10 Alexa Skills for CIOs

Since smart assistants are proliferating, agency CIOs should take note of these skills for everyday tasks.

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Face it: connected smart home devices are a part of everyday life now. We ask Google Home all sorts of questions, ask Amazon Alexa to play our favorite songs or place an Amazon order, allow Nest Learning Thermostat to build a temperature schedule around our own, and track fitness and health with wearable Fitbits.

Each of these smart devices can do much more than advertised, especially when connected to other smart devices and sensors, or programmed with special applications to do so. Plus, smart home assistants aren't only useful at home. They can be widely helpful in the office — even on the desk of a government agency

chief information officer.

Here are 10 easily downloadable Alexa Skills for an in-home or in-office Amazon Alexa or Echo that almost every CIO (or member in a C-suite) may find beneficial. These skills are developed by third parties using an [Alexa Skills Kit](#), so they're easily integrated and are free to enable.

Census Data

This skill provides public census data from the U.S. Census Bureau, so you can ask Alexa for quick bits of information like the population, median income or poverty rate in a certain state — without having to look up the numbers yourself. [Census Data](#)

The CyberWire Flash Briefing

Keep up with the latest breaches and cybersecurity threats with a daily briefing of cyber news. It takes just two minutes to listen. It can't hurt to be in the know. Plus, there might be some lurking potential threat that could impact your agency or industry partners about which you could be kept up to date. [CyberWire](#)

Daily Tech Headlines

This skills allows the smart home assistant to provide users with a general knowledge of the day's technology news, news on tech companies, upcoming tech products and capabilities hitting the market. [Daily Tech](#)

Mastermind

This skill is sort of the one-stop-shop for smart home assistants and productivity. You can ask it to send a text message or email, make a phone call, search for locations and places, search the web, launch Google Maps, access a calendar, send articles from a computer so Alexa can read them out loud and more. Some of these capabilities only work with Android phones, and of course, it means connecting your devices. [Mastermind](#)

OPM Status

This skill uses information published by the Office of Personnel Management to let you know if federal government offices are closed or open due to weather or over events, without getting out of bed or checking email. You can even ask about the government status on a previous date. [OPM Status](#)

Make Me Smart

CIOs are already smart, of course, but we can all use a daily dose of economy, pop culture, tech and current event news to stay on top of the continuous information cycle. Marketplace hosts Kai Ryssdal and Molly Wood provide these bits of info, pulling from experts and academics, and discuss why they matter. All you have to do is ask Alexa to "make me smart." [Make Me Smart](#)

Notepad

Also pretty self-explanatory; this skill lets CIOs tell Alexa the notes they forget to write down or need to remember for a later meeting. Plus, Alexa will store the note and can read it aloud at a later date. After the note is read, Alexa will automatically delete the note for security. [Notepad](#)

Vote Watch

When tracking an IT-related bill or anything else going through Congress, the Vote Watch skill lets you ask what happened in Congress today, track how specific senators and congressional representatives voted, and ask if a certain bill passed or failed the vote. The skill uses the ProPublica Congressional application program interface and could come in handy when the day is too busy to keep up with the votes. [Vote Watch](#)

Isitdown

Human-centered design and user-testing techniques are allowing government agencies to revamp outdated sites and services. Check if your newly designed .gov

website or citizen-facing services are down with this skill. It's simple, easy to use and can provide some piece of mind to the CIO overseeing the launch of a new .gov design. [Isitdown](#)

USA Spending

This skill lets you ask how much a department, and state or federal government spent as a whole on a certain day. This could come in handy during budget season, when deciding how much to allocate to IT spending, or to look back on a certain day, month or year of an agency's spending. The skill gets its data from USAspending.gov and is refreshed monthly. [USA Spending](#)

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