Agencies Continue to Trudge Toward Data Center Consolidation and Strive for Mobility

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As part of agencies' ongoing efforts to reduce costs and gain efficiencies, they are continuing to pursue data center consolidation and optimization. At the same time, they are implementing mobile applications and environments for the convenience of constituents and employees.

Deltek's new ***Federal Update: Cloud, Data Center, Big Data and Mobility, 2014-2019*** report delves into the status of federal data center consolidation and mobility efforts, as well as cloud computing and big data.

The evolution of FDDCI resulted in a shift in focus from consolidation to optimization of core data centers, which helps agencies focus resources on investments and strategies with the highest return. However, measuring success and ROI is complex and challenging, and has resulted in mixed information regarding progress.

The number of identified data centers continues to grow and change with the shifting definition of a data center. At the start of the Federal Data Center Consolidation Initiative (FDCCI) in 2010, agencies identified approximately 2,000 data centers, but over time, with more detailed inventorying efforts and a change in the size of what is considered a data center, agencies have now found over 9,600 data centers. 242 of these data centers are considered core data centers. Agencies plan to close an additional 3,127 of non-core data centers.

A September GAO report highlighted agency cost savings and avoidance due to data center consolidation. 19 out of the 24 agencies participating in the FDCCI reported achieving an estimated $1.1 billion in cost savings and avoidances between FY 2011 and FY 2013. 21 agencies collectively reported planned savings of $2.1 billion in cost savings and avoidance by the end of FY 2015 for a total of $3.3 billion by FY 2015, $300 million above OMB's original $3 billion goal. Between FY 2011 and FY 2017, agencies plan to have achieved total cost savings or avoidance of $5.3 billion.

But signals are mixed regarding progress. GAO stated that agency savings and avoidance calculations were not consistent among agencies. Additionally, some agencies experience difficulties determining or uncovering baseline spending. A Meritalk survey of federal IT managers showed that 52% of respondents rated their agency's FDCCI efforts at a "C" or below, while only 6% gave their agency an "A." 72% said that the number of data centers in their agency had stayed the same or increased since the FDCCI launched in 2010.

Mobility programs in the federal government continue to advance, driven by cloud platforms and Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI), although securing mobile devices and data remain areas of focus. Continued expansion in the use of mobile communications and computing solutions is expected to rely on accelerating network modernization and optimization, including the use of Internet Protocol and cloud-based technologies.

The purpose of the Federal Mobility Strategy is to accelerate the federal government's adoption of mobile technologies to improve delivery of government information and services, engage citizens more fully, reduce the costs of government operations, and increase federal workforce productivity. Much of federal agencies' mobile computing direction is driven by the Federal Digital Strategy, released in May 2012. Its goal was to move agencies to an enterprise-wide model for procurement of mobile devices and services. The strategy outlined objectives aimed at taking a baseline of current mobile assets and usage, followed by the consolidation and streamlining of purchasing, invoicing, and asset management.

Top trends in federal mobile computing include resolving security issues, expanding mobile applications, and leveraging enterprise-wide contracts. Security concerns run the gamut from employee mobile device security training, to authentication, encryption and application vetting and management. Application rationalization and the need for more self-serve citizen services are driving agencies to expand the roster of applications made available via mobile devices. The flexibility of carrier reach, pooling, bundling, etc. has driven demand for enterprise-wide contracts, while driving costs efficiencies.

Contractors targeting data center consolidation should focus on optimization, look to existing customers for opportunities, and take advantage of the variety of contract vehicles at your exposure to fulfill requirements. Contractors looking to address the mobility market should work with agency customers to assess infrastructure readiness for mobile computing,

promote key security features of their offering, and develop mobile applications that are specifically designed for federal government challenges.