



# Digital Public Services Survey

Uncovering the issues that matter today.

# Introduction

Much has been made of the UK Government's Digital by Default agenda, and the civil service shift towards the 'modern workplace'. The former of course is focused on offering citizens new, more convenient ways to engage with government services online. The latter an attempt to drive efficiencies across the civil service through the adoption of new technologies and working practices.

One respondent referred to their department as "still operating in the Victorian times".

But with comments made by cabinet secretary, Jeremy Heywood, that the modern workplace "hasn't gone anywhere at all" we felt it appropriate to revisit the question and see what, if anything had changed.

So when analysing the evolution of Digital by Default, have departments embraced the philosophy set down by Francis Maud; that efforts should focus on the user not the producer of digital technologies?

And with the increasing emphasis on digital service provision, and the growing importance of enabling technologies, are today's civil servants more connected to one another, and more productive?

The answer, according to a survey of over 2400 civil servants conducted by Civil Service World on behalf of Unify, seems to be no.

The survey found that digital initiatives across the board have begun to stagnate.

- The majority of civil servants are not aware of any added momentum behind the push for a modern workplace, despite it's priority status
- Only around a third of respondents believe their departments have the skills and capabilities required to deliver the Digital by Default agenda

- Less than a quarter agreed that implementation of new technology has improved information sharing between departments
- Over the past three years less than a third of civil servants had access to technologies that help them work more efficiently

That there are problems is not in doubt. However there are moves afoot to address the issues - from the establishment of a pan-governmental accreditation policy via the PSN through to the appearance of a new set of technologies - such as WebRTC - that could very well deliver the kind of profound changes civil servants, and citizens, have been promised.

## About the research

This research has been commissioned by Unify, and was carried out by Civil Service World Research between November and December 2013.

The principle objective is to uncover the realities of today's digital civil service reforms, and to gain an understanding of the on-the-ground impact as perceived by civil servants across the seniority and departmental spectrum.

A breakdown of respondents can be seen overleaf.

## Level of seniority

	Total respondents	Senior group	Junior group	No grade information supplied
Base	2,439	606 (25%)	1,774 (73%)	59 (2%)

## Key government departments

	DWP	HMRC	NICS	MoJ	HO	DfT	BIS	DCLG	SG	MoD	Defra
Base	720	441	123	106	95	84	73	61	55	51	50

The survey was sent to a field of over 30,000 civil servants. 2,439 responses were received, establishing a solid benchmark for measuring civil servants' views.

## Chapter One: Security Fears Stifle Innovation

At July 2013's Civil Service Live conference, cabinet secretary, Jeremy Heywood, told the audience that one of the corner stones of the civil service reforms, the modern workplace, 'hadn't gone anywhere'. Addressing this issue was to be a priority moving forward.

Some six months on and the data suggests little has changed. The overwhelming majority of civil servants responding to our survey were unable to recognise any added momentum behind the push for the modern workplace. 45% had not noticed it move up the priorities list. But perhaps more worryingly, some 16% felt progress had stalled.

So what is this modern workforce? In short, it's the combination of three key factors: provision for flexible working, substantially improved IT tools and the

streamlining of security to enable more productive working.

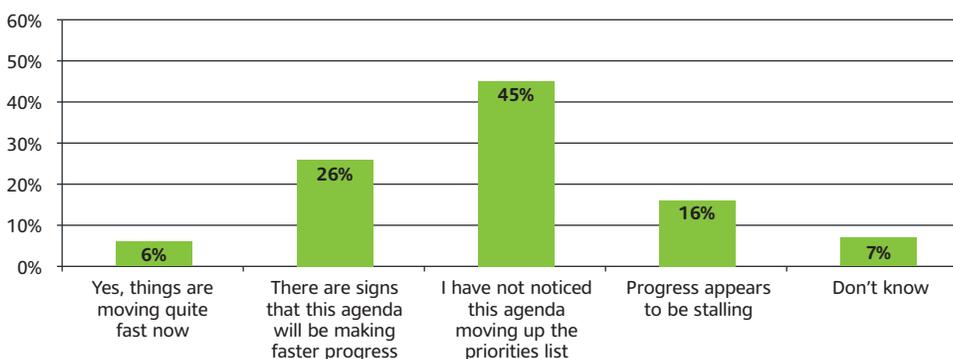
When asked to rate progress, less than a third (31%) had seen some positive change in flexible working arrangements.

The survey highlighted significant variation across departments. 60% of Defra respondents indicated they had seen substantial progress in flexible working arrangement, compared to just 20% in the Department of Communities and Local Government.

When discussion moved on to improved IT and streamlining security provision the numbers fell yet further. The percentage of those noting positive change in IT ranged from a maximum of 31% in the Department for Transport to 6% in HMRC. And were there substantive positive changes in security policy? Only according to 9% of the poll. In fact one respondent referred to their

Civil servants believe they would be more productive if the controls on the devices they use were less restrictive.

**Chart One: Have you noticed any added momentum behind the push for a modern workplace since July (and the secretary's comments)?**



Only 1 in 5 respondents felt IT was changing fast enough to make a difference.

department as “still operating in the Victorian times”.

While security is paramount within local and central government, the survey uncovers a real sense of frustration. Some 74% of civil servants feel they would be more productive if the controls on the devices they use were less restrictive. And fully 95% are unable to access the applications and services they use every day on their mobile devices.

This perennial security lock, a lack of access to business critical applications and the latest technologies contrasts wildly with the Government’s own drive to liberate supplier markets and its recently reported move to open technologies. And it certainly offers a damning indictment of the success of the modern workforce initiative to date.

At a time when private sector counterparts are rolling out secure home working and mobility programmes, Bring (and Choose) Your Own Device initiatives, and are actively engaging with constituents online and over social media, It seems today’s public sector policy makers have some catching up to do.

## Chapter Two: New Technology Implementation Too Slow

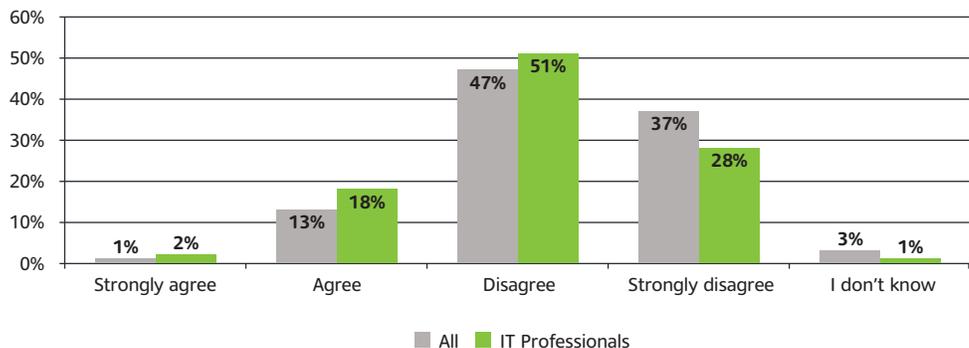
29% of respondents agree they have been able to access new technology over the past three years. And this has helped them work more efficiently. The vast majority however - over 7 out of 10 - did not.

That’s a problem. And not just for policy makers. Our survey tells us the pace of change is simply too. Just 14% were happy that new technologies are being rolled out fast enough to deliver any real value.

And while you might expect those IT professionals within the civil service to take a more positive view, you’d be disappointed. When asked the same question about pace of change, only 1 in 5 respondents felt IT was changing fast enough to make a difference.

The picture being painted is one of painfully slow deployment programmes that fail to take into account how people want to work today. While staff wait in limbo for solutions to appear, policy makers are failing to address that most fundamental of civil service reform objectives - staff performance.

**Chart Two: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I am satisfied that we are being given access to new technologies quickly enough.**



Despite the Government embracing a digital strategy that prioritises the shift to a modern workplace and new ways to work, the research uncovers a major expectation gap. Communication during leisure time is lightning quick, over multiple channels and on virtually any device. The same cannot be said in the office.

Certainly the number of communications devices civil servants use for work has increased over time - and it's a trend predicted to continue on into the future. But the most prevalent form of communication remains email - closely followed by voice calls.

We're overloaded by the former, while the latter is an expensive medium. Quite apart from the infrastructure and trunking costs, missed calls, voicemails and multiple messages take time - a resource cost with a true financial value.

Other digital channels are used significantly less frequently - text, social media, video conferencing and more. All of which constitute a missed opportunity to a greater or lesser extent.

### Chapter Three: Delivery challenges for Digital by Default

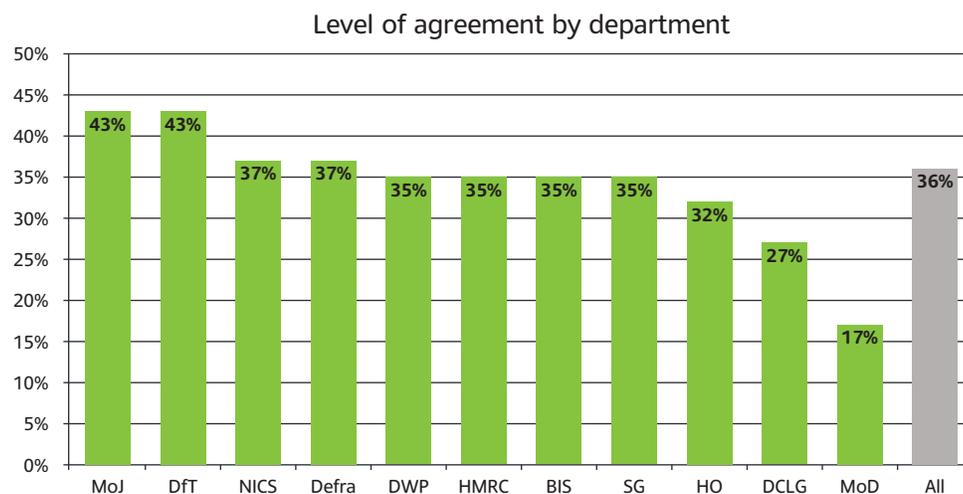
In delivering the Digital by Default agenda, departmental capabilities have come under the microscope. And the results suggest an initiative in trouble.

Just over a third (36%) of respondents agreed their departments have the skills and competencies needed to deliver against the goals of the initiative. Again, responses varied across departments, with the Ministry of Justice and Department for Transport topping the table - albeit at a relatively weak 43%. Just 17% of Ministry of Defense respondents agreed the skills were there - a clear indication the vast majority of civil servants need more convincing.

Fewer than 40% of civil servants believe their departments are demonstrating clear leadership when it comes to rolling out digital initiatives. Similarly, little more than half (52%) of those working in the main government departments know who their departmental Digital Leader is. Or indeed whether they have one.

Civil servants naturally expect to be able to replicate their preferred communications methods at work. But they can't.

**Chart Three: To what extent do you agree with the following statement about the Digital by Default agenda: My department has the skills and capabilities required to achieve its aims.**



Departmental capabilities have come under the microscope. And the results suggest an initiative in trouble.

Responses suggest that a lack of visibility and experience are hampering digital leaders; although in the departments in which they are being recognised, improvements such as intranet replacements and digital academies are being seen.

On a pan-governmental level there is a clear disparity between strategy and implementation where the Digital by Default initiative is concerned. Of those working in IT positions, 28% are not aware of digital initiatives being led within their own departments - suggesting a problem in communicating the strategy across the government.

But perhaps the biggest challenge lies in demonstrating the value of new technology. The survey highlighted that many civil servants are unable to make the link between new IT implementations and improvements to service delivery.

While 39% of those surveyed linked the improved delivery of public services to the implementation of new technology, 17% stated they didn't know whether digital initiatives had had any impact. And with citizen service the very corner stone of Digital by Default, this raises yet more communications concerns.

Finally, in a damning response, just 26% of respondents believe significant progress has been made over the past year in centring digital services around the user rather than the producer. As a key priority on the government's agenda, policy makers would have been hoping for a more positive response.

## Chapter Four: Bringing It All Together. The Unify Perspective

So despite the rhetoric, and the money being invested in digital reform programmes, civil servants of every grade are seeing little positive impact. At least not yet.

And while over-zealous security policies are stifling innovation and strangling productivity is a cry we have heard before, it's an important one.

Failure to address these issues provides a clear and present danger to both policy makers and operation staff in achieving their stated objectives of performance and citizen service.

The shift to a modern workspace must happen, if for no other reason than cost containment and savings. But it cannot do so under the terms of today's security requirements - that certainly provide information assurance but also prevent civil servants from working to their full potential.

It is perhaps inevitable that the campaign stagnated.

Security should grow organically with the modern workplace and give civil servants the freedom to work productively and collaboratively, while securing government data. But there is light on the horizon. The pan-governmental accreditation policy that the PSN implements should improve interoperability levels between government departments - helping to tap into the latent potential of the network rather than holding it back.



The willingness to adapt to new technologies outside the security sphere will be crucial in accelerating change and creating that user-centric vision so central to Francis Maud's strategy. Approaches such as WebRTC, the next generation of unified communications, offer opportunities to centre government communications around the citizen. They should be evaluated.

As we have seen, time is a factor. But take too much of it and opportunities will disappear. The civil service is already behind in its methods of communication. Staff enjoy a world of powerful mobile (and social) connectivity at home and it's time to translate at least some of this into their professional lives.

Buying frameworks have a role to play - and the UK is well served with the PSN and G-Cloud to name just

two. The rather more open market and competitive nature of these frameworks offer cost savings opportunities, simplified procurement processes and support faster roll-outs.

Ultimately, it all comes back to communication and information sharing between colleagues, departments and citizens. We've seen how a lack of internal communication is playing havoc with joined up approaches to service delivery. And we've heard how pivotal a role communication is targeted to become in citizen engagement.

There is, therefore, a clear need for action. But if today's communication-enabled civil service reforms are going to succeed, it's also time to keep the dialog open between policy makers, digital leaders and the civil servants at the sharp end.

## About Unify

Unify is one of the world's leading communications software and services firms, providing integrated communications solutions for approximately 75 percent of the Fortune Global 500. Our solutions unify multiple networks, devices and applications into one easy-to-use platform that allows teams to engage in rich and meaningful conversations. The result is a transformation of how the enterprise communicates and collaborates that amplifies collective effort, energizes the business, and enhances business performance. Unify has a strong heritage of product reliability, innovation, open standards and security.

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