



Making the most of industry innovations

The latest commercial capabilities can help agencies modernize and secure their operations

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT has a large budget to spend on innovation, but it does have limits.

In particular, the budget isn't big enough for the government to out-innovate the rest of the world. Fortunately, it doesn't need to.

The combined research and development budget of U.S. companies dwarfs the government's R&D budget. This investment creates a pipeline of innovation solutions that are often of use to the government. The key is for agencies to recognize that companies have innovative capabilities the government can readily and effectively leverage.

But don't take industry's word on this: Make companies prove it. When vendor representatives visit your agency touting their newest capability, give them a problem to solve so they can demonstrate their product's value. In addition, many companies have some form of innovation lab where they work with customers to use their products to solve mission problems, which is the best way to prove that the capabilities will provide value to you.

For instance, with the help of their industry partners, agencies can realize enormous benefits by incorporating

artificial intelligence into a secure cloud environment. The cloud provides mission flexibility and the ability to rapidly respond to new challenges, and AI helps agencies leverage the full value of their data and make better decisions in less time. And all that will happen at a significantly lower cost.

How to incorporate AI into your cloud

Based on our commercial and national security experience, there's a three step-process for incorporating AI into secure cloud strategies. The first step involves getting the agency's data in order. Nothing will expose weaknesses in data faster than AI. Problems arise when agencies jump in without giving any thought to the condition of their current data. When data is in decent shape, though, it's fairly easy to get value from AI.

The second step for agencies is focusing on the results they want to achieve rather than on the technologies used to get those results. Secure clouds have many capabilities in addition to AI, such as statistical modeling, advanced analytics, graph analytics, spatial modeling, user interaction tools, data curation tools and more. Agencies should use the right capabilities for their requirements and avoid adopting AI for AI's sake.

The third step is emphasizing iterative successes. This approach is crucial for encouraging user adoption of the agency's AI solutions. Rather than ask users to take a huge leap of faith on a finished product, agencies should roll out incremental AI-enabled cloud capabilities and demonstrate



Kyle Rice

CTO, SAP National Security Services





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their reliability. Then employees will be more willing to buy into the new technology.

The role of talented employees

A skilled workforce is a key component of any agency’s success. The sheer size of the government workforce is a distinct advantage because there are millions of people who understand the various aspects

of the government mission. Agencies should build on that by making sure their employees have the technical skills necessary to evaluate, integrate and manage the innovative commercial capabilities that will propel agencies forward.

One example is our NS2 Serves program, which trains military veterans and places them in technical positions with the help of our partners. Through that combined

effort, we’ve trained and placed more than 300 veterans. It is life-changing for them and a tremendous asset for the agencies that hire them. That mix of mission experience and technical training is a potent combination. ■

Kyle Rice is CTO at SAP National Security Services, where he leads NS2 Labs (www.ns2labs.com).

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