

The U.S. Digital Service – “Hey, Mikey!”

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Walking the halls of the West Wing in a rumpled casual button-up shirt, Mikey Dickerson’s mission as the Administrator for the new U.S. Digital Service is “to improve and simplify the digital experience that people and businesses have with their government.”

Mikey’s name immediately brought back memories for me of Life Cereal’s Mikey commercials in the early 1970s. The line “He likes it! Hey Mikey!” came to mind. And in the same way Life was bringing to market a new cereal that was good for you, the federal government is trying to break down barriers to ignite innovation.

Mikey is different from the typical Washington government leader, from his casual attire to his unassuming name. What he brings to the table is experience, knowledge, speed and out-of-the-box thinking. He’s not weighed down by bureaucratic work experience. He comes from a more nibble environment which the White House hopes to bestow across government.

Mikey’s first foray into government was last year as part of the Healthcare.gov rescue team. The aim of the U.S. Digital Service is to build on the success of that effort by bringing a small team of America’s best digital experts together to collaborate with other government agencies and make websites more consumer friendly, identify and fix problems, and help upgrade the government’s technology infrastructure.

The White House press release announcing the establishment of the U.S. Digital Service states that it will accomplish its mission by:

- Establishing standards to bring the government’s digital services in line with the best private sector services
- Identifying common technology patterns that will help us scale services effectively
- Collaborating with agencies to identify and address gaps in their capacity to design, develop, deploy and operate excellent citizen-facing services
- Providing accountability to ensure agencies see results

During a testimony in May, federal CIO Steve VanRoekel called the idea of a U.S. Digital Service a “centralized, world-class capability...made up of our country’s brightest digital talent.” This team will be “charged with

removing barriers to exceptional government service delivery and remaking the digital experiences that citizens and businesses have with their government.”

To get to know Mikey better, click [here](#) to watch the White House’s video “Day One: Mikey Dickerson, U.S. Digital Service Administrator.” I find his demeanor and persona refreshing. He states in his video that a lot of people want to know if he’s wearing a suit every day. It’s their way of asking, “is this the same old business as usual or are they (the government) actually going to listen.” His philosophy, as well as that of much of Silicon Valley, is that innovation doesn’t happen in a suit.