How Do You Convert Remaining Cloud Skeptics?

Adoption will take time, but it'll get done.

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Despite recent years’ focus on moving federal agencies to the cloud, a relatively small number has made that transition, according to one government technologist.

“Probably if I were to guess as to how far we are with actual adoption of cloud, we’re probably like less than 10 percent across the federal space,” said Federal Communication Commission Chief Information Officer David Bray, speaking at the Agriculture Department’s Sept. 26 Combined Cloud Computing Conversation event.

Joining members of the Cloud Center of Excellence and its industry counterpart, the Cloud Computing Acquisition Forum earlier this week, Bray discussed CCoE’s draft cloud acquisition guides and contracting considerations intended to help agencies
better understand and acquire cloud. The General Services Administration stood up CCoE earlier this year to address cloud adoption barriers, and the center is now co-chaired by Chad Sheridan, the CIO of the Agriculture Department’s Risk Management Agency.

The discussion also covered continued cloud adoption pain points, best practices and ways to work with industry. While obstacles vary from budget and regulations to policy and legacy system integration, culture and leadership buy-in play a part, too. Here’s how members of CCoE and CCAF answered *how do you convert cloud skeptics?*

**Richard Blake, deputy assistant commissioner, Common Acquisition Platform Team, Office of Systems Management, General Services Administration:**

“When agencies like FCC and David's work and USDA are beginning to publicize through the press that's in this room the amount of money they're saving, the efficiency they're gaining, the better services they're offering the American public, it'll create an appetite,” Blake said. He also stressed the importance of helping those smaller agencies with smaller budgets by creating a method of shared services and contracts.

Blake also believes this is a generational change. “New people are coming up and they’ll be sitting in the seats we’re currently sitting in,” he said. “Cloud is natural — it’s organic for them.”

**David Bray, CIO, FCC:**

“I think a lot of us are going to find that our 2018 budgets are not what our 2017 budgets were,” Bray said. “And in some respect, that will trigger behavior to say, OK, so how are we going to make do with less? Innovation can be driven by resource-scarce environments.”

Bray also added that skillful CIOs and IT leaders will go to their department heads making the business case that to do more with less, the agency needs to move on from its legacy versions. It may require spending money to save money, but in the end, that will lead to stronger performance and shift the focus back to the business and mission.
“I think we need to start operating in our agency as if we truly are an enterprise, and that starts with setting up ... two to three impactful goals that we require to be more nimble and help deliver the technology to achieve the mission,” Bray said.

**Tony Cossa, director of cloud strategy and policy, Office of the CIO, USDA:**

“We need to make it easy for that transition to occur,” Cossa said. “Cloud’s been very complicated; it's a new thing on the block. It's priced differently, the architectures different, you got to trust it, it’s not secure, it’s not physically bound. I think simplifying how to use cloud and making it accessible is what we’ve been doing in the CCoE . . . and as that comes about and matures, I think it’s going to be easier for people to understand what they're buying, how to buy it and how to get access to it, and hopefully that will help change that paradigm.”

**Kimberly Pack, vice president, Wolf Den Associates LLC:**

“What David and Richard have built with the CCoE, they have created champions out there that really carry the message far and wide,” Pack said. “The outreach that we're seeing is they're out there advocating for cloud and the Cloud Center of Excellence and bringing people to this.”

CCoE’s annual kickoff was Jan. 26, and has since grown from 20 people to over 140, according to Pack. “It’s because of folks in this group that are carrying this message,” she said.

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