5 Government IT Highlights from 2018

This year, industry saw many technologies like AI and cybersecurity at work in the federal sphere and beyond.

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The year saw many advancements and insights into the technological trends and issues facing various government agencies and their partners. From cybersecurity, to health IT modernization, to AI and beyond, here are five highlights worth noting into 2019.

Private-Sector Technologies for the Fed

The federal government faces a massive backlog of processing security clearances, which wastes money and severely restricts government innovation. This backlog
costs the government, and the vendors that support the government, millions of dollars in lost productivity and overhead costs.

Meagan Metzger, founder and CEO of Dcode, discussed new and existing technologies that can do so much more to make this process more efficient and effective, such as facial recognition and natural language processing, among two other key areas.

**Cybersecurity at the DOD**

The Defense Department with its treasure trove of data is constantly blitzed by hackers and cybercriminals. But despite the sophistication and velocity of the threats, the Pentagon is more than capable of defending itself.

The migration to Windows 10 was a key part of hardening the agency's cyberdefenses. The Pentagon rapidly deployed the operating system department-wide in January, and March 31 marked the first time nearly 95 percent of DOD was on a single operating system. Essye Miller, DOD's chief information officer, discussed this migration and more toward the future of the Pentagon's cybersecurity landscape.

**More Power to the CIOs**

President Donald Trump on May 15 released an executive order that would empower agency chief information officers, granting them more authority over budgets, hiring and overseeing IT processes.

But the 2014 Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA) already made it easier for agency CIOs to buy and manage technology and IT, and also puts the onus on the CIO as the person accountable for both successful and failed IT projects.

The executive order, however, does some things FITARA doesn't, such as giving CIOs more authority when it comes to hiring and budgets and more.

**Defense Health's Cloud Strategy**

"We're in the middle or on the edge of a cloud strategy that is really going to
transform the way we deliver applications and data across the enterprise," Col. Richard Wilson, chief of DHA's Solution Delivery Division, told GovernmentCIO Media & Research. "It'll help us reshape our hosting, providing stability to the applications we have, and it'll provide an opportunity to really sort of provide or create a foundation ... to work on more deeper or more advanced technologies like AI and other areas in analytics to go from descriptive and even predictive analytics into the real prescriptive things that happen at the bed side."

Wilson gave us a snapshot of the agency's IT transformation and modernization efforts, including an overview of its Military Health System Genesis.

Look out for more videos of key individuals in 2019.

**China, the Next Tech Powerhouse?**

China is on its way to becoming the world’s tech leader, with internet, smartphone, renewable energy and computing companies changing global markets. If trade tensions increase and the U.S. further disrupts Chinese access to technology and components, China will have to choose between technological self-sufficiency and world-class innovation.

With the Commerce Department having issued a denial order in April against Zhongxing Telecommunications Equipment Corporation (ZTE), levying a $1.2 billion civil and criminal penalty for contravening U.S. sanctions against Iran and North Korea, the nation faces a fundamental problem as it has put too great a reliance on foreign demand/exports and investment. How can it overcome and what does that mean for the future's technological landscape?

**Plus: US Government Shutdown**

The latest government shutdown began Dec. 22 and remains ongoing due to a lack of legislation appropriating funds for the upcoming fiscal year. This was a result of a dispute between legislators over the amount of funding for a wall called for by President Trump on the Mexico-U.S. border.

Not all government agencies are affected by the shutdown. Three-quarters of the agencies have already been funded through 2019 and remain open, like the Department of Veterans Affairs. The 25 percent that have been affected and therefore have workers who have been furloughed or working without pay include
the departments of Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Commerce, Interior and Transportation, plus the Office of Personnel Management, Coast Guard, FEMA and the Executive Office of the President, according to Reuters.