

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH DAVID WENNERGREN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY VIA TELECONFERENCE SUBJECT: NET GENERATION GUIDE: PREPARING FOR CHANGE IN THE FEDERAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY WORKFORCE TIME: 9:30 A.M. EDT DATE: TUESDAY, MAY 25, 2010

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SGT. LEE MCMAHON (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): My name is Lee McMahon with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, and I will be moderating our call today.

A note to our bloggers on the line today, please remember to clearly state your name and blog or organization in advance of your question. And if you have to place your phone on hold during the conversation, please hang up and call back in, because we might hear your hold music.

Today our guest is Mr. David Wennergren, deputy assistant secretary of Defense for information management and technology and deputy chief information officer for the Department of Defense. He is with us today to discuss the Net Generation Guide, a 128-page report by the Federal Chief Information Officers Council that focuses on preparing for change in the federal information technology workforce.

At this time, I'd like to turn it over to Mr. Wennergren for any opening remarks, and then we'll go to questions.

Sir, the floor is yours.

MR. WENNERGREN: Thank you very much. This is Dave Wennergren, and thank you all for being here with us today.

We're very excited about this product, and so if you'll bear with me for about three or four minutes, I'll tell you a little tale to get the conversation started. And then we'll open it up for questions and you can help take the conversation wherever it needs to go.

So there are like these two shifts that are happening in the world for us, and we wanted to make sure we were being thoughtful about them. And so my team, led by Joyce France and Sandy Smith, who works for

Joyce, took on the heavy-lifting work of working on behalf of the Federal CIO Council with Don Tapscott and the nGenera team -- Don Tapscott, the famous author of Wikinomics and -- (audio break) -- folks in his organization to go take a look at the Net Generation -- the Millennials, the Generation Ys, the demographic that is our prime target for coming into the workforce, either as 18-year-olds joining the military or as 21-, 22-year-olds coming out of college to join the military or become civil servants.

And so, as I said, there were these sort of two shifts that were going on that we thought it'd be really important to do some thought work about. And we did it on behalf of the whole Federal CIO Council so that it would be available to every federal agency as they move forward, to think about these two changes.

And those two changes are -- the first one being that the world has changed. And so as you all know, because of what we're doing here today, the world has moved to this Web 2.0 vision about services available anywhere, the ability to move things to the cloud, to do mass collaboration, use social networking services, to bring speed and agility to the delivery of information capabilities.

It's a radical set of changes that's moving us away from the old world, where the answer was always to just build a big information technology system, to this ability to collaborate and develop, share, reuse capabilities much more rapidly.

So you have that sort of shift that's going on all around us, and then you have the sort of workforce shift, that people my age, the baby boomer generation, are getting close to retirement age or are past the age at which they're eligible to retire. And so there is this sort of shift in terms of people leaving the workforce in fairly large numbers, and people that have been around for a long time and may not have the set of skills that are going to be the skills that they'll need for the new future.

So we're going to have to train the existing workforce to be adept at what the future will look like and help to replace those that are leaving with new people to take their place.

And if you look at the sort of nature of the demographics, which you can see in the Net Generation Workforce Guide, you will see that there's a big boom of people in the baby boom generation.

There's a smaller population in the Generation X, the next generation behind the baby boomers, and then another boom in the Net Generation -- of course, Net Generation coming from the term coined by Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams about that this is the first generation to have grown up in the Internet age.

And so as we looked at the demographics, we saw that young people of the Net Generation will be coming into organizations and taking leadership positions at a much younger age. And so we thought it was really important that we understood first what the workforce issues are.

How do we look, in terms of demographics? When will people be leaving? How will we replace those people that are leaving? And then we understood, sort of, what are the norms and behaviors and values and priorities of this new workforce? What are they looking to do and what kind of environment will help them to thrive?

And sort of wed those together then to say actually, you could use the tools that are available to you in the federal government to hire, attract and retain, if we begin to think differently about what's the nature of work, how do you create leaders at a younger age, how do you have supervisors transform from the once-a-year-do-a- performance-appraisal to the more hands-on, mentoring approach?

The good news is that the Net Generation believes strongly in public service. You see all the literature, and community service is like the number-one, college-level extracurricular activity. This is a generation that wants to serve and wants to make a difference. But they want to be working at a place where they'll have the tools and the capabilities to get the job done.

So we thought it was really important that we emphasize a couple of things.

One, are you providing the environment where you'll have the tools available, where they'll be able to use these skills that they have?

So, are you facilitating a world where people can get on the computer from anywhere, work from home, work on the road; can they connect to social networking services and other tools, do they have access to instant messaging and chat and collaboration services? Are you creating an environment that will really play to their strengths?

And then, are you helping them to grow and to recognize that this would be a place where you can make a difference? So people -- they want to make a difference, is the good news.

But this generation also does not necessarily hold to the values of, perhaps, my generation or my parents' generation that you go to work for company A, you work at company A for 40 years, get the gold watch. Right? They want to be in a place where they can make a difference. So are you giving them the opportunities to contribute and make a difference early on?

And that was talking really fast and saying a whole bunch of words. So now I'll slow down and take a breath and say, over to you.

There's a lot more that I could say to you about the guide, but the real important thing for us was that it was -- all the action that says, so, for leaders around the federal government you have a looming workforce issue that is a moment of opportunity.

And if you take advantage of that moment of opportunity, you will be an employer of choice and you will create the environment that will unleash the fire of their creativity and innovation, which would be a huge win-win for all of us.

And so with that, over to you.

SGT. MCMAHON: Sir, thank you.

Tom, you have the first question.

Q Sir, I wonder how you -- what specific changes to the way the government operates will allow agencies to attract this new workforce that wants to move quickly, since the government is notorious for being the opposite? MR. WENNERGREN: Yeah. Well, I think that the changes take several forms, and that's what the guide tries to lay out.

So one of them is, so what does the work environment look and feel like? Are you working hard to try to provide access from anywhere? Are you working hard to take advantage of collaboration services?

In the Department of Defense we have collaboration service now, Defense Connect Online available to every employee, to do instant messaging, to do video, collaborative environments remotely. Are you providing those kind of tools? Do you give access to the social networking services?

So again, in the Department of Defense we released a policy memo a few months ago that emphasized that it's important to do it responsibly, but nonetheless you've got to have access to these Internet-based capabilities.

So point one is federal agencies being thoughtful about making sure they have the environment that provides access to the technology, the ability to do flexible work schedules and all those sorts of things. So, the technology aspect of this.

And then also, I would say, sort of the set of workforce issues, that the nature of the supervisors' responsibilities change. And the guide goes into some of those kinds of details -- what-do-you-do-in-terms-of -- everything from financial issues like hiring bonuses and retention bonuses and things like that, but also to changing the nature of the supervisory relationship to one that's a more hands-on, mentoring experience where you're giving people the opportunity to do independent work where they can deliver results. And they're coached through that; that you're taking advantage of things like telework and recognition and a rewards structure.

So while we often say it's harder in the federal government (with the ?) workforce, there actually are a lot of things that you can do. And that's what the last section of the book talks its way through.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Jim, you have the next question.

Q Thanks, Lee.

Sir, what type of jobs are we talking about? And is there a way that you can offer, say, scholarships or other benefits while folks are in college to entice them to come into the federal government, and is that a plan that you're looking at?

MR. WENNERGREN: Yes. Well said. That's a really important point. We focus the guide on the information -- management information technology workforce, because we're a bunch of CIOs. And so that was the -- it was a Federal CIO Council work product.

So while the statistics and stuff you'll see in there are about the federal government's information technology workforce, I believe that the guide is really germane to people across every discipline in the government, that there's a whole lot of good information.

So even if you were in the personnel business, I would still encourage you, as a federal leader, to read the guide. Because there's a lot of tips in there about the workforce of the future and how you're going to attract and retain them. But we just sort of focus in, or (our look ?), for the sake of the CIO Council, about the information management workforce.

So there's sort of a couple of things at play here. The one is understanding the skills and competencies that you're going to be looking for today and in the future.

So there's this issue about -- that the future is about Web services, a greater emphasis on security, that some of these things may be different than the skills that made you adept if you had entered the workforce decades ago. So recognizing what are the competencies that we're looking for for the workforce for the future.

And then, to your point, what are you doing to help create that workforce? So one example is the Information Assurance Scholarship Program that we do in DOD. Over 100 colleges and universities around the nation are involved in curriculums that allow people to get graduate degrees or undergraduate degrees in information assurance, and then we help place them in jobs.

We'd like to extend that work. We're really excited about some of the work that we see coming out of different organizations right now, like the CSIS and -- forgive me, I forget what CSIS stands for. But these issues about cyber challenges and things that are going on, particularly for the cyber security workforce of the future, that we're actually reaching down into high schools and below.

So the Federal CIO Council does everything from a job shadow day to get local high school students interested in information management jobs, to also offering these opportunities for scholarships and other

ways to develop and hone the skills that we want them to have for the future.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Amanda, you have the next question.

Q Hi. Kind of switching gears a little bit, I'm just curious with the major shift that's happening. What would the consequences be if this change doesn't occur and if we can't appeal to this Net Generation?

MR. WENNERGREN: (Laughs.) Yeah, so that would be under the heading of failure is not an option, right?

(Laughter.

)

I think you have to look at it this way. We believe that, certainly in the Department of Defense, that this is really important work that's being done. And we believe that there's great opportunities for people to make a difference, that careers in the military that provide you leadership experience at a younger age than perhaps anywhere else you'll find, opportunities to work on (really ?) things that make a big difference.

And likewise, if you had CIOs from other federal agencies, I think they would make a compelling case about the power of public service.

So there is an inevitable shift that's going on about the nature of how work gets done and the technology and how you use it. And we've all been watching that for our entire lives.

So any successful organization, public or private, needs to sort of stay abreast of where the technology is headed, how do you use the technology to do work better, faster, more effectively? And then sort of meld that together with your human resources strategies about how you're going to attract and retain the right people.

So if you were to rest on your laurels now, you would miss that opportunity to get the best and the brightest. So what we want to do is to really create an environment where the call to public service is not only something that emotionally resonates with them, but for which they see an opportunity to make a difference and to contribute.

Because they're going to go take jobs someplace; we'd just as soon they came to work for us. And I accept the fact that the "us" is a big, extended family. It's military careers, it's civil service positions, it's working for our defense contract partners. So there's a sort of total force thing.

But the call is that you really would like to have the best and the brightest come and be part of your team.

Now, other people will be making that same call to action too, right? And so we recognize there's sort of a war on for talent, for everybody to get the best and the brightest. What I just want to do is make sure that the federal government team is trying to help lead that charge.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Rita, you have the next question.

Q Yes, sir. I was wondering, can you tell me how does the government expect this potential mass retirement and this generation that has very different ideas of information sharing to effect a change in our ideas of information security?

MR. WENNERGREN: It's a fabulously important point. And so forgive me, because I'm going to foot-stomp about it for a moment.

In order to be an effective information leader now -- and I don't care -- federal, state and local government level, academia, private industry -- I don't care where you work right now. If you want to be an effective information leader, you'd better have your eyes on two prizes at the same moment.

And they are this imperative about what the power of a Web 2.0 world brings to us in terms of the ability to share information faster and more effectively, which is either better results in the defense of our nation, better results in terms of competitive advantage, better results in terms of cost efficiencies and speed-to-market ratios. It doesn't matter what line of work you're in. This prize about being able to share information more quickly and more effectively is absolutely the top of your list.

And at the same time, at the top of your list better be this issue about security and how both -- the threats to our information systems and our information are growing exponentially, by the day, both in terms of quantity and sophistication.

And that information security in the 21st century has to look different, because it has to not just be the kind of mentality where you kind of wall yourself away, but a way to raise the bar in security that allows you to share at the same time.

So these two things have to be front and center on our plate. And so we're really looking for a workforce that's going to be extremely adept at this concept of secure information sharing. That they're going to understand how to use the tools.

What does the power of a You Tube and a Facebook and the ability to collaborate across boundaries bring to an organization, and what are the security issues that you're going to have to be really adept at if

you're going to share information effectively while still protecting your people and your information?

And so a lot of this work, like the cyber challenge work and the Information Assurance Scholarship Programs and all the other things that are going on is a recognition that the nature of security is changing and it has to be a priority for us.

The way that we used to do security is probably not good enough, and so we're going to have to have new and creative ideas, which seems to me a sweet spot for the workforce of the future.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Lois, you have the next question.

Q I'm actually a member of NII. I'm just here to learn what the bloggers are interested in hearing about today.

(Laughter.)

MR. WENNERGREN: All right. A ringer! (Laughter.) For the rest of you, NII being one of the shorthands for our organization where I work --

SGT. MCMAHON: Oh, okay.

Well, I think we have a few more minutes. If we can go around the line again, see if there are additional questions.

Tom, did you have another question?

Q Sure. Yeah, it's kind of a two-part question, I guess, about -- first of all, is there --

There are numbers in the report on how many IT workers the government has. But I guess the first part of the question is how does that match up with the numbers you'd like to be seeing right now?

And the second part would be how does -- there's been a lot of talk about in-sourcing federal jobs, especially in DOD and especially in the IT arena. So I was wondering how that movement would fit in with what you're talking about in the report.

MR. WENNERGREN: So it's sort of an -- it's a complex question because there are the people whose jobs are what we would describe as information technology jobs, right? So you can see the listing of how many information technology jobs there are in every federal agency.

I think agencies have done a good job trying to identify what those workforce requirements are, so I feel pretty good about those numbers. There is sort of the broader issue that gives it a complexity that says in today's economy almost everyone is an information worker.

So you need your entire workforce to be fairly adept at information technology skills, well beyond the people whose full-time job it is to be an information technology professional. So while the guide does kind of talk about the people that are the full-time information technology information management workforce, I do think there's the thing we have to keep in the back of our mind that all of the people we're bringing into our workforce need to be adept at using these technology tools, because that's the way work gets done, regardless of whether you're in the business of financial management or logistics or personnel. So a little plug on the side there.

There are, as you point out, things like in-sourcing initiatives that are creating additional federal jobs at this moment. And so there are additional opportunities even beyond the numbers that are in the report that there will be opportunities for people to come in and have jobs where they can make a difference in the information technology workforce.

And so I know in the Department of Defense we've hired more people than we used to have, as we fill some of these in-sourcing positions.

SGT. MCMAHON: Okay. Thank you, sir.

Jim, do you have a question?

Q Yeah, I do. Deputy Secretary Wynne talks a lot about the fact that India and China will produce far more computer engineers than the United States in the years ahead.

And then he also talks about trying to make up the difference there with technology. I'm just wondering if you took the technology, and where do you think technology is going to go, into consideration when you came up with this report.

MR. WENNERGREN: Yeah, absolutely. That was the way I tried to start the talk, that there are two shifts.

The one is the accelerating capability that technology brings, that if you have access to the right tools, you can do more, better and faster. And so clearly we have a very large Department of Defense, but it'll be more agile the more we're able to use technology. So the technology of the future and how you would leverage it to maximize your effectiveness is a fundamental point in the report.

So in consonance with that, if you're making sure you have the right technology in place to have a highly effective, highly mobile, highly connected workforce, then in parallel we'd like to attract and retain the best and the brightest. So it is those two themes: how can you maximize the use of technology to make your workforce better, faster, smarter, and how can you help attract a workforce that is the best and the brightest?

And I think that they're very closely related, because I think the expectation is, of the workforce that's coming to us now, that they expect to have those kinds of tools. They have those kinds of tools in their private lives, right?

There's this interesting shift that's going on, and I don't mean -- this is not a bust on government, because I think the same thing is true in big companies too. There's this interesting shift, this sort of democratization of technology that's taking place, that what used to take computer programmers weeks to do, in a race for a computer room to write code and so on, can now be done in some kind of mash-up overnight.

Likewise, the kind of technology that's available to the common user, if you will -- I remember a decade or so ago I got a BlackBerry. And the BlackBerry, for work, probably had more capability than my personal cell phone. But now people have all manner of mobile devices at home, in their private lives, that give them great connectivity and great ability to use the tools that are available today.

So there's this expectation that you would expect your employer to provide you access to the kinds of tools that you're used to using, and the kinds of tools being everything from the ability to have iPhones and Droids and BlackBerry Storms and iPads and things like that, all the way to -- and you have access to the kinds of Web-based tools that allow you to collaborate, find people, connect the dots, post information, find information and those sorts of things too.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Amanda, do you have a question?

Q I do. Looking over the report, it's pretty clear that minorities and women are under-represented. Is there anything that can be done to appeal to these crowds more, to help attract that audience?

MR. WENNERGREN: There is huge power in the diversity of the workforce, right? It just helps in so many ways.

We need points of view. We need people that represent different experiential bases. The federal government has made a huge priority around ensuring diversity and promoting diversity in the workforce.

And so it's part of every senior executive's performance objectives. It is something that we spend a lot of time and attention working on. And I think that the information technology field is one of the areas where we've done much better over the years, frankly. And so I think, again to your point, I think that this sort of Net Generation workforce issue is an opportunity, because it's an opportunity to bring in a more diverse workforce. It's an opportunity for us -- it's an imperative for us -- to do more outreach to a broad scope of educational institutions so we're giving people the opportunity to come and reaching out to as diverse a workforce as possible. So it's absolutely a top priority for us.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Rita, do you have a question?

Q Yes. Actually, building off one of the earlier questions, there's been a lot of concerns lately about there's not enough students who are studying the STEM fields. And I was wondering, do you expect that to change with the Net Generation to fill IT and similar jobs? And if not, how much of an issue is it going to be to find qualified, clearable people to put into these positions?

MR. WENNERGREN: Rita, I'm really sorry, but you broke up for just a second at the beginning of the question. Would you mind doing the question one more time?

Q Sure. Not at all.

There's been a lot of concerns about there not being enough students studying STEM fields in school, and I was wondering if you expect that to change as the Net Generation goes to college, so they'll be able to fill these IT and similar jobs? And if not, how much of an issue do you expect it to be to find qualified, clearable people to fill positions?

MR. WENNERGREN: Yeah. Well, you're on to a good, important point. So the workforce needs to be -- we need help that people are choosing careers in science, technology and engineering and math and all those sorts of fields, because they're crucial to the skill sets that we need for the workforce.

So part of the effort, I think, that is a call to action for all of us is what are you doing to help encourage? Because as information leaders, you have many opportunities.

If you look at the work of organizations like AFCEA, the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, and other groups that have really focused efforts on scholarship work and encouraging, having information leaders talk to schools and encourage young people to pick careers in these kinds of fields.

Because you're right; we really do need to have an emphasis on these sort of skills sets.

I think that the cyber security challenge is also an opportunity, because there's a large demand -- (inaudible) -- be in place now for -- if people study those disciplines, there'll be important and meaningful jobs waiting for them when they come out of school.

So I think you're on to something really important and we believe it's all of the leaders' jobs to help be available to mentor, be available to go speak to students, to go speak to schools, to go work with universities, to go work with high schools to try to help encourage students to choose careers in the science and technology fields.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

I think that's all we have time for today. I want to thank you all for your participation. As we wrap up today's call, I'd like to ask Mr. Wennergren if he has any final comments.

Sir?

MR. WENNERGREN: No. You guys asked great questions. You had all the hot topics that were on my mind.

It's one of those -- you can also be a glass-half-full, glass-half-empty kind of person, so you have to choose. When I read the Net Generation Guide, to me it sends a message that says there's a huge moment of opportunity here, right?

If we take advantage of the ideas and concepts that are in there, we can really do something wonderful here that'll be a win-win -- great people coming in and having meaningful jobs and making a meaningful contribution to the nation.

On the other hand, if we don't take advantage of this call to action, then we will miss an opportunity to make sure that we have the right workforce to meet the demands of our future.

And so if we could just sort of all rally around this idea that if you give people the right tools, the right environment, the right leadership, the right coaching, that there's this wonderful opportunity to allow the members of the Net Generation to come choose public service as a calling and make a huge difference today.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Today's program will be available on line at the DODLive Blogger Roundtable link on DODLive.mil, where you will be able to access a story based on today's call, along with source documents such as biographies, this audio file, and print transcripts.

Again, thank you, sir, and thank you to our blogger participants. This concludes today's event. Feel free to disconnect at this time.

END.