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Before this Decade is OUT…

What if the "Giants of the Web" Designed Government Service Delivery?

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Scene Setting…

What have we learnt from the past decade of "government online"?

And what could we learn from the giants of the web; the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London; the Ferrari Formula One Racing Team; the UK Government Digital Service (GDS); and the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)? Surely there is no common thread of insight to be gleaned from this diverse and eclectic grouping of organisations?

Over the past decade or more, the achievement of "client centric" remains elusive in a system where the client is exposed at the centre of complexity. "Client centric" is an outside-in view by government agencies; "client context" describes the client's own view of their needs and aspirations, and is not restricted to government.

This is an examination of how an understanding of complex systems, risk and common patterns can be applied in an economy wide effort of breakthrough innovation to drive the digital transformation of government service delivery over the next decade. (Note: the setting is Australia, but lessons broadly apply.)

The Moonshot…

> If human endeavor can put a man on the moon within a decade of the vision being articulated – more than 50 years ago – why then, in this Internet age and after more than a decade, are we still talking about putting government forms and services online?
>
> We need to re-imagine the problem so that we can re-imagine the future.

A decade of "government online"…or has there been?

I have often asked audiences "what would government service delivery look like if Apple or Amazon or Google or Microsoft or the banks or designed it?" - to some amusement of folks when they hear this. But there is always a stirring acknowledgement of the real question - from both the public and private sector innovators who envision a more seamless experience for citizens and clients.

Nevertheless, from a whole-of-government perspective, the holy grail of 'citizen centric' appears elusive, notwithstanding the dedication and professionalism of officers, and the millions of dollars spent across government on this objective. Just ask any citizen or business about red tape – including digital red tape…

A radical re- imagining and a re-boot of approach are urgently needed.

In the lead up to the Australian Federal Election in 2013, the Coalition released its policy for *E-Government and the Digital Economy.* This policy recognises that in the digital era, government has not leveraged technology as a productivity driver or as a policy lever; has not kept pace with the use and adoption of technology across society; nor the innovation in new models of engagement. Whilst the new policy for *E-Government and the Digital Economy* appears to be "directional" and foreshadows a far more strategic posture, the lessons from the past decade and from other domains indicate that it does not go far enough to meet the challenges. Let's compare the objectives and posture of the *Coalition's 2013 policy for E-Government and Digital Economy* to the objectives and posture of the *Government Online Strategy 2000*. What has changed in 13 years?

The *Government Online Strategy 2000* spoke about "online action plans"; putting all "appropriate" services online by 2001; delivering all "appropriate" services electronically by 2001; the online availability of printed forms and the desirability of "online forms"; and the concept of integrated services was articulated. Enablers such as authentication and meta data standards were called out, as well as the ground breaking achievements of the delivery of the Australian Business Number (ABN) and the successful multi-jurisdictional online platform to business – the Business Entry Point (BEP) (www.business.gov.au).

However, notwithstanding the progress that has been made and particularly in the enabling capabilities – the ABN, BEP, Vanguard Government Authentication Services and Standard Business Reporting (SBR) - a check of any government website will reveal listings of many hundreds of PDF forms. An inventory across government would measure thousands of forms. A peak inside agencies would reveal an unspeakable treasure trove of all sorts of forms lurking on Intranets…

The *Government Online Strategy 2000* also pointed to electronic payments, and whilst electronic payment options are now the preferred payment channel for government agencies, non-electronic payment options (such as cash, cheque, and the good old money order) are still supported by many agencies. Government is a big payer and receiver of payments and in this era of innovation in payments and information services, a more strategic rather than transactional approach is needed. A sophisticated whole-of-government strategy in digital payments and data services is urgently needed to revolutionise the core processes of service delivery and in so doing generate payments analytics to inform policy. I will be writing further on the need for a strategic approach to payments in government.

Three essential components were missing from the *Government Online Strategy 2000*. Firstly, hard targets were missing: the Strategy was heavily qualified by references such as "appropriate', "pragmatic" and "agency based approach". Secondly, client centric or citizen centric was defined in terms of the agency eg "agency's clients". There is nothing client centric about having dozens of agencies each having their individual specific views of the client. Of course, "client centric" is not the same thing as "client experience".

Just ask the clients… And thirdly and perhaps most importantly, the *Government Online Strategy 2000* was not about transformation – it explicitly ruled out "replacing" services or channels. The objective was to "…deliver all appropriate Commonwealth services electronically…complementing – not replacing – existing written, telephone, fax and counter services".

The *Government Online Strategy 2000* vision of "a seamless national approach to the provision of online services…[where]…a user of these services should not need to understand how government is structured…" remains a noble but as yet unrealized vision. For all the efforts, the question is 'why?'

Those initiatives that were successful and enduring – the Australian Business Number, the Business Entry Point and later Vanguard and Standard Business Reporting – were driven by a political and economic agenda. These initiatives took a whole of government – not agency specific – multi-disciplinary delivery approach. They were new and transformative business models; and importantly, were based on metrics and analysis to demonstrate the economic impact and benefit. Accountabilities were clear.

Before contemplating the "why" question further, let's take a look at the Coalition's *2013 policy for E-Government and Digital Economy*. This policy states that "Governments can and should lead by example in their own use of ICT to provide services or engage with citizens…the US and UK have recently adopted aggressive public sector ICT and digital transformation strategies." I'll come back to the remarkable UK approach shortly.

One area of concern in the *2013 policy for E-Government and Digital Economy* – and similar strategies in other jurisdictions – is an apparent ambiguity between "digital" and "ICT". It is essential that the difference between "digital transformation strategies" and "ICT strategies" is understood and accountabilities clear. As currently articulated, the Coalition's *2013 policy for E-Government and Digital Economy* needs to more clearly differentiate between "ICT Strategy" and "Digital First". Though clearly related, "digital" and "ICT" are different concepts and the accountabilities, objectives and measures of success are different.

Digital is about transformation, accountabilities for the client experience, new models and economics of delivery, realized efficiency targets, new measurable business value, and providing data driven insight to policy formulation. ICT strategies partly enable the digital transformation – and in the legacy environment siloed approaches can impede it. Also enabling the digital transformation are changes to policy, legislation, client service offer, new operating models and radical process change.

So looking at the two strategies literally side by side - the *Government Online Strategy 2000* and the Coalition's *2013 policy for E-Government and Digital Economy* – highlights that there still does not appear to be a whole-of-government strategic focus on transformation. After 13 or more years, the strategic approach does not appear to have evolved.

Year 2000 Government Online Strategy	*2013 Coalition's Policy for E-Government and the Digital Economy*
"…deliver all appropriate Commonwealth services electronically on the Internet by 2001…complementing – not replacing – existing written, telephone, fax and counter services".	"…getting all of its major services and interactions with individuals online…" "…Give people the option to elect to receive material from the government in digital form or in hard-copy, depending on their circumstance. We will aim to provide all correspondence, documents and forms in digital form, as well as hard-copy, by 2017."

Furthermore, as currently articulated, the Coalition's "2013 Policy" also appears to follow a "year 2000 strategy" agency by agency approach to targeting high volume transactions: "…every Government interaction that occurs more than 50,000 times per year can be achieved online by 2017".

The missing component in this brief comparison is transformation – innovatively redesigning services across government (and with other sectors), integrating and re-packaging to achieve a truly seamless client experience. This would consequently result in some unnecessary "interactions" from individual agencies being nullified, cancelled, "joined-up" or abolished – driving down costs and optimizing policy outcomes.

The strategy needs to articulate that in the digital era of service delivery, hardcopy or physical tokens or artifacts will often not have a digital replica. Examples of this include the abolition of paper visa labels; the abolition of car registration stickers in NSW; and the abolition (many years ago) of paper withdrawal forms in banks.

Care must be taken to ensure that – in a government digital strategy in 2014, the focus is on transformation – going far beyond and thinking differently to the online form approach from the year 2000 era. A strong political agenda, ambitious and enforced targets, and senior non-delegable business accountability must be crystal clear. Otherwise in 13 years time, we'll still have lists of hundreds of PDFs on government websites, and even more lurking in agency Intranets. All this ccompounding the red tape complexity even further and driving massive costs through the administration and the economy.

A re-think and a re-imagining of the problem and a re-booting of the approach are urgently needed.

A Different Approach – Insight from:

- *The UK Government Digital Service (GDS);*
- *Amazon;*
- *The Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital London and the Ferrari Formula One Racing Team;*
- *The Pentagon Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).*

What the past 13 years has demonstrated is that a decentralised fragmented approach will not solve complex problems.

There needs to be a different approach with new skills brought to the challenge of innovating in a complex system – skills such as big data analytics, design thinking, systems thinking, common pattern modelling, human factors analysis and rapid prototyping.

This is not impossible – after all, the moon shot was achieved back in the 1960s within a decade.

But the first step is to recognize that we need to create simplicity from, within and across this complex system. And the skills and perspectives to do this need to be brought to the challenge from different domains, different sectors and different economies. The *Government Online Strategy 2000* did not deal with complexity – in fact it probably made the situation worse by putting all the complexity out there for the client to figure out, in the absence of context.

The following examples from the United Kingdom Government Digital Service (UK GDS), the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London, the Ferrari Formula One Racing Team, and Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) all provide some revealing insight as to how innovations and breakthroughs can be achieved from complex systems.

The UK Government Digital Service (GDS)

The *Coalition's 2013 policy for E-Government and Digital Economy* indicates the adoption of a "Digital Service Standard" and "Digital Design Guide" modeled on the UK Government Digital Service approach. Whilst this is a positive sign, a new approach needs to go far beyond standards and guides – as necessary as these are they are not a sufficient mechanism to drive outcomes. There are plenty of standards in government, including "web standards", where agencies have not complied or have taken many years to do so. Just keep thinking about all those PDF forms…

The UK GDS approach positions the digitization of government as a transformation agenda, not an ICT agenda. And nor is it a back-end machinery-of-government agenda involving the joining up of agencies.

The UK Government has taken a remarkably strong and forward-looking leadership posture by being upfront about what's at stake:

"…until now government services have stood out by their failure to keep up with the digital age. While many sectors now deliver their services online as a matter of course, our use of digital public services lags far behind that of the private sector.

Government has got to do better. This [UK] Digital Efficiency Report suggests that transactions online can already be 20 times cheaper than by phone, 30 times cheaper than postal and as much as 50 times cheaper than face-to-face.

By going digital by default, the government could save between £1.7 and £1.8 billion each year."

Big numbers…

The UK approach is absolutely about transformation:

"…this isn't just about saving money - the public increasingly expects to access services quickly and conveniently, at times and in ways that suit them.

We will also need to embed digital skills into our organisational DNA, developing a culture that puts people's needs first so we plan and design our services around what users need to get done, not around the ways government want them to do it.

This Government Digital Strategy is just the start of a process that will transform how we provide services.

Until now government has been slow to realise the benefits of the digital age. In the future our services will be fit for the 21st Century – agile, flexible and digital by default."

The UK GDS talks about redesigning services; removing legislative barriers; improving digital leadership, capability and skills across departments; collaboration across the private and voluntary sectors; and improving the way government makes policy. This is a serious and concerted national effort, with a team drawn from all sectors, centrally orchestrated, to transform the operations of government. It's linked to Civil Service Reform, budget and savings commitments and importantly, inclusion.

According to the GDS, "Government service delivery is like a supertanker we must turn". This effort is driven centrally by the UK Cabinet Office. That is a very serious moon shot challenge and every government has this same moonshot to confront.

Agility, creativity, innovation, diversity of talent and accountability for delivery – the characteristics of a start-up – is how the GDS operates. And its approach and progress is being followed globally. As reported by The Guardian (15 November 2013):

> "In less than two years GDS has hired …some of the UK's top digital talent… shipped an award-winning service, and begun the long and arduous journey of completely revolutionising the way that 62 million citizens interact with more than 700 services from 24 government departments and their 331 agencies"

The Guardian further noted that the Government Digital Service is "…the best startup in Europe." The Guardian refers to the GDS as "one incredibly disruptive startup based in London that is going after one of the biggest markets of all… it is disrupting the British public sector in an energetic, creative and effective way."

There are a number of important strategic themes that the UK Digital by Default highlights. The first is that the Digital by Default Strategy is a lever to radically drive down the cost of government operations – in fact, it could be seen as a partner strategy with the UK Government austerity measures. The second strategic theme relates to architecture and the user experience: that Digital by Default combined with the UK Government austerity measures will not result in a lesser experience, but to the contrary will be "…the sort of experience that users come to expect from daily interaction with the giants of the web."

What could we learn from the giants of the web? Let's imagine how one of the "giants of the web" – say, Amazon – might approach the design of government service delivery. (Note: this is not Amazon's position, but my commentary on a hypothetical proposition.)

What if Amazon Designed Government Service Delivery?

During this period – the years between 2000 and 2013 - what *has* changed in the lives of clients / citizens, has been the emergence of Google; Facebook; Amazon; Twitter; the Chinese "giants of the web"; and mobile technology. The pace of change and the extent of the disruption is phenomenal. In recent years we have seen the rise of "apps"; the Internet of Things; electronic tags; embedded services; and innovation in payments that government is yet to touch. These are pervasive digital platforms of engagement and transaction that have profoundly changed the lives of individuals, society, economies and organizations. The paradigm of PDF forms and as provocative as it might seem - even government websites – are anachronisms in the digital future.

These digital platforms have changed power relationships and government is a part of this digital ecosystem of changing power dynamics. So what does this mean for the notion of targets because, after all, targets require context and meaning? Are these targets meaningful from the clients / citizens perspective? What *will* change the lives of citizens in the years ahead and what will be more meaningful and drive change: government targets or new innovative platforms of engagement? So targets without a narrative, a context, a story around the citizen / client are meaningless.

What if Amazon designed government service delivery – what would this look like, and what would the experience be like? Amazon is more than a technology company. First and foremost it is a customer service organization, so it should know something about how to be "customer centric", the "customer experience" and "service delivery".

Much has been written about Amazon's growth and success strategies: an unfailing focus on the customer and the customer experience. Amazon obsesses over customers; invents new things to drive the customer experience and compete; and interestingly, "it's always day 1". There are always more ways to think about the future, new ways to obsess over customers, invent, and prove worthy of their business; and importantly, take the long-term view.

From my perspective, the long-term view doesn't mean taking a long time: it means aggressive agility as part of a longer-term strategy.

What can government service delivery learn from the Amazon approach?

Before we go too far down this line of thought, let's consider the alternative proposition:

What if government designed Amazon service delivery!

"What if government designed Amazon service delivery in the same way government designs its own services - what would the experience be like for Amazon and Amazon's customers?"

Amazon customers would have trouble finding things: each business line (books, movies, Kindle Tablets etc) would be a different experience; most importantly, Amazon would not know if a particular customer bought a book (the same one three times!) and also ordered a game or was eligible for a "Deal of the Day". Different data formats could mean that the book business line records the same customer's details differently to the movie business line. Multiple and different payment services would not only complicate things from the customer's perspective but would be an unacceptable cost burden for Amazon. The fragmented approach to payments would severely inhibit innovation in this capability and service offers. Amazon would not have visibility of big data trends across its business lines, or of a customer's total interaction, or their search preferences, or their experience across business lines. When a customer's details change, they would have to update their details across multiple business lines - if they remember. It would just be way too hard for the customer and Amazon.

This is "customer centric" from an agency/business line perspective: fragmented, costly and value destroying.

From a whole-of-government or large-scale enterprise perspective it is costly, inefficient, with significant impact on agility. The fragmented approach results in missed opportunity for insight and innovation that comes from a system wide perspective.

De-constructing the Amazon experience in this way provides insight into a re-imagined government service delivery experience in the digital era. It provides insight into innovation and the capabilities and architecture required to achieve true customer centricity in a conglomerate service delivery data driven ecosystem.

The new approach to government service delivery in the digital era needs to be inspired by Amazon and the other giants of the web; banks, research institutions; and by the fresh lean approaches by energetic innovative start-ups.

Insight from the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London and The Ferrari Formula One Racing Team

Re-imagining also involves looking for common patterns and linkages in unlikely places; this is a fundamental aspect of innovation.

The Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London treats 100,000 children each year and is known for its expertise in infant heart surgery. What does this have to do with the design of government service delivery, particularly to the challenge of designing digital services?

The Wall Street Journal reported that "in a field where a lot can go wrong…two decades ago, a lot did go wrong." Between 1987 and 1993 there was a cluster of post-surgical deaths.

In this 2006 article, "A Hospital Races To Learn Lessons Of Ferrari Pit Stop", the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) told the amazing story of "one of the more unlikely collaborations of modern medicine, Britain's largest children's hospital…revamped its patient handoff techniques by copying the choreographed pit stops of Italy's Formula One Ferrari racing team. The initiative…helped reduce the number of mishaps."

An "unusually forthright" paper led by the senior surgeon provided insight: "… the infant deaths couldn't entirely be explained by the riskiness of the procedure or blatant failures such as a machine breaking down." A study by "human-factor" specialists followed, using scientific techniques to observe and study how people interact in a particular environment, including areas where technology is heavily used.

According to the WSJ, "the study found, not surprisingly, that big mistakes can lead to bad outcomes. Its unexpected finding was about small mistakes: The study revealed that they often went unnoticed and unrectified." The senior surgeon leading the study noted, "What's more, if you added them up they correlated strongly" with bad outcomes."

The WSJ described a further study in 2005, that found "…that nearly 70% of preventable hospital mishaps occurred because of communication problems, and other studies have shown that at least half of such breakdowns occur during handoffs."

The article describes how two senior surgeons at the hospital who were both were racing enthusiasts, observed "striking similarities between patient handovers at their hospital and the interchange of tasks at a racing pit stop." What followed was an amazing collaboration with the British and Ferrari Formula One Racing Teams.

The Formula One Teams told how they "used a human-factors expert to study the way their pit crews performed and have a system for recording errors…stressed the small ones that might go unnoticed, not the big ones that everyone knew about."

So in 2005, the senior medical team from the hospital traveled to Ferrari's headquarters in Maranello, Italy for meetings with the Ferrari Team.

The Ferrari Team was amazed by what they saw on videos the medical team took: "…clumsy and informal hospital handover process". This unusual collaboration between the Ferrari Team and the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital, and the comparisons they made between the two hand-over processes, provided life-saving insight. From the WSJ:

"Each member of the Ferrari crew is required to do a specific job, in a specific sequence, and usually in

silence. By contrast, the hospital handover was often chaotic. Several conversations between nurses and doctors went on at once. Meanwhile, different members of the team disconnected or reconnected equipment to a patient, but in no particular order.

In a Formula One race, the "lollipop man" with a paddle ushers the car in and signals the driver when it's safe to go. But in the hospital setting, it wasn't always clear who was in charge. Though the anesthesiologist had nominal responsibility to take the lead during a handover, sometimes the surgeon assumed that role -- or no one at all."

The lessons from Ferrari, as well as from other fields such as aviation, were incorporated into new procedures at the Great Ormond Street Childrens Hospital. What was also striking in this examination of the pattern of high-risk hand-offs, was that hospitals in many countries focused on applying practices and ideas from "fields more skilled in the art of high-risk handoffs, including aviation, spaceflight and the military."

The Wall Street Journal noted that "after the changes, the average number of technical errors per handover fell 42% and "information handover omissions" fell 49%."

What a remarkable outcome achieved from such an unlikely collaboration.

Why is this case study important to the challenge of re-imagining government service delivery?

The re-imagination and transformation of government service delivery is not possible without an approach to understanding complex systems and gaining breakthrough insight by identifying common patterns across diverse domains. This is not the same thing as benchmarking common processes in the same or like industries or organisations: without this insight, benchmarking can also imbed unidentified risk.

An approach to understanding government service delivery as a complex system and an examination of common patterns in diverse domains will yield insight into problems (often unseen) and solution opportunities not envisaged. It will drive a quantum leap in understanding as to how the operating model could and should change.

A more specific example of this occurred in a recent global program of change that I led at the (then) Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). We were dealing with some 1500 different program variables of risk, time, revenue, projects, decisions, policy, legislation, process, and client communication in a global program of change driving an additional $700 million in government revenue. The linkages and inter-dependencies of the program in flight were complex but needed to be understood and tightly managed.

Well as it turns out, Qantas knows something about managing risks and inter-dependencies in flight. We heard about how the Qantas A380 engineering team was managing linkages, inter-dependencies and risk – and their use of a modeling tool called Holocentric to map the relationships of all the components of the A380 aircraft. If the context of one component changed, it would affect the risk through the system. We figured that if any organization knew about complex systems, inter-dependencies and risk, it would have to be Qantas. So we applied the insight from Qantas engineering into our management of risks and inter-dependencies,

and modeled this into Holocentric. We could see the impact of changing one variable – time for example – and how such a change would impact risk, revenue and service delivery. Applying the insight from the A380 – an operations engineering approach - strengthened assurance across a highly complex global service delivery change program.

Another example where identifying common patterns could provide enormous insight into the re-imagining of government service delivery relates to payments and other innovative solutions in emerging markets. In Africa and India, there are phenomenally creative payments and messaging solutions that have transformed the ability of remote communities, farmers and micro business to receive payments and stock information. The "advanced" markets and government sectors need to look broadly for such innovations. Given the challenges of remoteness and infrastructure in many isolated areas of Australia (a common situational pattern with Africa for example), these innovations from "emerging" markets could have applicability in the Australian (or other "advanced" economy) context.

Finally, the case study of the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London and the Ferrari Formula One Racing Team provides insight as to the orchestration of complex systems around a central figure – the patient or the racing car driver. There are many thought provoking ideas from this case study that help explore the notion of what it means to be "client centric" in a complex system.

Insight from The Pentagon Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)

The initiative that I am proposing - the moon shot of the digitization of government - is so massive that it cannot be pursued within business as usual structures. Nor must the enormity of what's at stake become trapped over long time frames. The UK GDS has a very clear and compelling strategy, and a very innovative and agile approach to orchestrating the effort.

The Harvard Business Review (HBR) recently carried an article about another similar approach - the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and its long track record of radical innovation. Among its phenomenal innovations, according to the HBR, are the Internet, global positioning satellites, stealth technology, and even micro-electrical-mechanical systems (MEMS) which are now pervasive in many products from air bags, ink-jet printers to video games like the Wii.

What struck me was the systematic approach DARPA takes to solving really complex problems – dealing with unknown and unknowable variables – and innovating along the way. And not with a big budget…

According to the HBR, DARPA's programs last on average about three to five years. In an approach similar to the UK GDS - although with an historic 50-year track record - DARPA brings together an eclectic group. *"About 100 temporary technical program managers and a vibrant mix of contract "performers" - individuals or teams drawn from universities, companies of all sizes, labs, government partners and non-profits - to do the project work."*

The DARPA approach has been described as unconventional but there is something in the organization of the effort, the complexity of the challenge, and the temporary nature of diverse dynamic teams pursuing ambitious goals, that has proved enduring for DARPA.

What is particularly compelling in the DARPA approach is what the HBR describe as a "special forces" model of innovation. Perhaps the DARPA “special forces” model of temporary targeted teams might be worth considering – together with the model offered by the UK GDS - as a new approach to driving the agenda for the digitization of government over the next decade.

The HBR article noted that the DARPA model has been tried in other organizations with mixed results. However, the two people who previously headed up DARPA and are now VPs at Google - Regina Dugan and Kaigham Gabriel - believe that the DARPA approach to breakthrough innovation is replicable. They speak about three essential elements.

Ambitious goals. The HBR article explains that "...the problems must be sufficiently challenging that they cannot be solved without pushing or catalyzing the science." Further - and I find this a compelling insight into the power of ambitious targets - "... that the presence of an urgent need for an application creates focus and inspires greater genius." "Catalyzing" and "genius"… imagine these two powerful forces being brought to the challenge of digitizing government. This goes way beyond the process driven approach of putting forms online.

Temporary projects teams. This is another similarity with the UK GDS approach: that DARPA brings together "...world class experts from industry and academia to work on projects of relatively short duration.” These are not open-ended research programs. Dugan and Gabriel emphasise that the “…intensity, sharp focus, and finite time frame make them attractive to the highest calibre talent, and the nature of the challenge inspires unusual levels of collaboration.” Imagine unleashing this level of collaboration on the challenge of digitising government – clearly the UK GDS has created this type of environment. Dugan and Gabriel point out that in this way the DARPA projects “…get great people to tackle great problems with other great people.”

Independence. DARPA has autonomy in selecting and running projects and the HBR article notes that this independence “…allows the organisation to move fast and take bold risks and helps it persuade the best and brightest to join.” It would seem that the attribute of independence would also have application to the challenge of digitising government. Dugan and Gabriel believe that such project groups function in ways that differ from the rest of the organisation; that breakthrough innovations may lead to major departures for how the organisation operates. I would agree with this – this is not business as usual. And nor does the attribute of independence diminish accountability.

The obvious point that Dugan and Gabriel make is that “when different outcomes are wanted, different approaches are necessary.”

Too Big to NOT Change – Red Tape and Digital

The real challenge with the *Government Online Strategy 2000* and the Coalition's *2013 policy for E-Government and Digital Economy* was / is not a lack of good intentions, because in both there are many good intentions.

The first real challenge in these two "online" strategies, separated by thirteen years, is that neither confronts the real problem – the need to transform and fully digitize the operations of government service delivery. The approach of the UK GDS confronts this challenge.

The second real challenge is if we want to change it, put a number on it. The UK's number is £1.7bn per annum. Personally, I think this is a modest estimate – but it is nevertheless a very big number.

So, what is Australia's number?

Back in 1996, the "Time for Business" Bell Report commissioned by the Howard Government estimated that the red tape compliance burden faced by business across the three levels of government was $17bn (seventeen billion dollars) per annum. Eighteen years on and with the increased scope and complexity of government administration and regulation, it can be assumed that the compliance burden would be multiples of that figure. Digitisation would cut through, cut duplication and make seamless many of these compliance processes. Any red tape reduction strategy is dependent on the digital transformation of service delivery.

What would the number for Australia be in 2014 – it would have to be billions – but we need a number as this puts an image and dimension to the problem.

This number is driven by the fact that government service delivery is a complex system – and the approach to the online agenda has made this complexity worse by exposing the fragmentation of all services, transactions, forms and information online. It is fair to say, that over the past 13 years, the client has never been faced with so much complexity. Putting the client at the centre of complexity is not client centric.

The current approach to client / citizen centric design and delivery has to change. Re-imagining does not mean re-inventing: it means de-constructing, redesigning and simplifying the service delivery model. Given the billions spent on R&D globally, it's in the public interest to have the world's best bringing capability, services and thought leadership to the machinery of government operations in a new model of digital service delivery.

Given what's at stake - the $100's millions spent on an agency by agency approach to citizen centric, billions in program outlays, the interests of individual citizens and businesses, and the broader national economic outcomes - a new approach is urgently needed and this challenge should be a national strategic priority.

The HBR DARPA article concludes with a compelling call to action:

"Our current efforts suggest that organisations in the public and the private sectors can dramatically increase their production of breakthroughs by adopting this [the DARPA] model. The products and services created

by these breakthroughs will improve the competitiveness of companies and countries.

They may also restore a belief, that we can, indeed, shape the future."

Organising the Effort

The effort to digitize the operations of government service delivery is equally about transformation *and* discovery – in the way that the DARPA, GDS and the case study of the Great Ormond Street Hospital in London illustrated.

The effort to deliver this transformation needs to be imaginative, scientific, measured and agile.

This is not about business as usual or an agency-by-agency approach and for that reason the transformation must be centrally driven. An approach similar to that of DARPA or GDS should be adopted.

A "Commission of Transformation" type effort should be set up – similar to "reconstruction commissions" set up following man-made or natural disasters. The "commission" should have DARPA style "special forces" project teams redesigning and delivering government services. This no longer assumes that "government services" will be delivered by the government: the digital delivery platform will be fluid and shaped by the client context.

The team must unapologetically be the world's best. Drawn from all sectors and disciplines: the best from the giants of the web; human factor specialists; designers; systems thinkers; modelers; architects; and innovators from both the developed and emerging markets. The sourcing of this talent will not be through a long drawn out procurement process but through an innovative process akin to the process of mobilizing reserves.

The team should be led by someone with the same passion and drive that Bill Gates has for his philanthropic missions. Recognising that this transformation has to make a difference in the lives of the most disadvantaged people.

Whilst driven hard centrally, this transformation will have a system-wide accountability framework – every decision will be referenced to this transformation.

The transformation will be budgeted for – and will yield a significant and enduring return to budget.

The timeframes need to be unapologetically aggressive and agile because what is at stake is so significant in terms of economic and human impact.

We need to re-think the notion of targets. Without a narrative, a context, a story around the citizen / client, targets are meaningless.

Putting hundreds or thousands of forms or transactions online is not a good thing. Putting complexity online is lazy because it is getting the citizen / client to do the hard work of figuring it out. Declare what "interactions" are going to be stripped away, abolished, combined or transformed – such as paper visa labels

and car registration stickers. State how the target will improve the client experience; and how this will be objectively measured or benchmarked.

The real target is the $ multi-billion productivity number and the client experience – clear and simple.

A vision of Transformation and Seamlessness – The Digital Moon Shot

The next 13 years cannot be like the past 13 years. There is an urgent need for a change of vision and strategy - a re-boot and re-imagination of approach.

The transformation must be expressed in terms of the *context* of the client - their story - not just the *concept* of the client. The patient, the car driver, the small business operator, the new mother are not necessarily different "clients" but they are different "contexts" and the client can be all of these simultaneously. Therein lies the challenge.

The client will truly be at the centre because they will determine it. This will be the situational "natural" centre for the client, not the current government paradigm. Consider for example, in the context where the client is in their car or any car, the car's operating system will interact with the motor vehicle authority prompting a renewal of the car registration and drivers licence, with new payment mechanisms to enable this.

Putting forms, transactions and services "online" is not transformation – it is absolutely online complexity – and an assumption that the client can figure it out. "Online" and "digital" also do not equal "ICT".

The strategy for the next decade must be about simplifying – making the interaction with government seamless – taking away the clutter.

Less is more.

Payments will be recognized and applied as a transformative capability.

In 2025, all the thousands of government forms will be long gone – there will be no need for them.

Digitisation will enable a powerful analytics capability delivering predictive decision support, yielding system-wide insight driving innovations in both policy options and service design.

This vision is about imagination. And we need to apply urgency about the future to minimize or avoid crisis in the present.

This new approach is urgently needed and this challenge should be a national strategic priority.

The business case? Here's the business case:

The $ multi-billion productivity number and the client experience…delivered…before this decade is OUT.

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Biography

Marie Johnson
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Marie Johnson is the Managing Director and Chief Digital Officer of the Centre for Digital Business, with extensive public and private sector experience in Australia and internationally in technology and innovation. Marie established the Centre for Digital Business to continue her advocacy and thought leadership as a trusted strategic advisor to government leaders and businesses globally in innovation and digital transformation.

From a transformation implementation perspective, Marie has led the strategy and implementation of very significant reform programs to the digital machinery of government: the Business Entry Point (a digital initiative of the three levels of government); the introduction of the Australian Business Number; digital credentials and authentication; technology and operating model design for the Access Card; digital identity and whole of government architecture; innovation in payments and information services; the creation of the BasicsCard; and implemented a digital operating model with differential pricing for visas and visa services generating an estimated additional $700 million in revenue.

At Microsoft, Marie led Microsoft's Public Services and eGovernment initiatives worldwide. The egovernment and digital initiatives Marie has led have been recognised globally as groundbreaking achievements by the United Nations and global think tanks.

For 5 years, Marie has been a member of the Accenture Global CIO Council Advisory Board. The Advisory Board provides a significant role in the governance of the Council, and developing insights and perspectives on the direction, content and research programming for the Accenture Global CIO Council activities.

Marie was named "Innovative CIO of the Year 2006-2007 – Australia" by the Australian Financial Review MIS Magazine.

In 2009, Marie and her team at the Department of Human Services received the "Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Sector Management – Gold Award" for the BasicsCard Project.

In October 2013, Marie was named one of Australia's "100 Women of Influence" by the Australian Financial Review & Westpac Group.

Marie is a Board Director of the Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA), which sets the agenda for the ICT industry in Australia.

In April 2014, Marie was appointed as a member of the NSW Government ICT Advisory Panel.

Marie is professionally committed to advancing women, particularly in ICT and is Vice President of Women in Information and Communications (WIC).

Marie has an MBA from the Melbourne Business School; a Bachelor of Arts; has completed the Harvard University John F Kennedy School of Government Senior Executive Fellows Program; and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Marie is professionally and personally committed to supporting philanthropic initiatives. A fitness enthusiast, Marie has run half-marathons and marathons including the London Marathon in 2012 in a team of 10 that raised $100,000 for the Leukaemia Foundation. Marie is a supporter of the Indigenous Marathon Project www.imp.org.au.

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