one of the most critical steps for implementation is to engage the end user, and for IT to work collaboratively with stakeholders to build IT structures that fit the needs of the agency. Some options to consider are creating teams of cross-functional groups to engage with IT, to ensure stakeholder insights are integrated throughout the process.

## 3. DEVELOP

IT Roadmap/  
Strategy for  
Agency



By creating an IT roadmap, an agency will be able to identify and create the workplace environment that supports the overall end user requirements, and mission of the agency. Whether this entails implementing new technology, upgrading services to the overall IT infrastructure, or leveraging existing investments in different ways, identifying an IT roadmap and strategy is essential to fully leverage emerging technology.



# THE ROLE OF CISCO & RELATED RESOURCES

Cisco offers a variety of services around the unified workspace; you can find more information from the links below. According to Rau, “At Cisco, we are creating service processes around the unified workspace, so we can actually engage with the customer and deliver services to the agency.”

Also available from Cisco are validated design guides to help agencies build a unified workspace model. “We have a series of prescriptive implementation guides for building out a unified workspace infrastructure. So we have built, tested and documented the unified workspace environment and are fundamentally delivering that to our customers at no charge as a reference as for actually building the environment,” states Rau.

For more information, check out the following resources:

- [Cisco GovLoop Group](#)
- [Cisco Unified Workspace](#)



## 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 60,000 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 Pat Fiorenza, Senior Research Analyst, GovLoop, at [pat@govloop.com](mailto:pat@govloop.com).

GovLoop  
734 15th St NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20005  
Phone: (202) 407-7421  
Fax: (202) 407-7501

