

Paul Brubaker

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In his earlier days on Capitol Hill, where he was an auditor for the U.S. General Accounting Office (now the Government Accountability Office), Paul Brubaker became intrigued by the use of IT to transform and dramatically improve business processes and operations. Brubaker observed that the software development process for the Advanced Medium Range Air to Air Missile (AMRAAM) missile program was cumbersome, antiquated, and slow—and therefore costly. He realized that software development was nothing more than a business process, and therefore it could be automated and streamlined to create a dramatic reduction in the time and money required for development. He and his team began looking at how these processes could be modernized and automated, referencing the best practices of leading organizations to identify proven ways to streamline the process and save money.

From that point on, Brubaker was a devotee of achieving transformation through technology, but (belying his intensity of purpose) he has always employed what he terms “the lazy man’s methodology”: studying other organizations’ best practices to draw upon the successful experiences of others. “I first look to other organizations that have had analogous problems, and see what they have done,” he comments. “There has never been a situation where I couldn’t find best practices somewhere and apply them to the challenges at hand.” To illustrate, Brubaker talks about how he and others at the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) approached enabling smart vehicles so that they could detect and avoid each other. He discovered that the Department of Defense (DOD) had faced a similar problem enabling mobile communications among troops on the move. They met with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency to learn best practices,



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and incorporated these into their smart vehicle initiative.

“Creating an ad hoc, mobile, peer-to-peer wireless network on the road will do more than reduce the tragic 40,000 car crash fatalities in the United States every year. It will also deliver a raft of benefits, from the ability for first responders to get rapid data from traffic incidents, to enhanced communications abilities for drivers,” he says. “It will literally transform transportation at every level.”

Brubaker’s interest in best practices and in technology experienced a happy marriage when he came up with a concept that eventually became the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996, while he was working as a subcommittee staff director on Capitol Hill. The Clinger-Cohen Act mandates that government be operated exactly as an efficient and profitable business would be, by automating processes where possible, and treating acquisition, planning, and management of technology as a capital investment. “The objective was to use technology to find more efficient ways of collaborating, especially in automating standard processes,” Brubaker explains. “There never before was an explicit link between IT and improvements in operations, cost savings, customer satisfaction, and so forth. Clinger-Cohen mandated a link between IT and improvements in mission performance in the federal government.”

Brubaker’s personal hero, Winston Churchill, also had a farsighted vision of technology. During his tenure as Great Britain’s First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill was one of the first military leaders to understand the potential power of tanks in warfare, and is credited with their adoption by England—thus changing the face of warfare in the 20th century. Noting that Churchill was “an imperfect man,” Brubaker says that the former British prime minister made many mistakes during his life—as a soldier, author, Member of Parliament, husband, father, mason, investor, and ultimately Prime Minister—but he never failed to learn from his mistakes and successfully apply that knowledge as he evolved. Brubaker is active with the Churchill Centre, the international focus for study of Winston Churchill, his life and times, and has been instrumental using technology to reach and develop new generations of Churchillians and working to make the Churchill archives at Cambridge University available online.

As executive vice president and chief marketing officer of SI International, a provider of mission-critical IT and network solutions (primarily to the federal government), Brubaker automated the firm’s entire set of marketing processes—a feat unheard-of in a company the size of SI. As a result, SI International increased their proposal throughput by 300 percent without adding any staff, resulting in dramatically increased sales.

As a result of his successful transformation of SI International, Brubaker founded his own company, Procentrix. “I wanted to use technology to enable new and more efficient ways of collaborating, especially around automating standard processes,” he says. In essence, Brubaker automated the entire project management body of knowledge, using off-the-shelf software widely licensed by enterprises and government. This meant that organizations did not have to purchase new software to use the firm’s advanced project management tools.

As the second-highest-ranking official at the Department of Defense (DOD), Brubaker again used technology to automate the department's processes and operations, including personnel, logistics, finance, and command and control. His success in improving efficiency and driving down costs earned him the Distinguished Public Service Medal.

Even in his personal life, Brubaker is always looking for ways to collaborate, automate processes, and apply best practices. He and his wife are active in Autism Speaks, a non-profit organization dedicated to changing the future for all who struggle with autism spectrum disorders. Brubaker has created ad hoc collaborative capabilities so that parents of autistic children can informally exchange ideas and information.

And when he isn't trying to make the world a better place for people to live, work, learn, and play through the transformative power of technology, Brubaker enjoys being with his two young sons. After all, his sons will be the ones to live in tomorrow's world, and he's not taking any risks that it won't be a better one.