

Empowered Government Workforce: Connect Those Who Know with Those Who Need to Know

The government workforce is being squeezed on two fronts: the coming wave of retirees and the reluctance of new graduates to work in an environment they regard as having old-fashioned technology. “As a result of both factors, agencies are having to meet their mission objectives with fewer resources,” says Chris Shenefiel, federal government industry solutions manager, Cisco®. “To succeed, they need to empower the workers they do have to be more productive.”

A Human Capital Issue

Empowering the government workforce is actually the second phase of connected government. The first phase, already accomplished or underway in many agencies, was connecting agencies to agencies by building a shared voice, video, and data network. “Once the unified communications network is in place, agencies can turn their attention to empowering individual employees by giving them the collaboration tools to do their jobs better – and from any workspace,” says Shenefiel.

Empowering individual workers is a human capital issue, according to Alan Balutis, director and distinguished fellow, Cisco Internet Business Systems Group. “There is a pressing need to make human capital planning a strategic element in agencies’ initiatives as they seek to attract, recruit, train, and retain employees,” he says.

Three Measurable Benefits

Collaboration tools increase the value of government’s human capital in three ways:

- **Increasing productivity:** Presence information, for example, lets employees simply look at their IP phone or PC screen to see which employees with a certain type of expertise are currently available and how they prefer to be reached. This can save hours weekly by eliminating the need to dial multiple numbers, leave multiple messages, and send multiple e-mails and instant messages.
- **Making the government more attractive to potential recruits:** “Younger workers have grown up with collaboration tools such as instant messaging, text messaging, Web collaboration, and video conferencing,” says Shenefiel. “They’re more inclined to want to work for employers that provide those tools.” And the benefit doesn’t stop after recruitment: “Communications technology not only attracts savvy workers, it also improves their ability to share information and meet the mission objectives,” adds Kathy Ditto, federal unified communications marketing manager, Cisco.
- **Giving the workforce more flexibility as to where, when, and how they work:** Employees who have the tools to work from home spend less time commuting, which increases productivity and job satisfaction, reduces traffic and carbon emissions, and also supports government continuity of operations (COOP) plans.

What Does an Empowered Workforce Look Like?

An example of an empowered government workforce will be demonstrated in the Cisco booth (1701) at the FOSE Conference and Exhibition, April 1–3, 2008. In the demo, a program manager at the Government Joint Emergency Taskforce (G-JET) follows a weather event that appears to be headed for the United States mainland. Using unified communications and other technologies, the program manager collaborates in real time with colleagues in other cities, using voice, video, and Web sharing. Team members can connect from any workspace – even a hotel or the airport – and securely access all resources they would have at headquarters, including files, contacts, office voicemail, video conferencing, and data. In the demo, team members who need to leave their office can program their smartphones to receive updates and storm tracking information, and update their preference information so that their colleagues can see how and when to reach them. When needed, team members can escalate an instant messaging chat into a phone call, a video conference, or a collaborative session combining voice, video, and Web collaboration, sharing documents and Web pages with a single click.

As Shenefiel sums it up, “Unified communications helps to create a human network of government employees who are empowered to accomplish the mission objective from any workspace.”

Cisco offers two types of solutions for empowering the government workforce. For more information on Seamless Mobile Communication, visit:

www.cisco.com/web/strategy/docs/gov/SeamlessMobile_Mar08.pdf and
www.cisco.com/go/unifiedcommunications or www.cisco.com/go/mobility.

For more information on Cisco Unified Communications applications, visit:

www.cisco.com/web/strategy/docs/gov/UCApps_Mar08.pdf and www.cisco.com/go/fedunified.



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