The keys to achieving **bigger dividends** from **federal IT modernization**

BY FEDSCOOP STAFF

It is widely accepted that modernization alone would not have saved the taxi industry from being eviscerated by the "Uber effect." But a digital transformation — that is, a rethinking of the taxi business to become more agile, flexible, innovative and customer-focused — probably could have. All it needed was somebody to envision a smartphone app and a cashless way to pay for a ride, and Uber might not have gained the foothold it has today.

This anecdote highlights the defining moment that most federal agencies now face. Although IT modernization is now the dominant buzz phrase throughout government, it is digital transformation that will keep agencies from falling further behind in meeting the public's expectations.

The two initiatives — transformation and modernization — go hand-in-hand. But since digital transformation depends on technology, modernizing the underlying technology infrastructure is key to success. It's also crucial to making government employees more productive and to attracting new talent to the federal workforce.

Delivering on modernization's promise

A comprehensive IT assessment process is critical to developing an effective roadmap for IT transformation, even if agencies can't modernize all at once. A recent study by The Enterprise Strategy Group, Inc., [How IT Transformation Drives IT Agility, Innovation and Improved Business Outcomes](), found that although 95 percent of companies were somewhere on the road to transformation, the 5 percent that had actually transformed through IT modernization had significantly outperformed the rest.

"They were two times more likely to hit their revenue goals, they delivered IT projects ahead of schedule three times more often, they delivered applications four times faster, and their IT was likely to be viewed by the board of directors as a strategic weapon as opposed to a cost burden," says Kyle Leciejewski, vice president for data storage solutions at Dell EMC.

"We surveyed 1,000 executives around the world and 50 percent didn't know exactly what their industry would look like in three years, and 45 percent thought they might become obsolete," Leciejewski says. All agreed, however, that some sort of digital transformation initiative would be critical to their success.

Rethinking piecemeal assessments

With federal IT budgets remaining essentially flat, and roughly 80 percent of that funding going toward operations and maintenance of legacy systems, new ways to fund modernization are needed. While the recent passage of the Modernizing Government

Technology Act
(MGT Act) is a step in the right direction, it is slated to provide only $250 million in seed money for agencies to modernize. That's a far cry from what is actually needed to ensure all agencies can begin a meaningful movement toward transformation.

Leciejewski, however, points to a vast number of organizations that are leveraging savings and productivity gains from IT transformation as a way to fund modernization. The challenge, he says, is how CIOs can best prepare for the quickening pace of technological change — and the uncertainty that comes with it — and the extent to which CFOs can count on improving financial results.

That's where a company like Dell Technologies, and the power of its seven operating arms — Dell, Dell EMC, Pivotal, RSA, SecureWorks, Virtustream and VMware — can help CIOs make a comprehensive strategic assessment of their IT needs and capabilities and develop a flexible modernization roadmap.

Even if agencies have limited budgets and can take only take incremental steps forward, they still stand to gain added speed, agility and savings from procuring all of Dell's best-of-breed industry offerings under a single contracting vehicle.

Moreover, working with a dedicated team that also knows how to integrate hyper-converged infrastructure, software and security layers at large-scale enterprise IT operations can be a major force-multiplier for federal agencies.

Transforming business approaches, not just IT

Ford Motor Company realized digital transformation was critical to its ability to compete with the likes of Tesla and Uber. The automotive manufacturer worked with Dell Technologies and Pivotal to bring a software-enabled environment to its vehicles in the form of "Ford Pass," a consumer experience platform that also offers mobility solutions such as parking and car sharing. The partnership with Dell Technologies was also critical to Ford's ability to develop connected car experiences on Ford's new SYNC connect.

Late last year, the U.S. Air Force made a $1 billion commitment to Dell EMC and two partner firms to help the service completely transform its IT operations, including its workforce productivity. The Air Force is trying to create a modern workplace for more than 775,000 employees. The award is the largest-ever federal cloud-based unified communications and collaboration contract.

Dell EMC is the prime on the contract, tasked with supplying servers, storage and networking to Microsoft's government cloud, which is providing Office 365 services.

As of last August, about 100,000 airmen already had such capabilities in the cloud, Air Force Space Commander Gen. John Raymond said then at an event. This contract will make it so "nobody gets the 'your mailbox is too full' anymore," he said. By modernizing IT, it lets airmen focus on their primary duties.
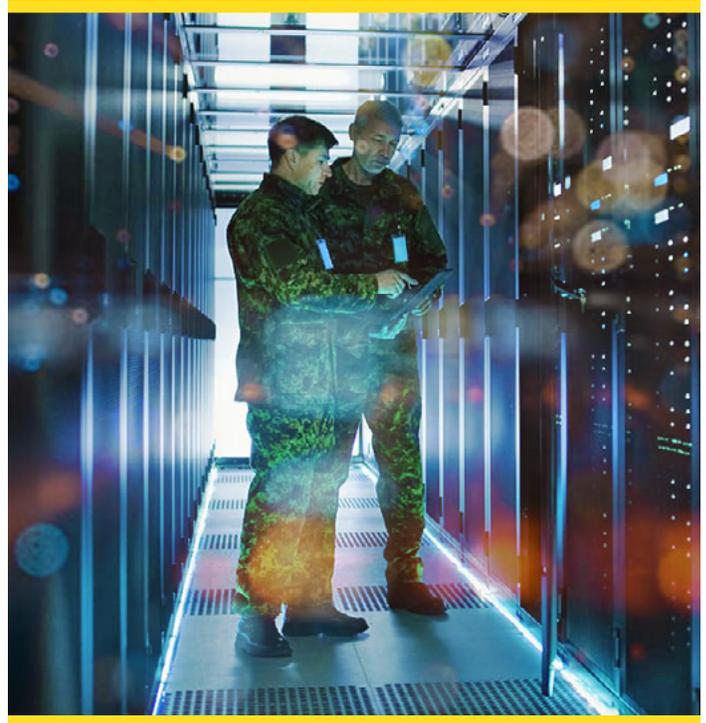
Future-proofing your technology

"You really need a portfolio to do this," Leciejewski says. "If you're a single-product company it's really hard to be relevant to a large organization like the federal government. You have to help agencies modernize across a number of elements."

Whether your goal is full IT transformation or simply to modernize key IT components, Dell Technologies has the breadth and depth of offerings to help you reach your objective, according to Leciejewski. Best-of-breed server, storage, networking, and data protection solutions, combined with transformative converged and hyper-converged offerings mean it's possible to accelerate your IT journey, regardless of your agency's size.

"Rather than buying the pieces and putting them together themselves, agencies want these offerings to come pre-packaged and pre-integrated," Leciejewski says.

But at the product level, it is also critical to have some sort of future-proofing ability. "Any product we sell falls into what we call the Future-Proof Program," says Leciejewski. "We guarantee it for three years. We also guarantee hardware investment protection, allowing customers to trade in mid-range systems for enterprise systems or enterprise for hyper-converged."

The company also guarantees packaged software, complete with all licenses and a flat maintenance

curve. An integrated, forward-leaning strategy also enables agencies to take a more holistic approach to their security posture, and establish the means to gain security visibility up and down their IT stack and out to the cloud, according to Leciejewski.

There's no denying that the cloud has taken the federal IT community by storm. But simply moving things to the cloud is not a long-term, transformative strategy.

It all starts with an assessment of workload and corresponding use cases, says Leciejewski. "What are you trying to do? You may go through your assessment and decide you need to write an entirely new app, which you can do using Pivotal and Pivotal Cloud Foundry. Or you may want to port something over to an enterprise cloud, which is something we do with Virtustream," he says. "IT has never been a whole-hog, single answer. Just like cloud isn't a single answer. It's a way to deliver IT."

For more on IT modernization and digital transformation in the federal government, visit https://www.dellemc.com/en-us/index.htm.