

Federal Enterprise Architecture Roundtable: Role of the Data Center

Agencies are readying their data centers for change as the nation prepares for a new administration with new programs and priorities. They will be following the Federal Enterprise Architecture, a business-driven framework developed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to deliver government services that are more citizen-centered, results-oriented, and market-based. We assembled a panel of Cisco's federal data center experts to discuss how the Federal Enterprise Architecture is transforming government, and the role of the data center in that transformation.

Panel participants:

- *Dick Burk*, Former Chief Architect of the Office of Management and Budget and a Cisco Internet Solutions Business Group (ISBG) Advisory Fellow
- *Gerald Charles, Jr.*, Executive Advisor and ISBG Director, Public Sector
- *Dan Kent*, Director of Engineering, Federal Government
- *Steve Picot*, Data Center Regional Manager, Federal Government
- *Chris Wiborg*, Enterprise Architecture Marketing Manager

How is the Federal Enterprise Architecture transforming government?

Gerald Charles, Jr.: In today's knowledge economy, advances in collaboration technologies have accelerated the collection, exchange, and dissemination of information. At the same time, citizens and government workers have come to expect highly personalized 24/7 services, wherever and whenever they need them. The Federal Enterprise Architecture is the tool that enables government to respond to today's and tomorrow's requirements for managing information and delivering services to people everywhere.

Dick Burk: Agencies have traditionally formulated strategies based on organization, budget, or legislation. The Federal Enterprise Architecture is now turning attention to business functions. Agencies are asking a new set of questions: What information do we need to move around to improve agency performance? What services do we need? And what data center technology will let us introduce services quickly when new needs arise? An example of a potential new need would be complying with tax directives that include new classes of people paying at different rates.

What is required to create a services-oriented environment for government data centers?

Dan Kent: The Services-Enabled Mission Fabric is a data center framework that provides services across agencies, across governments, and across communities of interest. It's a type of services-oriented network architecture.

Charles: The DoD has been working to meet similar requirements because it needs to perform distributed operations with Self-Organizing Field Groups and joint mission planning and execution. In much the same way, a Services-Enabled Mission Fabric enhances situational awareness by enabling collaboration across a distributed and diverse environment, including self-organizing groups.

Kent: Civilian agencies have a similar requirement for cross-agency services. Healthcare information delivery, for example, is a common requirement for Health and Human Services, Veteran's Administration, DoD, and many others. The Services-Enabled Mission Fabric can make the same service quickly available to other agencies, such as the Indian Health Service or Regional Health Information Exchanges.

Burk: It's important to note that the concept of the enterprise is completely absent from the Services-Enabled Mission Fabric. There's a mission, there are services to meet the mission, and that's it. It doesn't matter whether the services apply to one organization or many.

What are the next steps for government data centers?

Steve Picot: The data center architecture has a big influence on the cost of services, ease of management, agility, reach, and business resilience. One necessary step is moving services out of agency silos into the network, where they become available to more agencies, more applications, and more people. This increases the return on government's technology investments. Another step is to treat the virtual machine as the new atomic unit of data centers. This increases business resilience because the physical location of the services doesn't matter.

Chris Wiborg: The data center network also needs to be aware of the nature of the traffic it's carrying and treat it with the appropriate precedence, security, and accessibility. You need to handle voice traffic differently than ERP application traffic, for example.

How vital is the role of the data center in the Federal Enterprise Architecture?

Burk: Complexity, responsiveness, and personalization of government services have increased by orders of magnitude. The confluence of those factors means we can no longer afford to have services and data centers that are locked into one agency. To gain the agility to respond to new needs from citizens and employees, government needs to create a network of networks that can talk to each other.

How does the OMB's lines-of-business (LOB) model affect data center strategy?

Burk: Around 18 months ago, the OMB initiated the LOB model to optimize infrastructure. LOBs include business areas such as human resources and financial management as well as substantive business lines already shared by multiple agencies, such as the IT environment and health information sharing. Agencies need to achieve a certain performance level on metrics such as cost per desktop and throughput per dollar.

Agencies Have the Choice to Achieve Performance Goals Internally or by Outsourcing

Cisco Business Transformation Services can help assess your data center's readiness for a Services-Oriented Mission Fabric. For more information, visit:

www.cisco.com/en/US/solutions/ns340/ns629/networking_solutions_products_genericcontent0900aecd805aea03.html

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