

Public CIO's Founding Editor Reflects on the Magazine's History

Tod Newcombe | December 31, 2016

Our moment of opportunity came in the summer of 2002. Campaigns for 36 gubernatorial races were underway. The economy was on everybody's mind, in the wake of the dot-com bust just two years earlier that left a landscape littered with bankrupt technology companies and lingering questions about the future of the Internet. We realized that a large number of state CIO positions would be vacant and rookie governors were about to begin new agendas at a time when public-sector IT needed guidance and good ideas.

Given all that uncertainty, e.Republic CEO Dennis McKenna decided to launch a new publication that would focus on IT leadership across the public-sector spectrum. We called it simply *Public CIO* and made quality a top priority, from design, photography and paper stock to writing and editing. (The emphasis on quality paid off when *Public CIO* was named Magazine of the Year in 2007 by the American Society of Business Publication Editors.)

While the situation at the state level appeared most in need of coverage, we decided the magazine should appeal to CIOs at all levels of government, as well as to the people and firms that developed the technology used by the feds, states and localities. McKenna wanted the coverage to be relevant, informed and intelligent, so we reached out to some of the best minds to help explain the complexities of government IT leadership to our readers.

Early contributors reflected that mission. David Osborne, William Eggers, Nicholas Carr, Robert Atkinson, Darrell West and Jerry Mechling were just a few of the heavy-hitting experts who wrote for *Public CIO*. Along with investigative pieces by staff writers and astute commentaries by Paul Taylor and senior fellows from the Center for Digital Government, *Public CIO* quickly grabbed the attention of the government IT community. The country's first federal CIO, Mark Forman, appeared on our inaugural cover in 2003. Eventually we wrote about all of the federal CIOs, including Karen Evans and Vivek Kundra.

Other notables included New York City CIO Gino Menchini, who had the task of turning Mayor Michael Bloomberg's idea of a hotline for city residents into the country's largest 311 service, and Ian Watmore, who was the United Kingdom's first CIO. Not all our profiles involved government IT chiefs. We had an exclusive interview with Steve Ballmer, CEO of Microsoft at the time, and another with Virginia Gov. Mark Warner, now a U.S. senator, who explained why IT was an integral part of his policymaking.

Just as important as the people we profiled were the ideas, trends and issues we covered in many articles. Government IT is a tricky business and CIOs need to know

what works, what doesn't, who's doing it and how. *Public CIO* helped fill those gaps, highlighting a broad spectrum of insights from experts along with new strategies for getting the job done.

But just as technology has changed drastically since the first issue of *Public CIO* rolled off the presses 13 years ago, so too has the world of media. What worked then doesn't necessarily work now. This will be the last issue of *Public CIO*, but the ideas, words and people who care about CIO leadership will continue to appear online at [Govtech.com](http://www.govtech.com) and in [Government Technology](#). We seized the moment at the right time and held on as long as we could. Now it's time to let go. "

<http://www.govtech.com/opinion/Public-CIOs-Founding-Editor-Reflects-on-the-Magazines-History.html>