Mobile, social, cloud, analytics, the Business of IT—these macro forces are behind many of the digital technologies that are fueling innovation today. As these technologies advance, so do expectations around user experience, process transparency, and instantaneous access to information. In addition, technologies such as augmented reality and the Internet of Things to exponential technologies like robotics and quantum computing are reshaping every corner of organizations by transforming “business as usual” to the art of the possible.

This report provides a public sector perspective on Deloitte Consulting’s 2016 Technology Trends report and theme innovating in a digital era. Over the next 18-24 months, each of these eight trends has the potential to disrupt the way that public sector organizations think about operating and delivery models across functions and domains. As in the past, we seek to shed light on the anticipated level of public sector relevance and readiness for each trend. We acknowledge that public sector organizations are different, broad, and complex, and our scoring of organizational readiness and trend relevance is designed to represent overall trends. We incorporate real-world examples and some tips and key considerations to help organizations get started, so that leaders look for practical ways not only to do familiar things differently but also to do fundamentally different things.

As with each edition of our annual Tech Trends report, this is part of an ongoing discussion in an ever-evolving field. We hope that the ideas contained herein help to inform and guide your thinking as you explore opportunities to harness these technology trends to refocus, revitalize, and reimagine the future of government.
Right-speed IT

There is an inherent tension between stability and agility in IT. Organizations are evolving different delivery models to span the continuum from high-torque enterprise IT and high-speed innovation, balancing which can no longer be “one size fits all” across the enterprise. As public sector CIOs seek to distribute innovation, agile, and DevOps experience across teams, they may face procurement, budget, and talent hurdles.

Getting started

• Build a coalition of the willing. Understand people’s motivations, and recruit them to your cause.
• Be flexible. Sometimes it takes one step back to unlock another forward.
• Start small. Celebrate every win until the new behavior becomes the norm.

The Internet of Things: From sensing to doing

From “smart cities” to the military, government is capitalizing on the ever-expanding universe of connected “things.” Indeed, the Internet of Things has myriad applications to the public sector and has already proven to be transformative. But the real potential is unlocked when data are collected and new approaches to data management and mission delivery models are considered.

Getting started

• Start small and iterate. Iterative pilot projects let you experiment, measure, and refine.
• Use what you have. Previous solutions may find new life and save steps.
• Consider implications. Think about connectivity, safety, security, and privacy.

Augmented and virtual reality go to work

Augmented and virtual reality are no longer science fiction. AR and VR technology that delivers context and immersion, have tremendous potential to retro-fit training environments, improve communication, redefine the role of field service workers, and reshape government business processes. The military, law enforcement, and national security agencies have been early adopters.

Getting started

• Pick powerful pilots. Start with a use case that will create value and tremendous impact.
• Be the beta. Vendors may be willing to team up and lower prices to improve products.
• Educate. Understanding these tools and their value is essential to adoption.

Reimagining core systems

Decades-old legacy and ERP systems are at the heart of mission and back office government operations. But taxpayer expectations for ease of use, transparency, and efficiency have risen dramatically in the internet age. Cloud, sensors, and virtual reality are changing missions while also investing in emerging digital technologies. But what if those same legacy systems are at the heart of mission and back office government operations.

Getting started

• Mounting debt? Aging workforce? Develop a clear business case.
• team up. Work with the private and philanthropic sectors to help kick-start efforts.
• Convene. The public sector is a powerful coordinator and convener. Host competitions around principles that could better meet mission needs.

Social impact of exponential technologies

Exponential technologies such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and robotics have demonstrated the ability to do work better, cheaper, and faster. Beyond efficiencies, exponenials can drive positive social impact, and the public sector has the opportunity to take the lead in developing public-private consortiums to take on the world’s toughest challenges using these technologies.

Getting started

• Form up. Work with the private and philanthropic sectors to help kick-start efforts.
• Convene. The public sector is a powerful coordinator and convener. Host competitions around social problem-solving.
• Consider ethical impacts. Coordinate efforts to consider and understand the ethical and moral implications of exponential technologies.

Blockchain: Democratized trust

Developed as part of Bitcoin, blockchain uses cryptography to store and verify information in a secure shared ledger without a governing central authority. As a potential alternative to centralized governance, blockchain may rewrite notions of transaction, licensing, identity, and contract management. Adoption is nascent; however, regulators should be vigilant, and agencies should recognize that use cases exist that could drastically improve efficiency, costs, and reliability.

Getting started

• Get smart. Blockchain takes time to understand. Education can reveal the most valuable use cases.
• Role play. The public sector can play a role in developing standards or regulation.
• Keep up. ERP and financial systems are investigating use of blockchain principles that could better meet mission needs.

Industrialized analytics

The public sector has long harnessed data to inform decisions, enhance performance, and reduce costs. Today, data availability, better talent, and better technologies represent a tremendous opportunity. However, new approaches that consider innovative delivery models, new technical platforms, and novel governance tactics will be required to unlock this opportunity. “One-off” pilots offer insight in dribs and drabs—but larger-scale data efforts can allow results that are repeatable, scalable, and truly transformative.

Getting started

• Start with the question, not the answer. What information would help you achieve your mission?
• Work before you run. Introduce analytics gradually. Embrace failure, and fail fast.
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