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## Federal Priorities

By Lisa Terry, Contributing Editor, VSR



In the weeks since President Obama's appointment of Vivek Kundra as federal CIO, speculation has been rampant on the potential impact of this new office on the IT industry.

But what about the channel? Just a fraction of VARs sell directly to the Federal government, but changes made in how government procures could trickle into the state, local and commercial worlds. Perhaps even more so, a federal CIO can harness the collective IT purchasing power of the feds to take a leadership

role in IT, an opportunity that's been neglected in the world of massive IT procurement contracts.

Kundra has said as much in early speeches, professing an affinity for promoting transparency and open government through IT, a stance he previously took as CIO of Washington, D.C. Other stated goals are to provide forums for more interaction and feedback among citizens and agencies, and to lower the cost of government operations; he'd like to borrow concepts such as cloud computing, which help businesses contain IT costs. The Feds currently run 10,000 systems; Kundra would like to use them more effectively.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

These are federal CIO priorities, according to the channel:

- Adopt commercial best practices.
- Tap the talents and knowledge of the channel.
- Use the bully pulpit to drive newer IT concepts.

### A Few Suggestions

One way of ensuring government is procuring the latest and greatest is a more open RFP process, suggests Michael Wilson, president and CEO of HealthCare Information Management, a health care solution provider. He'd like the feds to implement an RFP process "that mirrors the commercial IT channel that seeks to

identify and acquire leading edge technologies to deliver cost-effective and quality solutions and to seek client/vendor partnerships that build enduring relationships and long-term success for both organizations."

Using technology industry standard processes including purchasing, electronic proof of delivery and payment will also help those IT providers by improving the order to cash cycle time, adds Jeff Tazelaar, RFID product manager at [Lowry Computer Products](#), a wireless, RFID-EPC, barcode and data collection solutions provider and manufacturer.

But that's not the only thing that needs fixing. Tazelaar would also like to see better use of the hard-won contracts the Feds do award, usually following significant due diligence by the agency, the IT contractor and sub-contractors. "I feel the government needs to do more internally to highlight these contracts to all agencies and put procedures in place to stop 'shadow' IT groups from going around these contracts to purchase equipment and services that may not fit with the overall government architecture," he says.

He also advises forming an industry advisory board to consider agency needs and priorities against industry best practices, with the goal to create an overarching government IT strategy that "streamline spending and crate standards across all branches," he says.

### A Clear Focus

Shaping government IT is only part of the job -- or jobs -- there's discussion that the federal CIO will soon be complemented by a CTO. No matter the division of responsibilities, channel players would like to see these positions leveraged on behalf of the IT industry as a whole.

"The focus of these positions should be split, with about 25 percent of the job focused on driving government's use of IT, and 75 percent focused on the broad tech evangelist role," says Todd Thibodeaux, president and CEO, [CompTIA](#). "The bigger role is providing leadership and a bully pulpit on issues that create the best environment for the innovation and growth that will allow our industry to flourish. The focus should be on areas such as clearing the path for next-generation broadband; advocating for tech-friendly policies like expanded R&D tax credits for businesses and education credits for individuals; and promoting healthcare IT and green IT initiatives."



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4/16/2009

If you're looking for a first-hand account on the latest products and services to hit the channel, across all verticals, VSR's Spring 2009 edition of its Products to Watch supplement will surely get you started when it comes to choosing the latest specifications and target applications from the channel's leading vendors.

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#### The Keys to Success

Thursday, May 7, 2009 | 60 min.

#### Panelists:

- Todd Thibodeaux, President and CEO, [CompTIA](#)

- Gary Pica, President, [TruMethods](#)

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Join CompTIA president and CEO Todd Thibodeaux and MSP industry legend Gary Pica (former MSP who grew his business to over 7000 endpoints/\$6M per year) as they address what MSPs need to do to compete in today's changing landscape.

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