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CLOUD FIRST CONSUMER GUIDE CUTS THROUGH VAPORWARE IN FEDERAL CLOUD ADOPTION

15 Federal Government Cloud Leaders Provide Straight Talk on Cloud Experience

Alexandria, Va., January 28, 2014 – MeriTalk, a public-private partnership focused on improving the outcomes of government IT, today announced the results of its in-depth study on the adoption of cloud computing in Federal agencies, the "Cloud First Consumer Guide." The study, underwritten by Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Google, captures detailed insight from 15 Federal IT leaders responsible for early cloud success stories. Their experiences – told in their own words – cut a path forward for Federal cloud computing and provide the first-ever rankings for cloud programs and approaches.

The timing for broad cloud adoption within Federal agencies could not be better, with Sequestration squeezing $85 billion from budgets in fiscal year 2013 (FY13). Though the Bipartisan Budget Act will ease some pressure during FY14 and FY15, agencies are now cutting into mission muscle. With funding tight, cloud is paying off with big savings. For example, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) saved $11.5M in one-time replacement costs[i] and the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board saved $854,800 in two years.

"Cloud computing certainly offers agencies both significant cost savings and a more predictable cost model," said Steve O'Keeffe, founder of MeriTalk. "And agencies that have adopted the cloud are also becoming more efficient in the way they accomplish their mission, empowering employees with the ability to access information anywhere, and to share easily with those who need it."

Federal cloud leaders agree. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) harnessed cloud-based disaster recovery to geographically expand its resilience without paying for (and

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managing) its own infrastructure. Several agencies noted that they benefit from cloud's flexible "pay-as-you-go" model, scaling service up or down based upon regular versus peak demand.

Though the early adopters are reaping sizable budget and operational benefits, they experienced a number of challenges in executing and finalizing their migrations to cloud. These challenges were not significantly greater than the hurdles inherent to any large IT program. The lessons learned from these pioneer projects will speed cloud adoption for other agencies making the leap. The takeaways from Federal cloud experiences to date include:

> **Define Your Objectives:** Beyond just compliance with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) mandates, agencies need to specifically outline their objectives for moving to the cloud in clear, specific, and measurable terms

> **Do the Math:** Moving to the cloud needs to make sense in hard, measurable terms including quality of service, mission enablement, cost savings, and operational efficiency

> **Reality Check:** Once you have a technical and business case, aggressively review it. Is it too optimistic? Does it incorporate all of the potential risks? Where are the most likely problems? Most importantly, temper the expectations with your experience

> **Manage the Procurers:** Given the technical and management challenges associated with cloud solutions, Federal IT professionals need to manage the procurement process and the procurers more explicitly

> **Expect Challenges:** Don't expect your cloud implementation, no matter how basic, to be fire-and-forget

"Cloud is not a concept, it's an operational reality in Federal agencies," O'Keeffe continued. "The establishment of the new Federal Cloud Computing Caucus underlines lawmakers' interest. In this study, Feds provide real feedback on what's working – and what's not. It's time to get the straight skinny on cloud so Uncle Sam can get more value from his $80 billion IT spend."

Beyond these lessons learned, the "Cloud First Consumer Guide" includes government rankings of cloud approaches and vendors based upon the interviews. To download the full report and the rankings, please visit http://www.meritalk.com/CFCG.

About MeriTalk

The voice of tomorrow's government today, MeriTalk is an online community and go-to resource for government IT. Focusing on government's hot-button issues, MeriTalk hosts [Big Data Exchange](#), [Data Center Exchange](#), [Cyber Security Exchange](#), and [Cloud Exchange](#) – platforms dedicated to supporting public-private dialogue and collaboration. MeriTalk connects with an audience of 85,000 government community contacts. For more information, visit www.meritalk.com or follow us on Twitter, @meritalk.

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[i] http://www.cio.noaa.gov/about_cio.html