

The IT Professionals' e-Bulletin

Issue 2 - November 2005

'I strongly encourage anyone working as an IT Professional in the public sector to register with the Government IT Profession. Let's work together to build better careers and skills in Government IT.'

Jim Murphy
Cabinet Office Minister

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IT Profession team takes to the road: 11th October F&CO Roadshow at Hanslope Park

Selby Weeks has recently started a new role in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office providing support for the IT Strategy Unit. Selby works primarily in the Project Management Office (PMO) which involves working closely with Hewlett Packard. He writes:

I use IT every day and wanted to have a clearer idea of 'What an IT professional is?' When I heard about this roadshow I wanted to see how it was going to encourage IT professionals and provide them with the recognition many believe is required.

Katie Davis, the Director of Government IT Profession, gave a presentation on an attention-grabbing concept of a Government IT Profession. Katie explained how we would use a competency framework to share best practice and experience across government.

A DVD created by Ian Watmore, CIO for Government, demonstrated that the Prime Minister and many other government officials promote this concept.



Hanslope Park was where Dr Alan Turing (widely believed to be the true inventor of the stored programme computer) developed his ideas between 1944 and 1946.

This was followed by three group sessions, in which each group was given a different question to tackle. This gave many of us who are IT sceptics, the chance to air our views.

In my opinion this roadshow was aimed at established IT professionals within government but it gave opportunities for those of us who have just entered the civil service to see what will be available. I was encouraged to see there was an emphasis on the need to improve the levels of professional IT skills across government.

Eve Spick from FCO Services was nominated to provide feedback from one of the workshops and her feelings towards this roadshow were:

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CTO Council

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IT Professionals: Eve Spick and Selby Weeks

'Sharing knowledge and skills across government departments has been patchy to say the least, though most colleagues would agree that the benefits were obvious long ago. So, the Government IT Profession is getting its act together to change this. I would encourage everyone to become aware of this endeavour - it doesn't take long and there are individual benefits to be gained alongside the corporate ones'.

Overall I think that this roadshow was well constructed and believe it will be of benefit to public sector IT staff. I hope that these roadshows will continue across government and that the necessary interaction from IT professionals strengthens. Personally it has opened my eyes to other areas of government and if this provides possible secondment to other departments this can only be a positive step for my future career.

Setting up the CTO Council

If we have a CIO council, just what is the role for a Chief Technical Officer Council? John Wailing, Director of Technical Policy for the e-Government Unit reveals all...

The formation of a CTO Council aims to support the IT business transformation of government to deliver better services.

Or put more simply: 'Keep things simple – only do what is necessary as it minimises risk. Do not reinvent – try and reuse'

In contrast to the role of a traditional IT director, who is responsible for maintaining the running of complex computer systems, CTOs are responsible for ensuring the right technologies are in place at the right time. The CTOs will also sort out technically how to deliver the IT strategy

This council is intending to complement the workings of its older brother, the CIO council.

The council aims to agree the architectural and technical infrastructure for Government over the next 10-15 years.

Enterprise architecture is basically, a book of words on how your computer systems work together.

The driving force behind the establishment of the council is the ability to promote Government IT as an 'Intelligent customer'.

By pooling knowledge and experience, ideas and solutions can be shared for the benefit of all. Too often, what happens at present, we replicate effort and consequently cost in achieving similar outcomes.

Hot topics for the CTO council to tackle will be:

1. Profession Capability and Capacity
2. Enterprise Architecture
3. Flexible Working / Changed Working Patterns
4. Shared Services/ERP/ Portals
5. EDRM / Sharepoint
6. Establishing a common infrastructure

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John Wailing, Director of Technical Policy, eGU

A key point to note is the requirement for senior representation – CTOs need to be in a position to make decisions on behalf of their organisations.

A full council meeting is scheduled for early December and will include representation from across central and local government and the devolved administrations.

CTO Council Timetable:

- **First meeting – 1 – 2 December – Ian Watmore will present the strategic view**
- **Subsequent meetings (30 - 31 March) will be held 3 times a year at the National School for Government in Sunningdale**

About the Government IT Profession

The Government IT Profession brings together all IT professionals in the UK public sector; including government departments, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) and local government. It stretches from new entrants through to the members of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) Council.

The aim of the Profession is to create a joined up, government-wide Profession which provides

IT professionals with a career of mutual benefit to the individual and the government.

The CIO Council provides sponsorship and direction from the highest level to the Government IT Profession. This initiative is part of the Professional Skills for Government programme, meets the business needs of the CIO community, and responds directly to feedback from IT professionals.

New features on our website

The Government IT Profession is fully integrated into the Professional Skills for Government (PSG) programme. You can use these frameworks from our site to support and develop your career as an IT Professional in government. The following documents are now available:

- the behavioural and managerial competencies which are part of the PSG programme and apply to all senior IT professionals
- suggested development opportunities for Senior IT Professionals who need to meet the PSG competencies.
- information about all the technical and specialist skills that are included in the Government IT Profession (based very closely on version 3 of the Skills Framework for the Information Age).

Please visit:

Terry Withers in profile

Where did your career start?

I started working in the mid-80s for a London based company called Liverpool Victoria Insurance as a Junior Mainframe Operator. The mainframe systems at this time seemed beyond belief with 'vast' 20Mb disk drives the size of car tyres, and sci-fi style operator consoles. It was a great start to my career. The job was interesting. London is an exciting place, and I met some terrific people along the way - but a better opportunity arose. Southend Borough Council beckoned me.

Where did your career head from this point?

I have held many roles, including Computer Operator, Operations Shift Leader, Technical Analyst and Senior Analyst. After gaining much experience in these roles I was offered the position of Team Leader, managing seven PC support staff. Within 18 months this became eleven staff, when I was invited to manage a further four technicians specialising in server management.

What does the job currently involve?

My team support over 2000 PCs and 85 servers on a mixed platform of Windows and UNIX. These systems span across six central sites.



Terry Withers, Team Leader - Customer Support Team, ICT Division Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Excellence in IT customer service is our primary activity, which, although a constant challenge, is also a relatively trouble-free objective with such a good technical and upper management team.

In your opinion is there an art to being a good manager?

I absolutely believe in leading from the front as it's a good vantage-point to see what's ahead and an ideal position to provide clear and positive direction. Further to this there seems to me to be a positive psychological effect in using this way of thinking. You can protect your staff from incoming events and it's a position that can only exist with willing colleagues; you must use encouragement, as pushing or pressurising is simply not possible.

What impresses you most about the job?

The culture of my department is one of encouragement and self-development - I have great role models and have been encouraged to complete a Diploma in Management Studies (DMS). I really think the e-Government objectives have not just driven technology forward in the public sector, but also the quality of the staff it now employs.

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Personally, I'm in constant awe of my team's IT skills, knowledge, tenacity, adaptability and good humour, especially when local government has undergone such rapid change in the past few years.

IT PROFESSIONAL PROFILE continued



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What challenges lie ahead in Public Sector IT?

Certainly greater exploitation of technology with ever-tighter budgets to provide improved public service - but perhaps this really is a given! I suggest that technology will be used to provide a significantly more customised approach to customer contact and response. We will need to understand and meet the needs of each and every citizen in a responsive cost-effective way; we must combine the best security, communication, customer relationship and document management systems to achieve this goal. The customer service business is at the driving seat of this technology - as indeed it should be.

IT Skills Management and Professionalism in Public Administration Conference – 27th October



The UK Presidency of the European Council and the British Computer Society (BCS) have hosted the first EU-wide conference on IT professionalism in Government to bring together EU Member State Governments, the European Commission, professional bodies, public servants and industry.

The key message emerging from the conference was that the importance of skills and professionalism in deploying IT in the public sector is growing.

Ian Watmore, UK Government CIO, complemented that with the perspective of a national body spanning supply and user industries.

Katie Davis, Director of Government IT Profession, described how developing an IT profession across the UK government was her top priority. She said, "A strong commitment to professionalism for the teams delivering IT-enabled business change is a major part of our agenda for delivering transformed public services in a cost-effective way".

Transformational Government strategy

On the 2nd November Jim Murphy, minister for e-Government launched the Transformational Government strategy. This was attended by a section of IT Professionals and suppliers across the whole public sector.

Read it now at:

PARTNER ORGANISATION PROFILE

Public Sector 'Yellow Pages'

Chris Histed is the founder and Chief executive of Publictechnology.net. He launched the site in 2003 to deliver a key service hitherto lacking - a high-volume and free-to-use online news and jobs service for those in public sector IT. Chris writes:



Chris Histed, on holiday in Loire at Chateau Villandry

...And now, two years later, we have over 39,000 monthly readers and deliver around 950,000 monthly page impressions - proving that there's a demand for our mix of content from those at the sharp end of e-Government. And our stats are still growing. Want to know how we've done it? Get in touch. It'd be a pleasure to help.

Our main website, daily email alert, and 'public sector Yellow Pages' PublicPages.net have distilled a lot of the private sector learning that our team has built up since 1999. The way we run our business is different from many other media & publishing companies. We try to practise what we preach by doing (almost) everything online.

This means we only have a very small office and most of our staff work remotely.

In fact, many are specialists who also have day jobs.

We publish around 50 articles per week, almost all written by people in the field (not journalists) - and see approximately 150 new jobs per fortnight on our jobs board.

This approach differentiates us from other 'trade press' whose content is journalist-produced. We hope you like it - and if so, why not write for us yourself? If you've got something to say, please get in contact newsdesk@publictechnology.net

The e-Government National Awards is also a central part of our operation - and it's planned very much as a supportive tool to the vision of strengthening the IT profession within government.

That's the (hopefully raucous) spirit which will fill the Savoy on 25th January 2006 -

when the winners receive their gongs from Ian Watmore (and a minister or two, we hope).

Driving strong take-up has been a key part of our own success, and something we feel is desperately needed in many e-Government services. There's a lot the public sector needs to learn from the private sector - not least in how to build large online audiences with loyal usership.

Currently there are many central and local e-Government services which are uttering the dot-com prayer "we built it, and they'll come" but have forgotten (or don't know about) the extreme pain of late 2000 and 2001.

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After all,
isn't it good
to praise
success
and feel
good about
what we
achieve?

In future newsletters we plan to feature many other organisations that we work with . These include:

- Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE)
- Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA)
- e-skills UK
- Society of IT Management (SOCITM)
- Programme and Project Management Specialism (PPM)
- Kable: e-Government research and events
- National Computing Centre(NCC)

PARTNER ORGANISATION PROFILE continued

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Then, it became apparent that a website had no future without growth in users and usage to a sustainable return of investment - and ROI which was at least 20% better than 'traditional' ways of doing things, pre-web.

If e-Government is to become the 'normal' way of transacting at all levels this may take a generation to achieve - a nation doesn't change its habits fast. In the meantime, there's a lot that can be done to engage people and build online loyalty - but this normally takes cash and superb communication (via serious, sustained, influential marketing). In government, marketing isn't normally a discipline funded alongside and linked to the 'IT Profession' - yet without marketing, the IT profession won't have strong usership for the services it generates.

Effective joined-up management of IT and product marketing was a key lesson from the success of the dot-com years, which we hope to see in the public sector.

Public sector IT now has a strategy and a vision of becoming a distinct 'profession' - and as an IT Profession partner, PublicTechnology.net has been right behind Ian Watmore's agenda from day one.

New look for www.cio.gov.uk/itprofession



The CIO Council web site has been revamped for the launch of the Strategy for Transformational Government on 2 November 2005.

The aim was to make the site lighter, fresher and more user friendly. Now that the site has been live for a few months, we listened to feedback from yourselves, colleagues and members of the CIO Council, who suggested some changes would help site users.

The most obvious change is the look and feel of the site. For IT Profession users, this means a shorter drop down menu on the left hand navigation.

Registration details and related links have been emphasised by moving to the right hand side. The content has been revised to make it more concise and a greater use of bullet points and other formats help readers scan the screen quickly.

We hope that users will agree that the new site is more attractive and easy to use and your comments, as always, are gratefully received."

If you would like to participate in future testing join our 'pulse group' by emailing Ryan.Edwards@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

Feedback

You speak, we listen then act

As I have registered my interest in the Government IT Profession, will I automatically receive the e-bulletin as soon as it is published?

Mark Kilminster, CPS

Yes you will. We are constantly looking into ways we can improve our service for you so look out for further benefits for those who have registered and please let us know what services you would like to see.

I'm getting a bit concerned about the CIO Council website. It has to be seen as embracing the whole of public sector IT, and it has a key role in providing a window for most people on what the CIO Council is about. It should be informal and personal.

If we want the Council to be seen as inclusive, and as a driving force for modernisation and change, then it shouldn't in my view look like an adjunct of the Cabinet Office or a general window on Civil Service IT. Currently it refers to 'Civil Service Careers', 'Civil Service Delivery Reform', and now the main and first bulletin is a Cabinet Office publication (a good one I have to say, but it reinforces the message).

Can you help please?
Jos Creese, Hampshire County Council CIO

Taking on board your constructive comments, in this issue you will find more personal style with a local council piece from a local IT Professional and this is an area which we plan to develop. For example, in a future issue, we will be featuring an article by SOCITM. In the meantime, if you know of a local Government IT Professional who would like to get their name in (e) print, then I would like to hear from them!

Could some thought be given to making the Bulletin more "e-friendly" as the the need to scroll up and down the page makes it very difficult and awkward to read on the screen. Perhaps some thought could be given to using a different layout for future editions.

Carol Piper, IMS (Risk, Assurance & Security) HMRC

Carol, one of the benefits of the current format is that while it can be read on screen, it is equally readable when printed, giving the reader more choice.

Having said that, we will be securing some dedicated software to assist with future designs. In this issue you can now click on the links to take you to the relevant information on our site which should make things easier.



'IT Professionalism is about sharing knowledge and skills within our fellow IT Community'

Rachel Neale,
Birmingham City Council

Facts you never knew about the IT Profession team - Kate Silver Implementation Manager: 'In my spare time I am the Commanding Officer of 1924 (Shirley) Squadron of the Air Cadets responsible for over 40 cadets'.
And before you ask – Kate can't fly!

FINAL SAY

Tell your friends

Send the link below to your colleagues. They can register their interest and we can alert them to what is on offer with the Government IT Profession. www.cio.gov.uk/itprofession

Other initiatives you may be interested in

[British Computer Society Young Professionals Group](http://www.ypg.bcs.org.uk)
[www.ypg.bcs.org.uk]

[Women in Technology](http://www.womenin.co.uk)
[www.womenin.co.uk]

[Computer Clubs for Girls](http://www.cc4g.net)
[www.cc4g.net]

Senior IT Forum

The Senior IT Forum is the official forum for dialogue between suppliers and the Government on general and cross-cutting issues. The trade body Intellect, the Office of Government Commerce and the Cabinet Office's e-Government Unit are all involved. The Forum is chaired by our Head of Profession, Ian Watmore.

Katie Davis, will present to the Forum in January 2006.

Next issue

Look out for the next issue in January. Bulletins will be issued every two months, with urgent news posted on our website www.cio.gov.uk/itprofession

If you would like to contribute to the next issue, e-mail Ryan.Edwards@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk