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GOVERNMENT
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
& ENGAGEMENT SUMMIT

A large graphic of a human head profile, facing left, filled with various puzzle pieces. The puzzle pieces are in shades of blue, purple, and pink. The head is set against a background of a large, stylized house shape. The text 'CX and Modernization Must Work Together' is overlaid on the right side of the head.

CX and Modernization Must Work Together

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Customer experience and IT modernization should be woven together from the ground up to maximize efforts to effectively meet federal directives for both, according to a private sector expert.

Users, said Barretta coining a phrase from Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, “are divinely discontent” with the services they have and are always looking for more.

Even though federal agencies are getting better at bringing customer experience (CX) platforms into data platforms, cloud computing and other areas, the effort requires longer term changes in how they see both, according to Mike Barretta, senior manager of solutions architecture at Elastic, which provides enterprise CX platform technology to government agencies. Barretta spoke on a CX/IT modernization panel at the recent Customer Experience and Engagement Summit.

At Elastic, Barretta works with technology teams at agencies that deal with internal- and external-facing systems that serve different audiences, so he’s seen agency efforts to modernize IT and introduce more effective CX up close.

Ease of Use and Speed Valuable for Agencies

As agencies move to fulfill federal directives to bolster CX, they are also thinking about how to modernize IT overall. That is not an easy job, given the experiences federal employees, as well as the public, have come to expect from commercial service interfaces like those provided by companies such as Amazon and others.



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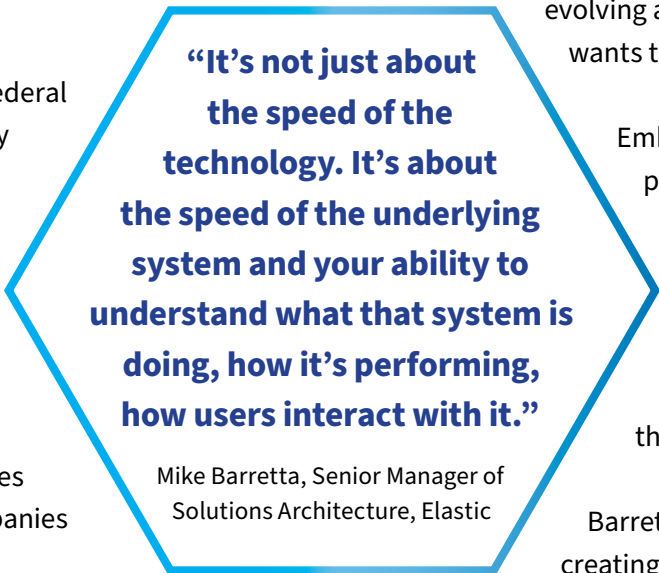
Mike Barretta, Senior Manager of Solutions Architecture, Elastic

“What was a ‘wow’ yesterday is expected today,” he said. “Industry is focused on the customer and getting the government on board is a challenge.”

“If people interface with systems, if the systems are slow, users get upset. It’s not just about the speed of the technology. It’s about the speed of the underlying system and your ability to understand what that system is doing, how it’s performing, and how users interact with it,” he added.

Get Users in From the Beginning

Getting users involved early in IT modernization plans can help accelerate CX capabilities, he said. “It’s not developing something in a closet, then throwing it over the wall to users. It’s evolving a solution that everybody wants to use.”



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Embedding users in the process is a productive path to follow in marrying IT modernization and CX development, according to Barretta. “You can grow something together that meets their needs.”

Barretta also warned of creating “solutions silos,” which

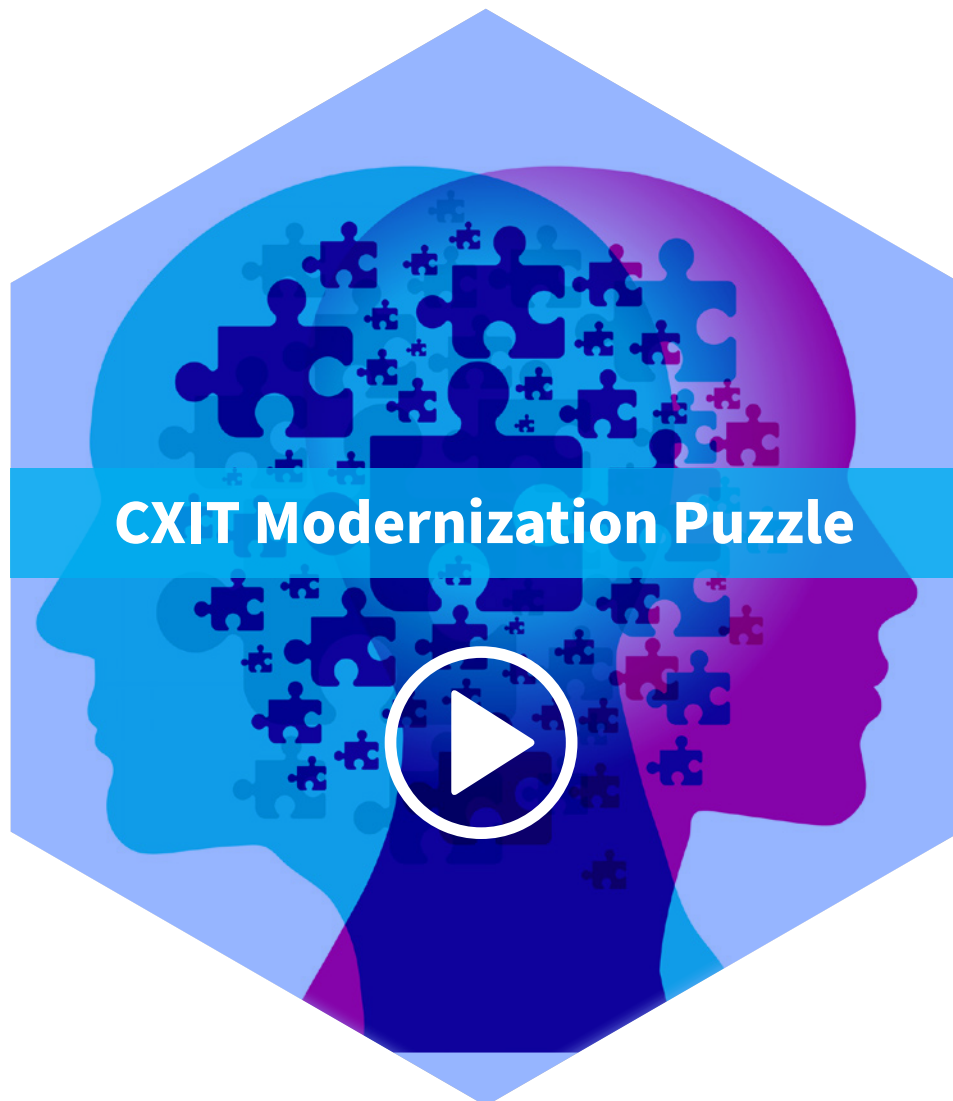
are solutions that can make it hard for users to interact every day in ways that weren't completely anticipated ahead of time.

Elastic has a user experience (UX) team of designers whose job it is to understand how people use things and then to adapt those natural human patterns into software. There is less focus on pure design in government systems in general, he said.

However, translating good design into reality, such as giving software developers the tools and

freedom they need to incorporate good design into applications and systems, are important for integrating CX into technology from its inception, he said. Every new feature that is put on Elastic systems goes through the design team and conceptualization before it is incorporated, according to Barretta.

“That is what we need more broadly within government IT,” he said.



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