
**What's the biggest challenge and opportunity facing the federal government?**

The biggest challenge and opportunity is one and the same—a digital-first government. The Obama administration has made great strides bringing in more tech-savvy individuals. Agencies have made progress, and it will be interesting to see what approach the Trump administration takes. But in my view, a digital-first government isn't just about more online services or mobile apps. It is a new digital mindset in which everything the federal government does—no matter if it is in headquarters, a VA health clinic, or in a field office—is thought of digitally first. And the workforce, business strategy, and technology investments are all in sync with it.

I was struck by the importance of this recently when I came across this quote from Apple’s Angela Ahrendts: “I grew up in a physical world, and I speak English. The next generation is growing up in a digital world, and they speak social.”

I read the quote and I looked around the family room at my kids—true digital natives—and thought of the federal government clients we serve. What struck me is how a digital mindset—putting digital first—serves not just today’s citizens better but gets government ready for this oncoming avalanche of digital natives.

**If digital is the center of it all, then how do cyber and analytics come into play?**

When you think about cyber, it is an ever-growing challenge because of technology. We are taking more technological risks with this embrace of digital. So how do you prioritize those risks related to your tech investments? How do you plan for or test your agency’s resiliency to a cyberattack? If you take a digital-first approach, your organization’s cyber posture is part of the strategy, planning, and execution. It is a natural fit.

Same with data analytics. Doing more with your data—or get better, cleaner data—is tied to your organization’s interaction with its customers. And how you approach your customer experience is connected to the data inputs—they all intersect—all of these trends. We can no longer afford, especially with these new generations on the horizon, to keep managing and operating in silos. A digital-first government is about breaking down those barriers, sharing information, and using technology as a way to drive mission outcomes.

At the heart of digital is innovation—digital is always changing, evolving. Our commercial experience enables us to bring that innovation to government. Medallia, for example, is an incredible customer experience (CX) software tool that many leading brands use. We’re working closely with them and I am excited by what Medallia, along with other innovative tech companies, could bring to the federal marketplace to play a bigger role in the government’s digital transformation.

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You recently wrote about the federal government community in FCW and how to be intentional about innovation. What signs do you see of change in the traditional federal agency-federal contractor relationship?

We all want to do meaningful, impactful work where we engage people and make things happen. It’s at the core of us all. Every day small victories are made in ending these “blind marriages” between government and industry.

By taking each opportunity to respond to an RFP in a more meaningful, impactful, and innovative way, we can start building on these small victories. Then the change becomes real—we in the federal contracting community have to be intentional about it and have to have more honest and real conversations with our clients. That’s something we’re committed to.

And, frankly, responding to an RFP in a more meaningful way is more fun. We have made a real effort over the past 12 months to make work better—give people back time to focus on what matters, to be more inclusive and collaborative, and create opportunities to bring ideas forward and test them.

A big part of being inclusive and collaborative is intent. We have put a big emphasis on empowering practitioners—at all levels—to ideate and innovate on client-focused, market-leading problems and challenges. To figure this out, we launched Hatch, an internal crowdsourced-based initiative, which captures those ideas and then puts them through a series of filters to determine how to invest and move forward. Our end goal is to create viable products and/or solutions that enhance, disrupt, or transform the federal market.

We will continue to tinker with this approach, get feedback from our practitioners to make sure that we are creating a culture that supports them as entrepreneurs and as people with lives outside of work. Striking that balance is important to us as it translates to happier, more engaged employees who bring fresh, new ideas to clients. This industry-government dynamic isn’t just about RFPs—industry’s own culture can be a big part of this change too.

You are a year into your tenure as leading Deloitte’s Federal Government practice, there’s a new administration coming in, it is a very tight, competitive market, how are you feeling?

In a word, optimistic.

While there is going to be a lot of change with the new administration, our purpose as a federal practice remains the same, to create new, better outcomes in collaboration with our clients.

In terms of this leadership role, I’ve been in it for almost a year, though I’ve been working on the growth of this federal practice for 16 years—from when it was only a concept.

Now looking to 2017, we’ve grown to a $1.7 billion business of more than 8,000 professionals out there every day making an impact with our federal clients. Those clients aren’t all in the Washington, D.C. area. As our practice has grown, the federal clients we serve are in Colorado—with a number of critical military installations there—as well as in California and Texas. Innovative and impactful government work—whether it is related to civilian services, defense and national security issues or health care—is happening across the country and we plan to be a big part of it.