

Global Survey Reveals New Workforce Habits: What It Means to Government

If you were forced to make a choice, would you want a car or an Internet connection? For 64 percent of the 3000 global college students and recently employed college grads surveyed in the 2011 [Cisco Connected World Technology](#) Report, the answer is online access. And not surprisingly, 66 percent of the students and 58 percent of the new employees said the most important technology in their lives was a mobile device, such as a smartphone or tablet.

The survey results signal a sea change in the way the new workforce expects to work and how the newest generation of constituents wants to interact with government. For ideas on how government can adapt, we convened a panel of Cisco's government specialists:

- Dan Kent, Cisco's chief technology officer for federal government customers
- Mike Shepherd, Cisco's public sector business development manager for cloud technologies
- Steve Pollock, public sector architecture lead for Cisco® Borderless Networks

How are mobile devices changing the government workplace?

Steve Pollock: For new college grads, mobile devices are almost like a personal fashion statement. People who are willing to stand in line overnight to buy the latest device are going to want to bring them to work, and allowing them to do so will help state and local governments compete with the private sector to recruit and retain the best and brightest. A bonus is that when employees are willing to purchase their own devices, government cuts costs.

Dan Kent: The big revelation from the survey is that the newest entries to the workforce are dramatically different from their predecessors. One difference is that they expect to use smartphones and tablets for work email at a minimum, and ideally for other services available to them in their offices.

In the survey, 88 percent of recent college grads said they had a Facebook account, and 73 percent logged in at least once a day. Could social networking provide value in the government workplace?

Mike Shepherd: Social computing in the workplace appears to be inevitable. In fact, the Department of Defense wisely decided to allow Facebook after earlier shutting it down, especially because it helps soldiers' morale by allowing them to communicate with their families.

Kent: Giving distributed teams an enterprise version of social networking tools can help them be more effective, especially since they're already familiar with social networking in their personal lives. Think about the time you could save by being able to see which experts are available and then just clicking to connect by IM or web conference. And teams can make better, faster decisions if they can use secure online communities to share and comment on messages, documents, and video.



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What changes to government networks are needed to support new ways of working?

Kent: Most colleges have complete wireless coverage, so recent graduates expect the same—not the disconnected hotspots typical in government buildings. Also, in a bring-your-own-device world, governments need to think about creating a secure “borderless network” that allows access from anywhere. This requires encryption as well as access and identity management controls.

Pollock: For government to allow employees to access information and services from anywhere, on any device, the network needs the intelligence to consider the who, what, where, when, and how of an employee’s request. A request to view email on an iPhone from within agency walls might be treated differently from a request to download a file from a coffee shop, for instance. The goal is to protect the device, the user, and the agency at all times. It’s worth the effort: employees will work additional hours every week just because they have the connectivity. Even 15 minutes a day of extra work from thousands of employees can translate to better citizen service.

Shepherd: You also need a platform to host the information and applications that people are accessing with their mobile devices. The new workforce grew up with social media, smartphones, texting, VoIP video chat, and online banking, knowing they could access services from anywhere, on any device. They expect the same convenience for services they use in the workplace. In government, some of the first services moving to the cloud are VoIP, instant messaging, document sharing, and video sharing.

The people who took the survey are also constituents. What are the implications of the survey results for government service delivery?

Kent: We can expect to see more demand for online services, and more use of video for information and interaction. Government is already doing a good job with online self-service for transactions like requesting a driver’s license or birth certificate. Online voting might be coming in the future. What’s exciting is that adapting to constituents’ growing preference for mobility and online interaction can increase citizen satisfaction while also helping to make government more efficient.



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