



Technology Recommendations for the New Administration

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Technology Recommendations for the

New Administration:

Some Thoughts from Industry

By Dr. Ramon Barquin

Americans have spoken and we have now elected the 45th president of our great nation. While it happens to be that our 44th and 45th president are the same person, Barack Obama, every quadrennial election ushers in a new administration that will attempt to embody the policy promises of the campaign and feature fresh faces in the new Cabinet.

A new administration also offers the opportunity for input from different quarters on how to address the major challenges facing our society. The expectations are that there will be new ears, a potential willingness to listen, and that the pressures and crises that have emerged in recent years may need actions and treatment different from the past.

One source of input to the new administration that I have been involved with for the last few months is the Quadrennial Government Technology Review (QGTR) commissioned by the ACT-IAC Institute for Innovation. For those of you that don't know, ACT-IAC, it is the American Council for Technology (ACT) – Industry Advisory Council, a non-profit educational organization and a unique public-private partnership dedicated to helping government use technology to serve the public. The stated purposes of the organization are to “bring industry and government executives together to exchange information, support professional development, improve communications and understanding, solve issues, and build partnership and trust, thereby enhancing government’s ability to serve the nation’s citizenry.” (Additional information can be found at www.actgov.org.)

When the QGTR initiative was announced, its purpose was specified as “to take a strategic look at the role that technology can play in achieving federal government objectives and missions.” A similar effort was undertaken four years ago, and its results were found to be helpful by the incoming Obama Administration.

The Director of the IAC Institute of Innovation, Sara DeCarlo, established a Steering Committee to provide guidance and governance to the QGTR, and named two well-respected former Federal CIOs, now retired, to co-chair the group: Molly O’Neill (EPA) and Anne Reed (USDA). This group deliberated long and hard to select a series of national challenges where technology could be part of the solution. The Steering Committee – of which I am a member – selected five areas where technology in particular could make a dent: federal financial management, national security, healthcare, education, and citizen engagement. Furthermore, because of the importance of IT in the business of governing,

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one additional paper was commissioned to address the importance of aligning government mission with information technology.

The actual preparation of the core papers was undertaken by teams drawn from IAC member companies and several individuals serving as liaison to the government. The outcomes are intended to reflect the collective thinking of the community in general.

Because of their importance as sources of fresh thinking and innovation, I plan to review and comment on each one of these papers in future editions of this monthly column. It should make for interesting reading given their relevance in these critical times.

As we prepare ourselves for the coming budget battles around “sequestration,” the “fiscal cliff” or however you wish to refer to it, our government will continue to operate to the degree that Congress funds it through the budget process. How is it going to impact our daily lives? Think air traffic control system, social security payments, Medicare and Medicaid, let alone border protection, food inspections and veterans’ health, hence the importance of understanding the innovative ways in which technology can assist our **federal financial management**.

In the wake of the debate over the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act – better known as ObamaCare – it became clear not just that **healthcare** is a huge issue for our country, but also that we don’t all agree on the specifics of the problem or what the solution should be. Much of what is discussed today is focused on illness when a focus on wellness and prevention may bring greater impacts on our citizens. There are no easy answers relative to the dollars that we collectively spend or the approaches that we should take as a nation. Yet this is one of the key challenges our 45th president will have to confront.

The complexities of our country’s **national security** are vast, and new challenges seem to emerge on a daily basis. We have gone from the clearly defined bi-polar world of the Cold War, where at least we knew who the enemy was, to the uncertainties of today. Today we must still deal with unfriendly countries arming themselves with weapons of mass destruction, but we are also as often confronted by non-state actors, terrorists adhering to extremist ideologies or criminal groups choosing cyberspace as their preferred battlefield. It’s a different scenario and one to which we must adapt. In an area that is understood by most to be the responsibility of the government, are there innovative technology initiatives around information sharing and identity management that could help a new administration?

Education has been a hallmark of our history as a nation. Reading, writing and ‘rithmetic in the one-room red schoolhouse was as much a symbol of the soul of America as were the covered wagons of our pioneers or the workers building the transcontinental railroad. Well, our educational system is now broken, especially when we look at the critical fields that will define the future: science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). We have thrown an inordinate amount of resources at education and have little to show. Are

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there things that our government could do with technology to alleviate the problem?

One of the things that the explosion of social media has made clear is that **citizen engagement** takes on new importance and meaning. The relationship of government and governed can never be the same. We are all empowered to be protagonists by having our say in a medium where the pressure of the masses can make itself heard very quickly as hits on a website or views of a YouTube posting are mobilized for political effect. What does this mean for our leadership? What are the emerging models of governance, and how can we ensure they are for the greater good? Should our government be acting differently as a result of these new realities?

Lastly, given that information is the central pervasive theme that governments must deal with to accomplish their charters, how can we be sure that our information technology plans and infrastructures are clearly aligned with the government's mission? We cannot aspire to hit Mars if our launch rockets and navigational systems are pointing to Venus. **Alignment** is of the essence, and any recommendation on how to achieve it would be useful to a new administration.

So the task at hand over the next few months will be to provide you a preview of what these industry recommendations are for the 45th president. The new administration may choose to ignore them, but we felt it our duty as citizens to put them forth.

You can access the reports of Quadrennial Government Technology Review at:
<http://www.actgov.org/quadrennial>.

About the Author

Dr. Barquin is the President of [Barquin International](#), a consulting firm, since 1994. He specializes in developing information systems strategies, particularly data warehousing, customer relationship management, business intelligence and knowledge management, for public and private sector enterprises. He has consulted for the U.S. Military, many government agencies and international governments and corporations.

He had a long career in IBM with over 20 years covering both technical assignments and corporate management, including overseas postings and responsibilities. Afterwards he served as president of the Washington Consulting Group, where he had direct oversight for major U.S. Federal Government contracts.

Dr. Barquin was elected a National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) Fellow in 2012. He serves on the Cybersecurity Subcommittee of the Department of Homeland Security's Data Privacy and Integrity Advisory Committee; is a Board Member of the Center for Internet Security and a member of the Steering Committee for the American Council for

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Technology-Industry Advisory Council's (ACT-IAC) Quadrennial Government Technology Review Committee. He was also the co-founder and first president of The Data Warehousing Institute, and president of the Computer Ethics Institute. His PhD is from MIT.

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Editor's note: More articles from Dr. Barquin are available in the BeyeNETWORK's [Government Channel](#).