

The Future of Work: How emerging technology and innovation are shaping the work, workforce, and workplace for Federal organizations

Background

As government leaders begin to reassess service delivery models and organizational success, the combination of enabling technologies and shared services has quickly become a key component of service delivery and operating model. As part of the ongoing SSLC/SEA/NAPA series on enhancing the government's understanding and execution of shared services as mission-enhancing value drivers, Deloitte Consulting LLP (Deloitte), hosted a panel and in-depth breakout sessions on August 9th, 2018, to explore major trends in the future of work and emerging technologies as they relate to shared services. The session featured a keynote address from William Eggers, Director, Center for Government Insights (Deloitte), followed by a distinguished panel that included Jeff Pon, Director, Office of Personnel Management (OPM); Glenn Davidson, Executive Director, Enterprise Services, Department of Commerce (DOC); and Dave Lebryk, Fiscal Assistant Secretary, US Department of Treasury (Treasury).

The Evolution of Work

Federal organizations are changing the way they work. Through adoption of digital workforce capabilities, process robotics, cognitive technologies, crowdsourcing solutions, and other emerging technologies, the nature of how government work is executed is changing.

By including more innovation into their workstreams, government organizations will become more impactful and productive, increase decision-making capabilities, and better support the overall well-being of their employees. This will have a profound impact on how Federal Organizations execute their mission and how Shared Services Organizations meet customer needs.

Across the Federal government, disruptive innovations are making way for new workstreams to emerge and for existing ones to evolve. These disruptors have the potential to change the way work will be done in the future. Many of these include:

- Ubiquity of technology
- Immense amounts of data
- AI, cognitive computing, and robotics
- Potential automation of jobs
- Diversity/generational change
- Longer careers
- Increased adoption of contingent work

These disruptors are already reshaping the way government and industry perform work, the workforce doing the work, and the workplace where work takes place. The Federal landscape is beginning to address these changes, and will need to stay abreast of emerging technologies, understand their impact, and adapt their delivery and operating models. These innovations will continue to influence the way in which shared services organizations operate and serve the government, both internally and externally.

William Eggers' keynote presentation showed how many labor-intensive, repetitive tasks are highly amenable to automation. Automating certain tasks could save billions of dollars and free up millions of hours across the federal workforce. This does not simply mean removing these jobs from the labor force, but to reimagine the workforce, by: (1) matching workers to work; (2) creating networks of teams; and (3) crowdsourcing tasks. Sample scenarios were given around each of these areas during the presentation. Eggers also highlighted research that quantified the immense return on investment, from both a time and financial savings perspective that the Federal Government could achieve by leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) to transform the nature of work.

The Future of Work in the Federal Government

The panelists discussed how their organizations are preparing for the future of work, detailing current initiatives to transform the work, workforce, and/or workplace to embrace emerging technologies and other major workplace trends. Each panelist shared their perspective on the potential these initiatives have to change work for the better and lessons learned from previous initiatives.

Director Pon laid out his vision for how federal career paths can be revitalized to provide employees more flexibility throughout their career and to increase knowledge sharing between industry partners and federal agencies. He also spoke to some broader workforce challenges and skill gaps that have been created by disruptive technologies.

Glenn Davidson shared insights on how Enterprise Services has been able to successfully use cloud-based technologies to deploy a wide-variety of shared services across the various bureaus within the Department of Commerce. He discussed the importance of evaluating "as-a-service" delivery models to scale operations.

Dave Lebryk spoke to the vast quantity of financial transactions that Treasury completes every year and how his organization is conducting feasibility studies to determine which transactions could be automated using process robotics and other capabilities.

Figure 1, below, provides a visual summary of the seminar and panel discussion.

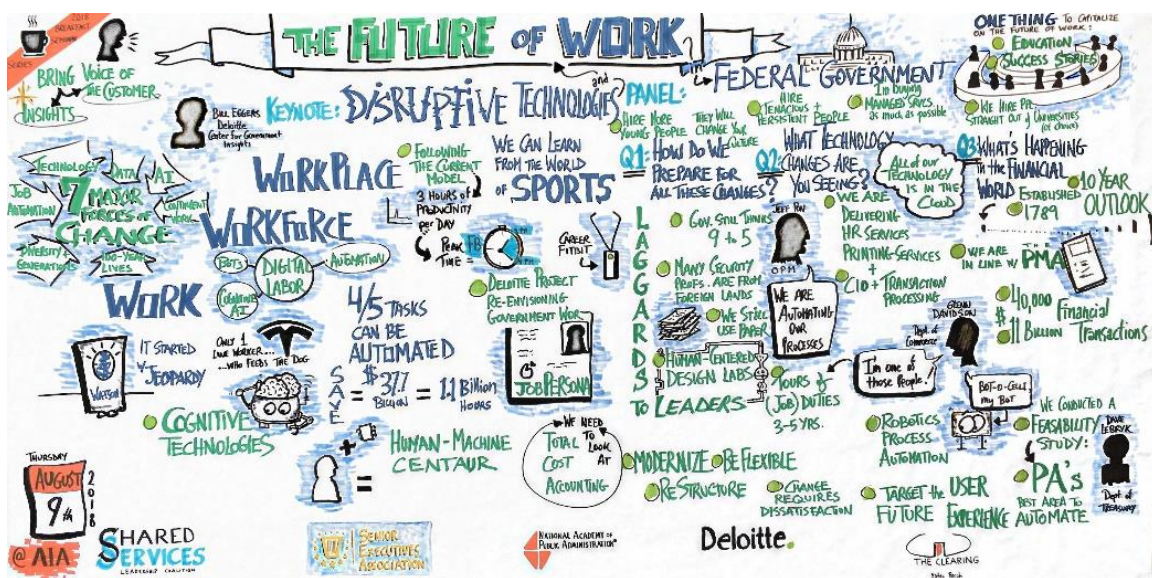


Figure 1 – Graphic facilitation summarizing the FOW seminar

Considerations

Future of Work Impact on Shared Services

As Federal shared services organizations continue to mature, there are increasing opportunities to evaluate the potential of emerging technologies to complete required tasks more efficiently and effectively. Emerging technologies may be used to automate certain tasks. The path towards automation comes in many different forms of technology from rule-based automation, robotics, and cognitive and AI-based technology solutions. Many organizations continue to perform processes because that is how they have always been done, which leads to outdated, redundant, and duplicative processes. Automation can reduce this type of redundancy and duplication, which will lead to freed up labor hours for more complex tasks, enabling workers to be more productive and effective.

Future of work (FOW) technologies are also reshaping the workforce. Bots (think of an application, not physical robots) are becoming a part of the workforce, in conjunction with people. This will enable the government workforce to focus on more complex and analytical tasks. As the government is pushing for the adoption and implementation of shared services, greater consideration of these technologies will help increase efficiency, productivity and build employee morale.

In recent years, several automation technologies have gained traction in the shared services market. Natural language processing, rule-based process robotics, and machine learning are all helping redefine and reshape processes across shared services in finance, IT, HR, and other functions.

Conclusion

Shared Services continues to be a pressing item on the Federal agenda. The FOW is only going to continue to change as new technologies are developed, explored, and adopted. The presentation shared during this session provided insights to support organizations interested in the FOW will be performed and the associated technology trends. As one attendee remarked, "the Future of Work is bright;" however, that does not mean it will be without challenges. Adoption of FOW principles may be met with skepticism and even fear that technology solutions will replace jobs or not function as planned. However, these trends and innovations represent great opportunities to improve the work, workplace, and workforce experiences of the future for the private sector, government, employee, and customers. As your organization embarks on a new transformation effort, each experience is different and will be different. Understanding the technologies around the FOW, will be key to your success.