

Public Service Clouds – The Way of the Future

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Currently we are looking for ways to do more with less and to renew and motivate the Public Service. What if accepting the challenge meant bringing the Federal Public Service into the Clouds?

In a nutshell the Fed Cloud means:

- ❖ **Shared Resources:** A central bank of employees is created, listing everyone's interests and skills. Every manager can access the pool and bring in resources when needed.
- ❖ **Cost Effective:** In the Cloud, human resources management is centralized, reducing any redundancy and saving costs.
- ❖ **Dynamically Scalable:** Flexibility is much greater in the Fed Cloud. Instead of hiring new staff, resources can be easily shifted from low-need to high-need projects.

Source: Deloitte. 2011. Fed Cloud: The future of federal work. A GovLab idea.

What do we mean by that? Cloud computing is a way to increase capacity or add capabilities without injecting new money or hiring new personnel. Hardware is shared and centralized, reducing redundancy and increasing flexibility. The Cloud is accessible in real time over the Internet by everyone. What happens if we apply this concept to human resources?

The following puts the reader in the life of a future public servant living in the Fed Cloud, as described in the Deloitte GovLab paper [Fed Cloud: The Future of Federal Work](#)

High in the Sky

I never thought I would go so high, but here I am, floating among the clouds, or rather the "Fed Cloud". A few years ago, the federal government cloud experiment started small. First, central agencies allowed some time for volunteers to work on projects that interested them, but that had nothing to do with their current responsibilities. Then, a platform where project managers could post their needs helped with the coordination. At last, a tiny, prudent pilot project took shape and a few pioneers were uprooted from their departments to join the Cloud.

In retrospect, a few other actions could have been taken to ease the transition; having easy-to-access workspaces for interdepartmental collaboration, encouraging the rotation of staff, and better preparing candidates to join the

Cloud would have reduced some of the challenges in the early days.

Today, pretty much everything runs smoothly and rare are those who still deny the benefits of the Cloud. Of course, there are still some outstanding issues such as the challenge of building an up-to-date and complete bank of every employee within the Cloud, including the list of their skills and interests. There is also the tricky question of how the projects are accepted. Being inclusive and transparent to every citizen in the country, whether they are acting alone or representing a private, public or non-governmental organization, the amount of project received is considerable. Debates are still ongoing about what projects should get prioritized and which ones should be turned down. Another challenging aspect of the Cloud is the funding system. It's easier now that

Parliament granted us our own budget, so we can pay the Cloud workers ourselves. However, the money needed for projects can either come from the Cloud's budget or from the participating agencies.

Right now, it mostly comes from the agencies that set the parameters of the project, but as the Cloud grows, the Cloud's budget will certainly increase.

As a Cloud project manager, my job may look simple, but it involves a great deal of finesse. Yesterday, comfortably sitting on my sunny patio, I chose a project from the central pool on which I want to work for the next two months. The fun part about the Cloud is that I have complete autonomy on how to conduct the project. What is important is that I achieve the desired results. Of course, I will have to show results to the core team who manages the Cloud, but apart from performance reviews, I am largely free on how I wish to proceed. Usually, I also give a lot of autonomy to my teammates on the way they accomplish their tasks. I recently found out that people can do surprising things if you provide clear parameters and trust them.

I usually choose projects that feel new to me for two reasons. First, I like to develop new skills and learn new things. Although not a hard fact, I believe there is some truth to the saying that my generation – the Millennials – like change and pursue variety. The Cloud system is perfect for us in the way it enables us to build our own career path and never stop learning. There is also the experience points system (XP). If I kept managing the same kind of projects over and over, it would make it harder to gain skill levels. The days of the ladder are gone, the lattice is

now the new paradigm and to “move up” (move around would be more accurate), you need to diversify your skills and knowledge.

My first task today will be assessing what kind of skills I will be looking for during the team building phase. For this specific project, I believe I will need two macro-economists, a generalist with a good analytical mind, someone with vast knowledge in health, a strong and creative writer, a graphic designer

and since we will probably need to include external partners, a collaboration specialist would be useful. Since we will probably need the writer only at a more advanced stage, we may pull him in later and use him only two-days a week during the last month. As for the health specialist, I was thinking I could talk to Roger, my “retired” health

encyclopedia, who just told me he would still be interested in participating on a one-day-a-week basis if I stumbled upon an interesting project. This may be it.

By the end of the day, I will post all the roles and skills that we will need on the collaboration platform. I may also access the central pool and make some phone calls if I find any good matches. My last project took a while to put a team together: it wasn't a big priority and the Cloud is designed to shift resources from low-need to high-need projects. The good news is, now that I have obtained an advanced skill level in project coordination, I can choose high priority files (as is this one) so it will prove easier picking the right people.

I can't help wondering where this project would have ended up in the traditional system. If it had been undertaken by a department with a single mandate, would researchers have given



the same importance to the strong linkages among the health, environmental and industrial aspects of the issue? In the complex world we now live in, it just makes sense to have teams

with wide expertise and skills temporarily assigned to dealing with the big issues and then moving on to another project once their task is completed.

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