Ep. 24 Federal Digital Transformation through Digital Adoption

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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Welcome to the federal tech podcast. My name is John Gilroy, and I will be your moderator. Today, we have the company called Walk me in the studio. We have Billy Biggs, the Vice President public sector. Now I deal with a lot of companies. I've done hundreds of interviews, I think I was at an event and I talked to someone I said, who should have in the podcast. And they said, once you have it folks walk me on and I said, well walk me I've never really heard of him, and what can they do for the Federalist? And I said, Hey, let's get Billy on the show and find out what walk me can do for our federal audience. So So Billy, it's going to set up for you. Why don't you give us a real quick, nutshell description of walk me and we'll take it from there, please.

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Yeah, John, appreciate it super happy to be here. So as you mentioned, you know, walk me is certainly a new category of technology and what we call a digital adoption platform. So simply put, what does that mean? That means that basically, we're looking at the enterprise tech stacks in the federal government and trying to ask the question, is the federal government getting the value out of that tech stack? Right? So we know there's usability issues, adoption issues, there are problems with every piece of software in the federal government. The unique thing about what me is what we have is an authoritative data source. And what I mean by that is we can understand every single user's journey, in every single application, understand what's working well, what's what's not working well. And for the things that aren't working well, we have the ability through our no code editor to create what we content that acts as an overlay on the application, think of it like a GPS to really, you know, improve the user experience of the underlying application.

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I'm trying to figure out and understand the name of the company, I finally get it. I've done a lot of research, and I fully understand it. So. So let's say department interior hires John Gilroy. And they say, Okay, you gotta learn this, you got to do this, get on that. And I'm gonna sit back and go, Candice, walk me through this real Yeah. So I guess that's what walk me is all about, you have to worry about a manager taking time from her day. But you can help someone walk through learning a new software system, because every agency is going to have a different group, isn't it?

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That's exactly right. And think about how traditional onboarding enablement has been done today. Really, in private and federal government, if you roll out a new piece of software, you go through a bunch of trainings and change management, and it's kind of like a beat well shot, right? And then you kind of forget about it. But what happens when you need that help or assistance in the time of need, and you haven't taken training, and you know, now you're being 120, or six months later, right? It becomes obsolete. So for us, we have the ability to provide that just in time training and learning in the application at the moment of need super compelling value proposition to the federal government, given the 1000s of applications and each agency's tech stack.

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Well, here we are in August, September 2022. I think if one word would describe this arrow, and its changes, I mean, such a changes and David Bowie, I mean, there's a lot going on the federal government, there are many, many programs. I mean, their programs are spending billions of dollars on infrastructure, on roads, I did a whole show on just satellite access and high speed access in Alaska. I mean, there's so many things going on. Now, what's happening is the federal government is hiring new people. And I think you just pick up the newspaper, you know, the IRS is hiring all kinds of people. And, and so what happens, you can't just hire 5000 people, and then then Billy bigs gonna sit them all down and say, No, walk with me in this, and I'll show you exactly, you can't do it, you can't scale. So So onboarding is going to be really important for many federal agencies, isn't it? That's a

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layup for us, right? So onboarding experience for a new employee. It really anywhere, but simply put, you know, 5000 10,000, all these people coming into the government new opportunities, you're exactly right, John, there's not an effective program out there that can handle that, right. So even if you were successful, in some kind of odd situation, to be able to enable people onboard them effectively, think about the productivity, loss of having to sit through hours and hours of training for each application, versus just getting the application need, or the need that you need at the time of need in the application versus sitting in the classroom. So traditional change management, traditional onboarding, we think of it in much different ways. And it will provide that content exactly when the user needs it. And we can segment it by a user, right? And so the important thing to understand is, if you're a power user, and you're in, for example, Salesforce or ServiceNow, or workday every single day, you might not need what me content, you might just be able to kind of go around or use it yourself. But for the folks that only log in once a week, once a month, that becomes much more important and compelling.

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And, you know, in my little business here, I may use an application just once every quarter. And then when I have to go back to do something, I can't remember everything that leads up to it. And so if I had a virtual assistant built into the software, maybe that's, that's more like a virtual assistant built in software that can sit back and help me with that, and be a good idea. Now, it would seem to me that, okay, John Gilroy, gets hired by the IRS, okay, and is known to show me how I'm supposed to handle let's say, ServiceNow, let's say Salesforce or something. I'm gonna place a service ticket. And let's get back a week later, I learned and then another week later figured out and then it's three weeks, and I get a little minor problem resolved. That could

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have been, so I'm thinking that just helping with onboard, he's going to be just just take one of the last just service tickets there. Isn't that just one tiny aspect of it?

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Yeah, I mean, look, service tickets, one of the one of the things that we talk often with prospects is like, the opportunity to get started with walk me is overwhelming, right? They think about the or the possible, and they're completely overwhelmed with everything they can do with the platform. So sometimes I just simplify, say, look, go to your level one helpdesk on the service tickets that your population is submitting, let's start with a top 10 list. All those users that are having issues and submitting tickets, I'm quite confident that we'll dig into those areas, we can probably provide some assistance in app on the App, it's having problems and really cut that list down, we may not be able to solve every single one of them. But I assure you that that level one or zero helpdesk, we can certainly reduce significantly the number of tickets coming in from an onboarding perspective, it changes it significantly. And then you can completely automate the onboarding experience. And again, by segment, user segmentation, by function, functional area, or even if you're an individual contributor, or leader, all those onboarding experiences are going to be uniquely different.

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And anyone who's worked a help desk or monitors work desk know, it's the Pareto Principle 80% of the questions of the same three things. Okay, so, so one of the best restaurants in San Francisco, where the day trips to San Francisco, where can I do with my kids in San Fran, it's gonna be the same questions over and over again, if there's somebody to automate it that's going to reduce things real quickly from the beginning.

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That's right. And think about one of the unique things in federal government, just the problem with data integrity, right. So the federal government, as we've learned over the past 1520 years with enterprise software, is a lot of freeform text. And freeform text is a formula for disaster and data integrity problems, right. And so that massive data issue that we have the federal government, you know, we have some some unique features in our platform that can kind of constrain the data, right? So if you're having data issues, and look, every agency has data issues, what if there was a mechanism, and no matter what application third party, custom cops gods, you can actually validate the data that's going into the system. So you're not creating a multitude of problems on the back end, again, super compelling value proposition in our product that a lot of prospects are leaning into.

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So if we're up to 30,000 feet above DC, maybe in an airplane or something, and we look at problems that the government has? No, so everyone has challenges. And so So what would you say is the biggest challenge related to managing enterprise software in the federal government? Is it this digital adoption? Or what I think the big challenges?

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Yeah, I think a couple things. I think one of the things that the government's consistently challenged with is the acquisition of new capabilities into the mission. Right, so innovative procurement, like we've heard about the Valley of Death time and time again. So what me being introduced to the government, right, it'll take two years for the government to actually buy us, because it takes that long to budget cycles and things like that. So that's the number one, but if I think about actually, in Michigan, is certainly customer experience and its customer experience for government employees, as well as external constituents. You know, Joe Biden signed the customer experience executive order in December. And one of the things that I specifically remember being called out is that the manual paperwork burden on the public is estimated at 9 billion hours, right. And it was referred to as a time tax. And I thought that was extremely compelling. But then I got to thinking, Well, if that's how much the burden is on manual paperwork, think about the manual burden for enterprise software, where folks in mission really spend more time wrestling with the technology to do their job, versus actually doing their job. And I don't have any data points on this. But if it's 9 billion hours for manual paperwork, and really all we're doing most of the time, the average government employee is using enterprise technology. It's got to be considerably more so think about the increase in productivity, if there was a mechanism for us to make those user journeys more efficient across the 1000s of applications in the go. I'm at Texas Tech. And I can't stop thinking about that, and particularly on getting time back, because we all can appreciate that time is a resource we just can't get back. And so for everyone that uses enterprise technology, we've all struggled with 123 a dozen applications where we refuse to use it because of the experience.

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Well, the purpose of this podcast is to show government, federal technology, people how to save money, and increase security. So I got to ask you the Tom Cruise question, it's the Show Me the Money question. So show me that show me the ROI on this. And so if you're talking to a leader, let's say and don't say he labor, and he's gonna say, okay, belly? Well, how does this has it saved me money? What? Where's your ROI on this?

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Yeah, I mean, I think there's a couple of different things. So the way I slice it is like, look, how much of your enterprise stack tech stack that you are paying for that you can probably deprecate. Right? So if you think about that authoritative data source that I talked about, where we can see how many users are using the application, what their journeys are, where they're getting caught up, right, you may be spending millions of dollars on an application that only a dozen people are using over the course of a year, right? Is that an effective ROI? Probably not. On the flip side, right, if you know, you're using an application that your entire agency uses for one reason or another, but you know, I'll just use an example of submitting an expense report, right? We all probably loathe submitting expense reports, for one reason or other no matter what application you use. But if it takes you an average of 30 minutes to do that, and there was a mechanism to cut that down to five minutes. And you can, you know, accelerate that over the course of the entire agency that's meaningful time and productivity back so they can focus on something else. And then you compound all the other technologies that they've used in the same form or fashion. And that has really an astounding effect on productivity.

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Early in my career, I work for real big companies, Fortune, Fortune 50 companies. And I'll tell you, it's very difficult to get a handle on many things. And, and when I did my research on walk me, it seems to be very popular in these big, larger enterprise organizations. And maybe as some of the analytics that you offer, is that one of the reasons why I mean, I read the numbers, I mean, a lot of fortune 100 companies use your service. Is that why? Because it's specifically designed for these large organizations get a hand on application training?

12:22

Yeah, I mean, if you think about fortune 500, obviously, you know, some of those organizations are out in the front of really digital transformation and a lot of areas, right. And to do that, effectively, they have to understand from a quantitative perspective, what's going on the tech stack, and this is not, you know, survey in the population, whether you like this application or not, I've been I've been interviewed a lot. I'm not anti survey, but you're gonna get a lot of different opinions on those surveys, and probably not meaningful results on anything that you can impact, right. And so for the fortune 500, absolutely anything into, you know, using our insights product, because they want to understand where the pain points are, and you can't actually manage what you can't measure. And that's an important thing to understand that there's now capabilities for us going into federal, that didn't exist in the mission before from a quantitative perspective.

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I've done a lot of public speaking my day, and there's always someone in the back of the room, who may email me a week later or afraid to talk and want to learn more, but doesn't want to go face to face or wondering what's your website this morning, I saw this thing called the Digital adoption Institute. So this may be a place for someone who's listening, let's say it's six months from now, there's snow on the ground or something, people looking at digital adoption, they they listen to this podcast, and they want to learn more. And so there's a sensitive we can go there and and learn a whole lot about this just adapting to new types of software for onboarding or all kinds of reasons. Is that what it is? Institute? Yeah, so

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it's a community, right? We think about digital adoption is a new category of technology as a new community, right. And so you don't have to be a customer or prospect or a partner, you can go and sign up and find out some of the cool things that we're working on. Just to educate yourself a little bit more on capabilities. You know, partnerships, how we think about going to market our value proposition and use cases, I certainly encourage all your listeners to go check us out, you can start there, there's no commitment. And you certainly like I said, don't have to be a prospect or a client

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watched a YouTube video with one of your company founders this morning. And he talked about an overlay. So so I don't want to get too technical here. But generally speaking, if you're here on the metro, somebody want to explain it technically, it seems to be an overlay that works in the browser. How does the technology actually

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work? Yeah, and in the simplest format, right, so we deploy via extension, browser extension. And so what that means is long gone are the days of hardcore integration from one application to another. We're calling API's. We don't need the underlying application data source to be effective and to actually render our content and That's a massively compelling argument in that, you know, the value for the government in particular, is always worse going through as long as it's not too painful. And so our deployment, really, quite frankly, is in the number of weeks versus months and years. And so what I have found talking to folks over the last eight months, if anything, as the government has moved to the cloud over the last, you know, 10 1215 years, depending on what agency you're talking about, you know, there's a lot of benefits to that. But one of the negative aspects of going to the cloud, if you're in the federal government, was your inability to customize these applications to your liking. In one aspect, you now have the ability to customize the underlying application through our overlay technology. I didn't think about this as a potential use case before. But certainly it's resonate with a lot of folks that we're we're talking about in the market.

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Well, that's an interesting observation made about the unique application for the federal government. I know, you can take a big company like Exxon or Progressive Insurance, and say, Well, this is large enterprise and and NIH is sort of a large enterprise. And there's some similarities there. So from your perspective, you've seen both what, what makes us federal software development experience unique?

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Well, I think, most importantly, just the number of custom applications that are in the federal government. And there's specific reasons why, right, so as we've gone to cloud over the last 10 1215 years, right, there's a number of SaaS providers that provide applications that really mean a lot of requirements out of box. Certainly, there's there's a number of custom applications in the government that had to be custom, specifically, because third party providers, you know, couldn't support that. And so as I think about internally here, walk me on any of the applications I need to log into or used to run the business. I can't think of a single custom application that we use, everything is SAS, everything is SSO through Okta. Right, I have all my my dashboard there, whether I'm using Salesforce or Clary, or logging into my timesheet approving PTO, whatever those things are, none of those applications are custom. However, think about DoD in particular, right. And applications that support the warfighters mission, you're not going to go to a big tech company out there in Silicon Valley. Or if you do, it's probably few and far in between. Right. So there's a number of custom applications that have been developed over time to support unique mission requirements. I think that's the biggest difference that I've seen in my career against, you know, comparing the federal government to the private sector, for example.

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One topic always comes up is legacy applications and your integration with legacy applications. I was a couple years back talking to someone at Department of, of education. And they talked about they had an old ABA holder, well, it was written b before C. And so So, you know, I'm probably not exaggerating them with other agencies must have similar problems, as long as and I'm sure commercial companies have legacy applications, too. And so tell me, though, how do you address legacy applications with your brand? spankin new technology?

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Yeah, look, I'll be honest, if it's written in B, I probably cannot help you.

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Yeah, I don't know who can't either. Maybe Ben Franklin, maybe that's what's called Beat.

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Yeah, I was smart enough to move out of computer science into information systems, some hardcore programming when I was in college. So I'm empathetic to some of those legacy programming languages. But look, the way I the way I think about it, if the application can render in a browser, we can support it. And the one nice thing that we've incorporated here into some of our go to market capabilities, is we do what's called a tech validation. So before we sign any contract with any customer, we make sure that what me content can render in the browser on the application that we intend to use walk me on, that's a very important factor, because the last thing we want to do is sell the ability to solve business problems, or, you know, Mission issues and the enterprise tech stack. And then we have issues deploying. So we've incorporated this stage in our sales cycle to ensure that we have 100% confidence that we can in fact, support that application. And to the extent that we can't, and we can't resolve those challenges, quite frankly, will say, team were not able to render on this particular application. Let me be upfront with you that unfortunately, because of legacy coding and legacy programming languages, or combination of both, this is not a good use case for us. Let's figure out perhaps a different problem to solve and one that we're confident over the long term, we can provide value.

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Yeah, I think it's very wise to be careful. So you don't run in to a pond and find out it's over the waters over your head. Your website says you have 2000 corporate customers. It's a big deal. I'll bet none of your corporate customers have the same profile as the FBI, the CIA certain. It's called the intelligence community agencies. And a lot of them like to have software on prem on premises, not in the cloud, and so on. Do you offer both or just one or the other? How would you answer someone from the FBI who calls you up next week?

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Yeah, I mean, we we're seeing that in market right now. So we have had like a 10 year headstart in really the private sector. And so that category is well respected and understood in the federal government. Right. In the last eight months, we've been doing a lot of market education and demand gen through our FSI, our federal system integrator partners, but certainly you're spot on, there are certain use cases after we demo, the the art of the possible to where quite frankly, we don't have the clearance to understand how they made us walk me, right. And whether that's in the IC community, or some of the independent agencies, we do offer a self hosted option. It's not the preferred approach, we'd rather use our SaaS offering. But certainly in the situations that present the opportunity to solve some of these major adoption challenges, we do have some flexibility there. So we're seeing an increase in DOD, I see. And obviously, civilian is sort of in my mind waiting for FedRAMP certification, which we expect early next year. But the opportunities on use cases, like I said, when I joined the

company, versus what I'm seeing now, it's really exciting to see what prospects and clients and partners are kind of leaning into on where and why they might use LogMeIn. Hey,

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six months from now snow on the ground, we'll get in talk about FedRAMP. And walk me might be a good opportunity down the road, maybe go live and maybe thrash convention center or someplace where they have an event in town, when I was thinking about the beginning of our conversation, the IRS and they're hiring all these people. And the phrase that pays into is equity. And so they're gonna hire people of all ages, of all ethnic backgrounds, all language backgrounds mean, in Alaska and Florida. And my all it means is a wide range of people here, you know, I think the phrase might be multi generational. And so what you have to have is you have to respond to that, with a wide range of backgrounds with something that is common, you know, I mean, there gonna be someone in in Denver that looks learns visually, and someone in Ohio that just wants to have step by step, and then someone who wants to differently. And so it dawned on me that if there's going to be a widely diverse group of people being hired, the IRS is going to be mean, there has to be some kind of a common way to onboard someone with that will work for more than just one mindset. Hmm.

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Yeah, I mean, interesting point you made because since the pandemic, right, the government has been really focused on digital equity, right, and putting broadband in areas in which were most negatively impacted with kids weren't able to go to school. And obviously, that makes complete sense. But I also think about digital equity a little bit differently. And what you just said, resonates astounding, across our client base in that, what if there was a mechanism where you could level the playing field from a technology perspective. So you have five generations in the workforce, multi multitude of different socio economic backgrounds, and not everybody grew up understanding enterprise technology, right? So my 12 year old daughter is more technically sophisticated than I am. And certainly, I'm more technically sophisticated than my mother and father. And that is going to be a norm that continues. But think about the opportunity where the limitations on your understanding of technology are no longer an issue for promotion in the government. Right? That's a resounding value prop as well. And now with walk me, you have the ability to simplify the most complex applications, and no longer has that issue, specifically, if you're hiring the most diverse background like the IRS will be.

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And it almost seems like you should be talking to the HR people in addition to the CISOs and CIOs and it's, it's, it seems it's a natural conclusion, if you if you read about your company, and how it helps people learn systems and and make them more effective, it just

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we're talking about we're talking to everybody, every CFO, from talent, HR to finance that's the one. That's that's the interesting, interesting and exciting opportunity as well. We're not just selling to the CIO or the chief talent officer, or the Chico right. So if we can provide value in while we walk right down the hall to the other, and there's an opportunity there.

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We are wrapping up the interview crystal ball time. So look, five years down the road, where do you see walk me headed? Where do you think the whole digital transition is going to make it? There's lots of mountains in the next five years, sir, I mean, just look at the well, we all know what's going on federal government. So give me a five year forecast your ability What do you see going

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as far as walk mean, that's probably a little bit easier versus everything that's going on. But I will tell you, I think that walk knees ability to bring digital adoption to the forefront as a new category of technology is going to do a couple of different things. One is I'm very bullish on that digital adoption will be probably the new and probably most important thing since the cloud as far as an initiative in that when you see opportunities, whether they're RFPs or if x is out there in the market, that I do believe that the GOV met will now be thinking deeply about their digital adoption strategy no matter what application they purchase, right. And so what I mean by that, traditionally is, hey, we're buying the system. It meets our functional technical requirements. And as long as we deploy it, and there's no user errors, and we get through testing and things like that, usually, the they go live, the system goes live, and everybody celebrates. But right now, where we are, there's no thought about the long term adoption of that application in the next three to five years. And sometimes it's kind of a reverse Field of Dreams is what I call it, you build it and they don't come they users will not use the application. So in the next five years, I think digital adoption will be a core strategy of every acquisition, procurement and federal government, at least that's my hope. And based on what we're seeing in the market, and in the first eight months out in market. I don't have any reason to believe that won't be true.

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What's good prediction? Unfortunately, here we're running out of time. You've been listening to the federal check podcast with John Gilroy. I'd like to thank my guest Billy Biggs, Vice President public sector at walk me