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CIO as chief integration officer

Tech Trends 2015: The fusion of business and IT
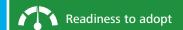## A public sector perspective

Technology is the glue that connects programs and people, and helps information flow in the public sector, making it an essential component of everyday public sector operations. That puts the CIO in a unique position to take on the important job of integrating decision-makers and stakeholders.

Public sector perspective

Relevance	Timing	Readiness to adopt

The graphic above represents the trend's potential relevance, timing (short, medium, or longer runway), and overall readiness (low, moderate, or high) of the public sector to adopt this trend. These broad ratings are based on the professional opinions of some of the authors and may not reflect your organizations unique situation.

Large public sector agencies often have dozens of technical assets in place to support a disparate range of business processes – everything from email platforms and data centers to grant systems. Meanwhile, rising expectations regarding citizen engagement and digital government have put integration architectures in the spotlight. In this environment, CIOs have a unique vantage point, able to lead integration from an enterprise-wide perspective. After all, technology touches every department and government function – as well as, arguably, every business and citizen.

CIOs not only have access to the technology and the organizational strategies, but also control many of the tools required to enable and activate those strategies. There are some challenges to stepping into this integration role. For some CIOs who "grew up" in the public sector, this may be unfamiliar territory, since this level of business integration and visibility was not traditionally part of the job. Today, CIOs face a growing maze of laws and regulations that have created the government structures in which they operate and established data and privacy practices that must be followed. The organizational and cultural shifts that should take place to become a more

integrated government present additional hurdles. Because of the independent nature of separate departments and agencies, many had carte blanche to procure any type of IT asset in the past. The concept of sharing is often a challenge for government, both organizationally and legally – and one that will likely require strong leadership and significant change management to recast.

Despite the hurdles, integration is happening now with various states and federal agencies making incremental progress. For example, the State of Minnesota is on the journey of bringing together the state's IT assets, programs, and people under one umbrella so there can be one integrated "view" of citizens. While strong use cases can be a driver, new legislation is also helping to spur integration along. From a federal level, the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA) gives CIOs more centralized accountability and more responsibility for the overall IT budget, regardless of size or number of components. Also, states such as Tennessee and Washington are passing legislation to consolidate departments, making it easier to integrate business processes, data, and technology.

To make progress along the lines of the examples above, CIOs should be masters of balance and collaboration, marrying the traditional day-to-day job of IT operations with the strategic goal of connecting technology, business, organizations, and data to meet future needs. They also have to balance strong executive leadership with diplomacy: CIOs need to partner with the business and human resources leaders while infusing IT across the enterprise. The organizational and modernization considerations loom large. What will new reporting structures look like? How will these new structures impact government functions? Who has final say in procurement issues?

Regardless of the obstacles, now is the time for the CIO to step into this new role and be the driving force for integration. Simply staying the course, or maintaining only an operational focus, would likely heighten the risks of increased technical debt, mistrust among key stakeholders, and an inability to make progress. Integration will be disruptive to business as usual in the short term, but its long-term positive benefits to citizens, stakeholders, and government itself are just too large to ignore.

Moving forward

- **Find a champion.** Some agencies and even states are more interested than others in collaborating and integrating. Consider starting with agencies or departments that share a common constituent or line of business. Find them – and work together to create real momentum.

- **Determine infrastructure and organizational readiness.** Integration requires technology assets and management skills that are up to the job. Create measurable criteria for assessing readiness to make the case for keeping, merging, or discarding existing applications. Create new incentives and metrics to help the teams work together.

- **Align your IT efforts with the business.** Cabinet secretaries and others already have clear priorities in place. Make sure you understand those priorities and pursue initiatives that align with them—and work together to create real momentum.

For more information, please contact:

Kristen Miller
Principal
Deloitte Consulting LLP
krmiller@deloitte.com

Kristin Russell
Director
Deloitte Consulting LLP
krrussell@deloitte.com

Art Stephens
Director
Deloitte Consulting LLP
artstephens@deloitte.com

Vance Hitch
Specialist Leader
Deloitte Consulting LLP
vhitch@deloitte.com

Paul Krein
Specialist Leader
Deloitte Consulting LLP
pkrein@deloitte.com

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