Federal CIO Unveils Mobile Road Map

Chad Vander Veen | January 11, 2012

LAS VEGAS — U.S. Federal CIO Steven VanRoekel announced the launch of a mobile road map for the federal government Wednesday, Jan. 11, at the Consumer Electronics Show.

"We have a real opportunity to bring to bear mobile technology in federal government that changes the paradigm, VanRoekel said. The mobile strategy is a multipronged approach that is aimed at driving efficiency across the federal government, enhancing citizen-government interactions, and untethering federal employees from their desks.

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To help agencies do that, the GSA officially established the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP) in December 2011. FedRAMP is designed to provide agencies "a standardized approach to security assessment, authorization, and continuous monitoring for cloud products and services."

As part of the road map, VanRoekel also announced a new crowdsourcing platform called the National Dialogue on the Federal Mobility Strategy. The site asks citizens to submit their ideas that could contribute to the Federal Mobility Strategy, which VanRoekel said will be ever-evolving. The best ideas, as voted by users, are moved to the top of the list.

Much of what VanRoekel wants to accomplish will be built around making the federal government more efficient. One way to do this is to give federal employees the right tools and, as the National Dialogue on the Federal Mobility Strategy website notes, "by liberating them from ineffective 20th-century work practices." Bring your own device (BYOD), VanRoekel said, is one strategy being considered. That comment drew praise from U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly, D-Va., who was with VanRoekel as he spoke to the press.

"One of the things we're trying to promote is telework," said Connolly, who is backing telework legislation. "If you don't have this kind of provision it's very difficult to achieve what we want. This is going to help facilitate a lot of other goals. It also helps recruitment and retention. I applaud what Steve has done."

Other elements of VanRoekel's road map include improving the way the federal government makes data available to citizens and app development. "We have the opportunity to be the platform to provide government data. If we deliver that data in new ways that allow people to get access, it could be incredible what they do." VanRoekel said there will also soon be a federal "app store" that will take care to be device-agnostic.

The goal of this effort is to transform how the federal government operates at a fundamental level. "We need to do things in a more lean, startup kind of way. We can't do what the government has done in the past," VanRoekel said.

While the roadmap's lofty goals all sound noble, VanRoekel didn't shy from the fact that it's also about cutting costs. "We won't do things unless we're saving money doing them," he said.

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