

Chad Fulgham

Chief Information Officer
Federal Bureau of Investigation

By Michael J. Keegan

Delivering Reliable and Effective Technology Solutions



After 9/11, the Federal Bureau of Investigation fundamentally altered its priorities and expanded its mission. This transformation has involved going beyond its traditional law enforcement identity to become a core part of the nation's counter-terrorism intelligence apparatus. "When you look across the intelligence community, you have some 16 agencies and the FBI is now one of the big six," says Chief Information

Officer Chad Fulgham. This has also required that the agency restructure itself and build new capabilities.

"Information technology," exclaims Fulgham, "continues to play a critical role in enabling the FBI to meet its expanding and increasingly complex missions." Since joining the FBI from the private sector in December 2008, Fulgham has sought to evolve the FBI's IT capabilities to improve operational effectiveness and enhance organizational flexibility. He underscores the necessity of modernization and enhancements. "Right now, of the almost \$8 billion invested in the FBI [annually], about \$1.4 billion is spent on information technology. As a CIO, I provide leadership and strategic direction. I need to ensure we have the right people, make the right investments, and have the right governance process in place to vet all major IT projects."

Fulgham's IT strategic vision focuses on five core areas: infrastructure, information sharing, transforming the workforce, improving IT management, and enhancing customer satisfaction. He envisions a vastly improved and agile IT environment that will better serve an increasingly proactive enterprise. He also recognizes the importance of

approaching it from an enterprise perspective. "Last year we completed our Next Generation Network project. NGN was a complete replacement of the domestic network at over 800 locations in about a 10-month period," explains Fulgham. He underscores that this next-generation infrastructure and its emerging technologies will provide a more resilient and agile environment that aligns with industry best practices. "We're finishing a second major program called Next Generation Workspace. It involves [implementing] all the latest and greatest unified communication and collaboration tools," reports Fulgham. NGW will equip FBI users with new and efficient ways to communicate and collaborate across the globe, and enable migration to a true shared-services environment that will further improve effectiveness and efficiency beyond the FBI, making a real difference for the entire intelligence and law enforcement community.

The FBI, like most federal agencies, also seeks to rightsize its data-center footprint. "We probably have more than we need," acknowledges Fulgham. "[Procuring] data center services [is] going to enable us ... to consolidate a number of facilities."

Data centers may store the wealth of information essential for the bureau to connect the dots, but like most agencies, the FBI requires effective strategies for retaining intellectual resources and institutional memory. "We have the Office of the Chief Knowledge Officer that reports directly to me. Over the last two years, I've increased the size of our knowledge office eight-fold. We do have a lot of information and we need to come up with better strategies on how to share information within the bureau, with our partners, and to capture that knowledge for future use," explains Fulgham. To that end, in concert with the Next Generation Workspace, the FBI has implemented a SharePoint environment and has rolled out MySites,

A close-up, profile view of a man with short brown hair, wearing a dark grey suit jacket, a white dress shirt, and a red and white patterned tie. He is looking slightly to the left and appears to be speaking, with his mouth open. His hands are visible at the bottom of the frame, gesturing as if in conversation. The background is out of focus, showing green foliage and a wooden structure. A small gold name tag is pinned to his lapel.

“We started reorganizing a few months after I came on board. I tried to turn the [IT branch] into a service-oriented and business-aligned organization. The role of a chief information officer in the federal government does vary from place to place, but I feel very fortunate, having the level of support and backing I do from the director and deputy director.”



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which, according to Fulgham, is like combining Facebook and Ancestry.com. The FBI also created Bureaupedia—an internal Wiki that allows different parts of the organization to contribute information and retain knowledge. “We also are pursuing the Data Integration and Visualization System (DIVS). It brings our entire organization together to create a federated search function across all our repositories. We will then add a layer of analytical tools ... to help our intelligence analysts and agents better connect the dots.”

Fulgham has restructured his office to make it more business-aligned and service-oriented. He acknowledges that the changes were so dramatic that, along with the approval of FBI Director Mueller and Attorney General Holder, they required congressional approval. “I feel very fortunate, having the level of support and backing I do from the director and deputy director,” admits Fulgham.

His newly crafted branch places IT customer needs front and center. He added two functions—a marketing function and customer liaison officers. “We can create the best widgets in the world. If our customers don’t know about it, then there’s really no value there.” Critical to this vision is seeing information technologies as “customer-centric” tools and mission enablers. Because Fulgham wants his branch to concentrate on value-added services and customer relations, he created customer liaison officers. CLOs are two-person teams that actually map against FBI’s major IT customers. “I pay for the CLOs, but they live with the customers. The goal is for us to understand what we’re doing well, what we’re doing that helps, but more importantly, where are we falling short. The CLOs bring that information back to the IT branch, so we’re able to address [it],” explains Fulgham.

No doubt Fulgham’s strategic vision is inspired by his private-sector experience. He admits working in the federal government has been different and somewhat challenging. “The hardest thing is cultural. Sometimes it’s hard for people to accept new ideas and new ways of thinking.” He also acknowledges that procuring best-of-breed technology can

be difficult. “The Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) is there to ensure an ethical, open, and fair opportunity to compete for government business, but it has a very difficult time adjusting to the speed at which IT is moving today.” Like most federal agency CIOs, Fulgham recognizes the challenge of having his office properly resourced. “I think every CIO will say they don’t have enough resources. We are very appreciative of the support that the administration and the Congress have bestowed on the FBI, but we’re always looking for more resources to enhance our performance.”

A proud graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Fulgham understands both the value of strong leadership skills and the importance of inculcating certain qualities that make an effective leader. “I think it boils down to a few things,” explains Fulgham. “First and foremost, it’s about your character. Without integrity and transparency, I think you’re going to be hard-pressed getting the backing of an organization and its people. The second thing is, you must have a vision for what you want to do and what you want to accomplish. I think this aspect connects with the ability to ask really probing questions, to challenge the status quo. The final thing is truly caring about what you do. If you don’t have that passion every morning [when] you get up, then you’re probably not going to be able to inspire other people either.” ■

To learn more about the Federal Bureau of Investigation, go to www.fbi.gov



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