

# IT-as-a-Service shows promise for Department of Defense ●●

Delivering cohesive solutions to military and defense groups has always been a challenge, in particular with the slow procurement and development process typical of these groups. More recently, the as-a-service model has become increasingly popular across government applications, and with good reason, as outlined by Bob Ferrell, World Wide Technology's Vice President Federal Strategy.

**During the last year, we have seen a fundamental shift** in how federal IT leaders talk about information technology. Rather than talk about the technology itself - the hardware, software, networks and so on - they focus on the information and how it is managed, analyzed and shared.

This shift builds on growing interest in the as-a-service model in recent years, first with Software-as-a-Service, then with Platform- and Infrastructure-as-a-Service, and a growing range of similar niche services that leverage the flexibility and accessibility of the cloud.

The difference now is that agencies are beginning to think about how to put all these pieces together and move to a full IT-as-a-Service model (ITaaS). For good reason, a growing number of leaders see this as the future of federal IT.

## The ITaaS value proposition

The Anything-as-a-Service (XaaS) model has steadily gained traction because it enables agencies to buy IT services on demand, making it easier to expand or deploy services as requirements change, and reduces the time and energy they put into buying and managing the underlying technology.

However, the flexibility and savings have been limited by the limited scope of most XaaS implementations. Agencies typically have adopted XaaS in piecemeal fashion - for example, leveraging SaaS for a short list of applications, or using IaaS and PaaS services for just one division or program.

An enterprise approach to ITaaS enables an agency to create a more integrated and agile IT environment, deploying services - and reaping benefits - at enterprise scale. But, most important of all, ITaaS shields users from the technical complexity of the enterprise, allowing them to focus on improving the quality, availability and usefulness of information. Information, not the technology, delivers value.

Defense leaders have always understood this, so it is no



●● Bob Ferrell, World Wide Technology's Vice President Federal Strategy

surprise that the Department of Defense (DoD) is taking steps in this direction. The most high-profile example is the DoD's Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure (JEDI) program, which will provide a cloud-based platform for services across the department.

In providing background for the program, DoD officials noted that the lack of an agile infrastructure hurt its ability to defend the country. "The Department's lack of a coordinated enterprise-level approach to cloud infrastructure makes it virtually impossible for our warfighters and leaders to make critical data-driven decisions at 'mission-speed,'" the RFP stated.

The Air Force is also moving in this direction. In 2018, the Air Force launched experiments for its Enterprise ITaaS transformation program, which aims to outsource basic commodity IT operations to commercial providers so that the Air Force can free up service members for more specialized technology work.

The same principles apply across the federal government. When it comes to providing standard IT services, agencies need to get out of the business of building and maintaining siloed systems that lock them into a limited range of capabilities.

But outsourcing is just one option. With ITaaS, the goal is not to create a uniform approach to IT, but to integrate a wide range of commercial technologies, services and processes. That environment is likely to include a mix of public and private clouds - but all of it should be managed as cohesive whole.

In part, this is a technology integration challenge. But in part it is an organizational challenge, because it involves a different way of thinking about technology. This has always been the case with cloud, and with ITaaS it is even more so.

A full-scale move to ITaaS might not be the right choice for every agency at this point in time. But as agencies move forward with their modernization initiatives, they have an opportunity to leverage the cloud on a broader scale to achieve new levels of flexibility and scalability - and to spend less time worrying about the technology and more time driving value through better information and services.

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