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A Global Government Forum event

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Foreword

“ The Global Government Summit is a unique event that each year brings together the world’s most senior public servants for informal discussions on common public sector challenges. Over an evening and a day, top civil servants from a range of countries explore and discuss some of the biggest challenges facing governments today – hearing presentations from their peers, and sharing what they’ve learned about how to tackle shared problems and agendas.

The Summit is organised by *Global Government Forum*, and in 2018 was held with the support of knowledge partners the Boston Consulting Group and the Centre for Public Impact. It was hosted by the government of Singapore at the city-state’s Shangri-La Hotel on 9-10 February, and attracted very senior officials from nine countries.

The Summit is designed as a safe space for honest, open discussion between people at the highest ranks of government, and as such is held under the Chatham House rule – meaning that no quote can be attributed without permission from the speaker. Additionally, Global Government Summit has excluded from this report aspects of the discussion which might lead to governments or delegates being criticised or embarrassed; it is essential that people can speak freely at the Summit without fear of repercussions.

Nonetheless, we produce a report on the event because – with the permission of those quoted – it is possible to cover many of the discussions and draw out the key lessons. Our report is intended to share the ideas and learning generated at the Summit, helping senior civil servants in governments around the world to address the issues explored by delegates.

We very much hope you find it useful; if you think your country or business might wish to send a delegate, please contact kevin@globalgovernmentforum.com.”

Kevin Sorkin, Director, Global Government Forum

“ *The setting and number of delegates was perfect: it was small enough to have a good, honest discussion. It was challenging in the ideas we discussed, so that worked very well. And I thought everybody brought to the table quite innovative ideas. It was very broad, well put together, and based on good research and engagement.*”

Yaprak Baltacıoğlu, Secretary of the Treasury Board, Canada



Leo Yip, Singapore

Introduction

“As senior public officials, we don’t have enough forums where we can come together and reflect on what’s happening around us; on the common challenges we all face,” said Leo Yip, Singapore’s Head of Civil Service, as he welcomed top officials from 10 countries. “In the business world, there’s a multitude of conferences where CEOs and business leaders come together to talk about their operating landscapes. But there’s hardly any conversation about improving the environment in which we all operate – yet our profession impacts so many more lives than any single company.”

The Global Government Summit, he explained, is “based on the idea that even though we’re all serving different countries and governments, each with our own unique national contexts, there is much we can learn from each other in terms of our experiences and perspectives. And I recognise how much commonality we share, in the priorities for our civil services and the sorts of challenges that we have in common.”

Yip was, he said, looking forward to hearing about other countries’ approaches to civil service reform, policymaking and service delivery. To get the most out of the event, he asked them to be honest about the challenges they face and the problems they’ve encountered: the quality of the discussions, he said, depends in part on “how prepared we are to be open with one another.” And Kevin Sorkin, the chief executive of *Global Government Forum*, encouraged everyone to “intervene and contribute; please don’t wait for permission to speak. The event’s success is down to its informality, and the continued input of all our participants throughout.”

Setting the tone, Yip laid out some of the “challenges and driving forces that will shape our societies, our governments and our people.” Some of these are disruptive “shocks to the system”, such as changes in technology, trade and the global economy. Others are “creeping changes that take longer to work through the system, but which are no less insidious than the disruptions.” These “elephants in the room”, he added, can be characterised as the “dreaded ‘D’s”.

Demographic change, said Yip, will “profoundly change the societies and people that we serve; how do we serve that very different population?”

Disruptive technologies present a second challenge, including “digitalisation, robotic process automation, and the convergence of technologies in the physical, digital and biotechnology spheres.”

Declining trust in public bodies and experts – evident in some countries – is the third: within these nations, there’s a “questioning and scepticism over why people’s lives haven’t improved and whether governments are telling the truth.”

Disillusionment presents the final D – with some electorates showing declining faith in “the political process, political parties and the political system.”

Faced with these powerful changes in technology and society, Yip argued, civil servants mustn’t respond with three further D’s: denial, defensiveness and a sense of drift – a “lack of clarity in direction, and a lack of strategic responses to the challenges staring us in the face.”

Instead, civil services must fundamentally rethink how they structure, organise and equip themselves – developing holistic responses, and the processes and skills to implement them. “As governance becomes more complex and disruptions more profound, we can no longer address these challenges at the single dimension or domain level,” he argued. “Responses need to be at the system level, and delivered with deep expertise.”

To develop those responses, Yip concluded, civil servants must address a set of questions. “What does the future of my civil service look like? How do we conceive and conceptualise it? How do we mould and design it? And how do we make it happen? Those are questions that we as civil service leaders must own and answer – otherwise the answers will be given to us because of outside pressures.”

The Global Government Summit exists to help top civil servants formulate their answers to those questions. For as Yip told his peers, if civil servants don’t take ownership of these challenges and set out convincing ways to address them, then someone else will.



John Manzoni, United Kingdom



Welcome dinner

Civil service reform: the UK experience

In the years before 2010, explained UK civil service Chief Executive John Manzoni, the country's civil service took a step back from delivery and implementation – outsourcing aspects of service management, along with support functions such as IT.

This “worked really well for infrastructure – we built the Olympic Park really well,” he commented; but many of the civil service's technical and project management capabilities dissipated. And officials lacked the commercial skills to get the best out of private sector delivery contracts: “If a government doesn't have commercial skills, it ends up with transactional, price-based contracts – and the cheapest bid wins, because there's no other basis on which to award the contract.”

“I spent 30 years running companies, and the quality of intellect inside the UK's civil service way exceeds the private sector,” added the former BP executive. “The issue was that it didn't have a lot of commercial, technical, project experience.”

Following the credit crunch and the subsequent recession, the Coalition government elected in 2010 slashed budgets to squeeze the public sector deficit – reducing the size of the civil service by a fifth. But without substantive organisational reforms, leaders “ran out of road” for further savings: appointed in 2014, Manzoni warned then that more was being asked of the slimmed-down civil service than it could deliver.

His solution was to chip away at the “stove-piped” structure of government from a strengthened centre, fostering collaboration across departmental boundaries whilst building pan-governmental professional ‘functions’ to improve career paths, training, recruitment and deployment for specialist staff. And in a bid to match the demands on the civil service with the resources allocated to it, the centre instigated ‘Single Departmental Plans’ to push government bodies into prioritising and specifying their goals.

The professional functions cover fields such as project delivery, HR, property, data and finance, Manzoni explained, and provide the “only structures which cut right across the UK government”. Their directors, who report to Manzoni, are tasked with improving skills, setting professional standards, providing independence assurance, and creating centres of expertise.

By taking ownership of the ‘how’, he argued, civil servants can avoid coming into conflict with ministers over the ‘what’. As he told an audience in the UK recently, “if what the civil service does is policy and only policy, over time and in subtle ways it changes the dynamic between politicians and the civil service in a way that I think is detrimental to this country in the long term... What we really need is a civil service which deeply understands through experience how to do what the politicians want us to do.”

Strengthening professional skills and structures inside government, said Manzoni, creates a virtuous circle for recruitment and retention – showing specialist professionals that there's a home for them inside the civil service. “People used to bounce off the UK civil service because there was nowhere for them to dock; it was all policy conversations,” he recalls. “We've created through this mechanism a structure that suddenly makes the UK government more interesting for people from the outside world.”

In the longer term, he argued, strengthening career paths will enable the civil service to hire bright young specialists – and, crucially, to hang onto them as their value grows in the private sector jobs market. “If you want to attract a young finance professional, you need to offer a finance career,” he said. “In five to eight years, we want it to be as likely that a permanent secretary is a commercial, HR or finance person as a policy person.”

This latter goal, he added, will require a shift in the way leadership is viewed. “For some, leadership is about being the smartest person in the room,” he said. “But leadership isn't about intellectual superiority; it's a broader thing. The leaders I know are the people who can get the smartest people into the room; that's an important thing to drive into a different leadership culture, and I think the top of the civil service today gets that.”

These changes to leadership, prioritisation and professionalization, Manzoni continued, are accompanied by a wider workforce strategy and a mission statement – setting out the aim of creating a “brilliant civil service”, and bringing in other goals such as flexible working and equal opportunities.

Developed “to meet a fiscal envelope”, this package of reforms is now helping the government address its pressing delivery challenges. When the major services provider Carillion collapsed recently, Manzoni recalled, all 450 of its government contracts were picked up by joint venture partners and public bodies: “Not a beat was missed when that company went into



Paul Huijts, Netherlands

liquidation,” he said. “Public services were retained – and if this had happened two years ago, I wouldn’t have been able to stand here and tell you that.”

The biggest challenge facing the UK is, of course, Brexit; and here too, the functions are proving crucial. “We have 330 new projects that relate to Brexit,” Manzoni noted, detailing some of the new systems and processes that will be required. Producing realistic schedules and delivery plans for those projects, he said, demands specialist expertise; and the functions are currently placing relevant professionals on each of those teams, helping policy officials to get to grips with the mechanics of implementation. “So this cross-government functional structure is being leveraged right now on two pretty disruptive activities,” he concluded.

Responding to Manzoni’s presentation, some delegates warned of the need to retain policy skills alongside technical capabilities. And Paul Huijts, Secretary-General of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Office in the Netherlands, argued that those making policies “should also have a basic understanding of the complexity of policy execution, in order to ask the right questions”.

Getting more specialist professionals into senior roles will, Manzoni responded, help address this issue: “In a few years’ time, when these different streams come up into the senior civil service and the top leadership ranks, we’ll have a blend of people around the table – and that will lead to a different conversation.”

Leo Yip, Head of the Singapore Civil Service, pointed to the need to reach even further into fields of technical and scientific specialism. Like the UK, he said, the Singapore civil service is working to build capabilities in new disciplines such as data science, as well as more traditional realms such as engineering.

“In a more complex world, we require more complex solutions; we need in-depth expertise,” he said. “We’ve realised that we need to bring on board deeper scientific expertise. It’s no longer adequate for us to look at education policy simply through a policy lens: we need education scientists. For my colleagues dealing with urban policy, we need urban scientists. As leaders, we must be able to harness and blend pockets of deep expertise across our civil service, because that’s the nature of the problems we’re up against.”

Such specialist policy expertise can help governments to identify and prepare for emerging challenges in particular fields of service delivery; whilst the cross-department functions assist



Andrew Kibblewhite, New Zealand

in developing and delivering a response. As Manzoni asked, “what are the disruptions of the future?”

There will, he added, be many such disruptions – and to deal with them, “there’s no option but to create civil services which are increasingly efficient and effective.” That, he argued, means breaking down the “stovepipes” that have traditionally fragmented the UK government’s operations: “The question is: how do you create those structures across the system to get us into the modern age?”

Civil service reform: the New Zealand experience

When Andrew Kibblewhite, now Chief Executive of New Zealand’s Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, first joined the civil service in 1988, the government was in the midst of a major reform programme. Floating public businesses such as the post office and railways in the “great deregulation of the New Zealand economy,” he recalls, it was “seeing fantastic efficiency gains.”

Taking a similar approach into the institutions of government, ministers and top officials moved civil service finance management from cash to accrual accounting, set out each agency’s goals and responsibilities in output targets, and gave agency chiefs the freedom to decide how they achieved them. “Chief executives became very much the bosses of their own agencies, masters of their own destiny, and pushed forward into reforming the way that government departments worked,” he says. “Government became much more nimble, more flexible.”

Over time, though, the resulting diversity in procurement, operating systems and working methods whittled away at economies of scale and weakened collaboration. “We were locally optimised, but much more atomised,” he remembered.

By 2010, a more fundamental reset was needed: government tried to strengthen cross-departmental working and system integration by creating functional leads, tasked with creating whole government strategies on topics such as property and IT. Meanwhile, it sharpened up agencies’ targets to focus on outcomes and foster collaboration across departmental boundaries: “We picked them reasonably carefully to drive



Vichet Seat, Cambodia



Yaprak Baltacioğlu, Canada

a sense of cohesive action, so you would only achieve them if you could get action across a range of portfolios.” And politicians took more responsibility for hitting these targets, publishing six-monthly reports on progress.

A few years on, said Kibblewhite, New Zealand is in the “third chapter of public management reform.” At its heart is a desire to revive a sense of unity and common purpose amongst public servants: working to foster the “spirit of service” amongst government staff, leaders are “looking really deliberately at those things that join us together.”

Asked by Vichet Seat of Cambodia how New Zealand has promoted this ethos, Kibblewhite replied that nearly 1000 top officials gather every year to find ways of strengthening collaboration. The answers have included developing ways to “articulate what it means to be a public servant”; strengthening “system-wide requirements and expectations”; mounting a push to build a more diverse workforce; and creating channels through which staff can be redeployed around government “to meet the needs of the system, rather than the needs of individual agencies.”

On this latter point, he added, government is setting up career boards to manage talent across government: Kibblewhite chairs the policy profession board, “and we’ll be judged on how well we shift policy leaders around the system.” Further boards oversee operations and corporate staff, and the functions are gaining new powers: the goal is for them to be “more assertive, and prepared to clip the wings of individual departments.”

These reforms are being overseen by a State Sector Leadership Team comprising departmental chief executives, and specific leadership roles have been clarified: State Services Commissioner Peter Hughes – as the most senior line manager – is the formal head of the civil service; Kibblewhite leads on policy; and other chief executives take on a range of system-wide leadership roles. The group meets regularly, Kibblewhite explained, and focuses on “shifting this collective culture forward.”

Asked by Head of the Singapore Civil Service Leo Yip which skills the civil service needs to operate this new model, Kibblewhite pointed to changes in both leadership and delivery. Both Peter Hughes and his predecessor Iain Rennie, he said, “very explicitly made a point of appointing chief executives who are minded to work collegiately and collaboratively, and who see the bigger picture.” And on delivery, he reinforced UK Civil Service

Chief Executive John Manzoni’s focus on developing capabilities in technical fields such as IT and procurement.

The renewed focus on outcomes built into this reform programme, it seems, sits well with the recently-elected prime minister’s agenda. “We’ve got a government that wants to look at the numbers, understand the real outcome indicators in the community, and then drive policy from them,” Kibblewhite explained: the new administration is legislating to define a set of child poverty metrics, require itself to set out targets against them, and demand regular public reports. “This could evolve to include environmental and other social indicators as well as economic ones,” he added. “It’s a very ambitious programme.”

The new government also came in with a “hundred day plan”, he said, including major pieces of legislation and service changes – and those goals have been achieved. Kibblewhite is now working on how to meet the administration’s next set of ambitions, and said he anticipates that a system of Cabinet committees will be key to delivery – catalysing cross-departmental action, and keeping public servants focused on the over-riding goals through the inevitable distractions and crisis of everyday governance.

Canada’s prime minister Justin Trudeau has taken a similar approach, commented Yaprak Baltacioğlu, Secretary of the Treasury Board of Canada. Trudeau broke the convention that the ‘mandate letters’ informing ministers of their key delivery goals remained secret, publishing the lot; and he set out specific targets, covering everything from the legalisation of cannabis to improving the living conditions of indigenous people. Canada too is using Cabinet committees to catalyse action, she added, in a bid to “align decision-making to what we’re trying to achieve” – though, detailing some of the challenges involved, she acknowledged that it’s a “work in progress.”

Looking back over New Zealand’s journey, Kibblewhite noted that “the wheel has turned” – with current reforms designed to rebuild the “one public service” mentality of the years before 1988. But “it hasn’t turned on the spot: we’ve got a lot of traction, and reached a new place. We’re now unambiguously looking for the whole to be much greater than the sum of its parts.”

“The needs of the system,” he concluded, “are now more likely to prevail over the needs of the individual agencies. The trick for us is to embrace the change and the evolution, and to make sure we don’t lose too many of the strengths of the approach we’ve come from. It’s a pretty interesting time to be working in public management in New Zealand.”



Yong Ying-I, Singapore



Leo Yip, Singapore

Civil service reform: the Singapore experience

“Singapore is an unlikely country of a tiny size. And we’ve been pushing for reform since the founding of our republic because we need to turn constraints into opportunities,” began Yong Ying-I, Permanent Secretary of the Public Service Division in Singapore’s Prime Minister’s Office.

Like New Zealand, from the 1980s Singapore went through a wave of privatisations and public sector devolution – with agencies given the freedom to achieve their goals in their own way. In the 2000s, the government focused on looking ahead and on empowering civil servants, creating horizon-scanning units such as the Centre for Strategic Futures and changing working cultures to ensure that “every officer, no matter which level they work at, has the right and responsibility to make improvements – and that your boss is not allowed to get in the way!”

This push to empower civil servants has produced results, said Yong Ying-I – transforming services such as Singapore’s prisons. The leaders of today “have inherited a service where for a long time there’s been a philosophy of wanting to continually reinvent our model, and one with the capacity for imagination and a spirit of resourcefulness.”

But things change, she continued: “Every year has its own challenges, and what’s worked in the past isn’t addressing our current or emerging needs.” Like the UK and New Zealand, Singapore found that its decentralised model was making it “hard to provide integrated solutions, or to realise synergies when the solutions cut across agencies.”

In part, the solution is a stronger centre – largely in the form of the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). But she emphasised that the PMO is “not there to dictate: it’s there to orchestrate, to align, to enable and to support” – removing hurdles, providing resources and sharing expertise.

For example, the central agencies introduced legislation to get data and citizen information shared across government agencies. “The benefits of data-sharing to policymaking and delivering better services are obvious, but so are the risks of breach of privacy and data loss; so agencies have been very

concerned about sharing their data,” she commented. The Bill “made clear to all our agencies and the public that agencies’ compliance with central data policies, and their sharing of data, is going to be the default position.”

Another goal of reforms is to plug the gaps in services between public bodies: members of the public, said Yong Ying-I, have often complained of blurred boundaries between agencies’ responsibilities, and of their tendency to pass the buck. One result was the Municipal Services Office, which was tasked with identifying those gaps and allocating responsibility for closing them. With then-Head of the Civil Service Peter Ong brokering agreements behind the scenes, the office has shortened case handling times and improved public satisfaction.

Such reforms will only realise their potential, though, if civil servants embrace changes: as Yong Ying-I said, “public sector transformation only happens when our officers want to participate in making improvements real.” And she suggested that in recent years agencies may have concentrated too hard on hitting their own targets and operating autonomously. “The mantra is ‘one trusted public service with citizens at the centre,’” she added, setting out a set of initiatives designed to strengthen links across government and highlight the importance of involving citizens in service provision.

For example, the government sent quality service managers from various agencies away together for joint training programmes and study trips – giving them a space in which to build personal connections. “They got to know each other, and to this day they still meet for social get-togethers,” said Yong Ying-I. “So when issues come up at the boundaries between agencies, they pick up the phone, call their friend, and solve the problem.”

Meanwhile, agencies are being encouraged to involve citizens in service delivery. “The public service has a responsibility to build civil capacity for collective problem-solving,” she said. “And Singapore has recognised that we’re living in an era when citizens don’t just want to be served by us – they want to participate.” Examples include the roll-out of the Pioneer Generation Package: to explain this healthcare funding system to its elderly target audience, the government recruited 3000 volunteers from across Singapore’s communities – accessing the language skills and community links that public bodies sometimes struggle with.



Klen Jäärats, Estonia

Such initiatives rely on a creative civil service culture – and Yong Ying-I explained that leaders are building on the empowerment agenda to foster both a feeling of “constructive discontent” with the status quo, and a culture of “restless innovation”. Civil servants can access seed funding of up to S\$70,000 (US\$53,000) to “experiment with new ideas and develop prototypes.” The government is training 10,000 officials in data analytics, and bringing in specialist skills to bolster its delivery capabilities. And staff undergoing training are supported to form teams and work on real-world challenges.

These approaches to building an innovative culture got the delegates listening hard – for senior leaders are only too aware of both the need to develop new ways of working, and the political and cultural obstacles to doing so.

“How do you build public acceptance for running sometimes very expensive experiments?” asked Klen Jäärats, Director for European Union Affairs at Estonia’s Government Office. And Paul Huijts, Secretary-General of the Netherlands’ Ministry of General Affairs, noted that the public’s “tolerance for what are called ‘mistakes’ is becoming smaller. There’s not the business culture where you know that you’ll fail three times for every time you make innovation work – so there’s hardly any incentive for a politician to take a calculated risk.”

John Manzoni, Chief Executive of the UK Civil Service, also worried that whilst “we’ve got to make our public sectors more innovative and agile, the incentives are all about not taking a risk.” In the UK, he added, the culture of sending “submissions” up to ministers sits uneasily alongside the need to encourage officials to develop and champion their own ideas.

In part, said Andrew Kibblewhite, Chief Executive of New Zealand’s Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, improving transparency can help reduce the bad publicity when projects go awry. His country’s government has taken to publishing six-monthly reports on its major projects – including a ‘traffic light’ rating on how well they’re going: “When you put this in the public domain, someone might notice that a project’s not going well, but you avoid the ‘gotcha’ moment when someone thinks they’ve discovered a mistake,” he said. “People know that nobody is perfect, and by acknowledging the problems you are to a degree normalising them.”

Part of the solution, suggested Yaprak Baltacıoğlu, Canada’s Secretary of the Treasury Board, must be for civil servants to



Paul Huijts, Netherlands, Leo Yip, Singapore, John Manzoni, United Kingdom, Andrew Kibblewhite, New Zealand

engage with the media and explain “what government work is, and how it’s changing” – including the need to trial new approaches, not all of which will pay off.

When the pressure is on, she added, politicians are sometimes willing to provide cover for civil servants engaged in innovative or untested projects. When the credit crunch hit Canada’s economy, she recalled, “government had to spend money fast – and we all know that if you’re spending money fast, you’ll make mistakes.” The prime minister understood the risks, giving “a speech about why we needed to act and why we needed to act fast; and he said clearly that there will be mistakes.”

“That once sentence was emailed across the public sector at the speed of light,” she continued. “And it liberated the public service. So when the mistakes are not as scary as the consequences of not acting fast, politicians come our way.”

Meanwhile, said Yong Ying-I, civil servants can innovate at low cost by running small pilots. The trick here, she added, is to find a way of testing whether the idea can be scaled up: “Sometimes the project works precisely because it’s small.”

And ultimately, governments are big organisations that need scalable ideas: most innovations only become useful when converted into far-reaching transformation. “It’s easy to have ideas,” commented Leo Yip. “But that thinking must be translated into doing. The innovation of action – people prepared to get it done and to own the outcome, for better or worse – is the big shift we’ve had to make.”

As civil servants grapple with today’s challenges, peering warily into an unstable and unpredictable future, they know that they must either become more flexible, more agile and more innovative – or be overtaken by events. And Leo Yip argued that where politicians won’t or can’t increase their own risk appetite, top officials should take ownership of the agenda themselves.

“I think we in the civil service have to take on that burden of innovation and transformation ourselves,” he concluded. “People need to have the confidence and conviction to move first – and if things don’t work out well, to say sorry afterwards. It’s for the collective leadership of the public service to say: ‘Yes, this is something we want to do,’ and to determine the destiny of our civil services.”

The world becomes its own map



Source: Boston Consulting Group



Miguel Carrasco, Boston Consulting Group

The benefits and risks of artificial intelligence

The Argentinian poet and author Jorge Luis Borge, recalled Miguel Carrasco, once wrote a short story “about an ancient kingdom, high in the Andes, whose leaders were obsessed with cartography. They aspired to develop maps with ever-greater fidelity and accuracy, and launched increasingly ambitious projects until, eventually, they began a project to map their kingdom on a scale of 1:1.”

This was, of course, “ridiculous”, he added: “The project was a complete failure.” But then Carrasco, a Senior Partner at Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and its Global Leader in Digital Government Practice, ran a video pulled from an autonomous vehicle’s memory banks: combining film from its cameras with satellite photography, cartographic and GPS data, signage info and a satnav route, the vehicle identified and tracked moving objects and other hazards, weaving its way past swerving cyclists and jogging jaywalkers (see image above).

“Borges wrote the story to illustrate the futility of exact science,” commented Carrasco. “But as my colleague Philip Evans notes, this story serves as a useful analogy for what’s happening in the world around us: a combination of technologies, reinforcing each other, are allowing us to create a map of our world on a scale of 1:1.”

Real-time information can be brought together from an ever-growing range of sources, he explained, including sensors and “user-generated” data – such as the roads congestion and hazards information uploaded by drivers via the Waze app. And Artificial Intelligence (AI) tech has reached the stage where machines can distinguish and identify individual objects, even in moving images or against a confused background.

The current revolution in data and AI is being driven by four key factors, said Carrasco: the dramatic falls in the price and size of sensors able to transmit real-time data; the arrival of cloud computing, making it “so cheap to store data that we can capture and maintain everything”; rapid progress in the development of algorithms and analytics, enabling people to process, interpret and analyse data; and the ability to exchange data with people on the move, via smartphones. “It’s the mutually reinforcing

nature of these four things which is driving a rapid acceleration in what we can do as private individuals, corporations and governments.”

Given these capabilities, explained Grantly Mailes – a BCG Associate Director specialising in digital technologies – AI is enabling us to move “from a descriptive to a prescriptive use of technologies: from describing what used to be, to what can be or is likely to happen.” The big tech firms publish many of their algorithms without charge, while AI processing power is available as a cheap utility service. And modern AI is able to ‘learn’, reducing the need to write detailed programmes and leading to continuous improvement.

With all this computing power on tap, he argued, “what makes the difference is data – and you can mash up government data with data that’s freely available, creating tremendous power.”

The duo went on to consider use cases – beginning with segmentation: the ability to split groups up into ever smaller cohorts sharing common characteristics. Given rich enough data, Mailes said, governments can now create a “segment of one customer, providing the ability to talk specifically to each and every person that you deal with: to understand which person is at risk, which health theme we need to worry about, how we educate individuals, where we target investment.”

In New Zealand, said Carrasco, the government has pulled together data from a range of agencies and identified “which cohorts of welfare recipients are costing public services the most over their lifetimes. That then allows you to prioritise and work out where to invest in early intervention, reducing subsequent lifetime costs. The future liability in welfare outlay has come down in the order of billions of dollars.”

The second use case centred on predictions. Just as the autonomous vehicle had learned to predict that a cyclist might veer into the road, “the ability to sense patterns at very large scale” can help governments to forecast changes in fields such as climate change, health, education and transport. In New York, Carrasco explained, BCG has fed transport and infrastructure data through many thousands of simulation models to “identify the weak points in the food supply chain: those that are vulnerable in the event of natural disasters and emergency situations. That enabled the city to address them.”

Third, they turned to recommendations – for AI can now churn through vast amounts of data to develop detailed, nuanced



Grantly Mailes, Boston Consulting Group

plans for distributing funds or delivering services. In Australia, said Carrusco, a new system is being developed that separates welfare applications which can be processed automatically from those which are more complex and might need reviewing.

In another Australian programme, “network optimisation models” were used to identify the mix of technologies required to hit the government’s commitments on rolling out high-speed broadband. Using data on properties’ locations, the existing network and the costs of different solutions – “millions upon millions of data points” – the system worked out how to hit a set download rate in every home with the minimum of cost and delay.

To realise such opportunities, however, governments will have to address a set of challenges, risks and obstacles.

There’s the government ‘silos’ which inhibit collaboration and data sharing, and concerns around data quality – though Mailes commented that “the technology industry is beginning to work out how to deal with dirty data.” There are skills shortages – a real issue, given the tech firms’ tendency to Hoover up as many data scientists and AI specialists as they can recruit – and the challenges around transiting from legacy IT systems whilst maintaining services. And there’s both a lack of understanding of the opportunities, and a tendency among policymakers – even when opportunities have been identified – to be suspicious or sceptical about new technologies.

If policymakers are wary, the public is still more so – and Paul Huijts, Secretary-general at the Netherlands’ Ministry of General Affairs, was worried about cyber security. “I’m convinced of the astounding possibilities,” he said, “but the vulnerability of our society is increasing: everything is interlinked, and in many cases there aren’t even non-IT solutions to run operations any more.”

This is largely a human rather than a technological problem, replied Carrusco: “Eighty percent of cyber security failures come down to human error,” he said. “We need technical firewalls, but we also need to increase awareness in our organisations and people. They have to understand the ramifications of mistakes or not applying appropriate policies. Just as we’ve been educated over many years on occupational health and safety, we all need to be educated about data safety.”

Privacy is another, linked concern, said Andrew Kibblewhite, Chief Executive of New Zealand’s Department of the Prime



Presentation, Boston Consulting Group

Minister and Cabinet. “All the different countries here will have different understandings of the ‘permission space’ for what is effectively surveillance of people and the use of AI,” he pointed.

Klen Jäärats, Director for European Union Affairs at Estonia’s Government Office, explained his country’s solution: giving citizens access to a digital platform through which they can control access to their data, and enabling them to receive alerts whenever public bodies make use of it. “Making it transparent enabled us to win people’s trust,” he said; if people can see the benefits of sharing data and have the right to say no, they’re generally happy to give their permission.

Even with these obstacles addressed, though, there are some challenges and risks unique to AI. As Mailes explained, AIs ‘learn’ using “training data” – so they can develop an “inherent bias” if that data is skewed or points in a particular direction. There’s a further risk that algorithms are “tuned such that they work well for the training data but fail in the real world; that’s something we need to be careful of.” And because AIs are combining data from multiple sources, it can become possible to identify individual people or organisations – even when their data has been ‘anonymised’ in each individual data set.

It was the sheer complexity of AIs’ calculations, though, that underpinned the risk which attracted most attention from the civil servants – for as Carrusco explained, as machines learn and develop their processes “through thousands of millions of iterations, they can come up with algorithms that we just can’t understand. We can see the inputs and the outputs, but we can’t see what’s happening in the middle.” In some cases, added Mailes, these days software engineers often receive guidance from AIs on how to develop their systems: “The algorithm says: ‘Here’s five things you need to do’. Pretty soon the algorithms will begin to do the coding for them.”

This rang alarm bells for John Manzoni, Chief Executive of the UK civil service, who drew a parallel with the financial services sector pre-2008 – another rapidly-growing industry built around products so complex that people didn’t know exactly what they were buying or selling. Governments are wary of regulating fast-growing, successful industries – but in a “system beyond human cognition,” he asked, “who’s accountable for that algorithm?”

Yaprak Baltacıoğlu, Canada’s Secretary of the Treasury Board, had another challenge: how to manage AIs’ handling of ethical



Mikhail Pryadilnikov, Russia

decisions? Say an autonomous vehicle has to decide between hitting a pedestrian and driving into a wall, she said, risking its passenger's life: "How is it going to make that call?"

Similarly, one delegate raised the question of a tech giant which had recently said in a meeting that they "had a problem with hate speech and were developing algorithms to remove those comments. But then you're defining what is hate speech, and I don't know what standards they're using: to us, that's censorship." Tech companies must be completely transparent about how they operate, he argued, but in some cases "they're not really aware of their societal impact."

"This is a dangerous place," Mailes acknowledged, "where the smartest minds are moving so much faster than governments." Carrusco noted that, in the end, it's in the tech firms' interests to build public confidence: "Organisations that breach people's trust will ultimately pay the price," he said.

One answer, replied Carrusco, is to use AI to monitor and regulate AI – giving regulators the tools for this most complex of jobs. And within the public sector, he suggested, governments can ensure proper accountability when using AI by dividing decision-making processes into "white box and black box models".

There are some types of decisions in which government doesn't necessarily need to know exactly how a conclusion was reached, he argued, and here opaque "black box" AI might be acceptable; "but if we're using AI for recommendations on parole or child protection decisions, we might need a white box model" in which civil servants can see exactly how decisions are made.

Looking ahead, Mailes urged the public sector leaders to focus on citizens' needs and look for opportunities to use AI for public benefit: "Let's start with the proposition of how do we create public value, not how we protect existing data systems or worry about where data is held." And Carrusco recommended focusing on use cases, developing technologies in short, iterative "sprints" to test ideas, engaging with the public to explain the potential benefits, and producing some "tangible value that will create the permission space to do more."

To make this approach work, Carrusco argued, governments can look to the reforms embraced by some big tech firms. He mentioned ING Bank which, he said, has "transformed its way of working, breaking down the organisation from traditional functional hierarchies into customer-focused



Nadine Smith, Centre for Public Impact

squads" – where small teams work in iterative sprints towards clearly defined outcomes.

It was clear from the conversation, though, that governments need to address both the potential benefits and the inherent risks flowing from our fast-expanding tech industries. "I've yet to see many governments thinking about the capabilities they have to put in place to get on top of this," concluded Mailes.

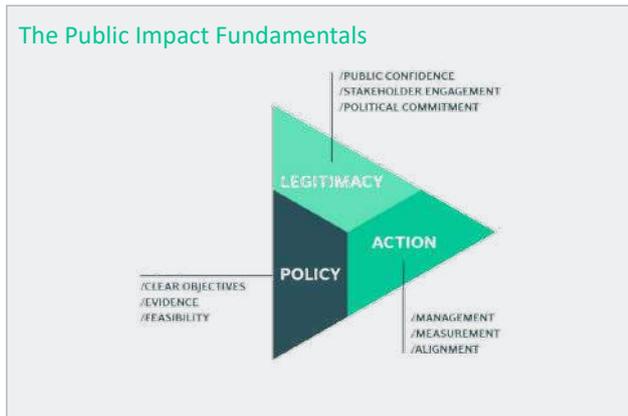
"I'd have a cabinet minister responsible for data and AI, and a dedicated team in government," added Carrusco. "Because the big tech companies are getting away from the regulators, and the danger is that governments are already behind."

Rebuilding governments' legitimacy

In consultations undertaken by the Centre for Public Impact (CPI), said its Global Director of Marketing and Communications Nadine Smith, communities told the organisation that they see government as distant and opaque. "People said they don't know what government is doing for them; that it feels like a big unknown – something faceless and distant," she said. "They want government to build a vision for the future, but they can't see one; so you get feelings of anger and grievance."

This is a particular problem for central government: local people know frontline public service workers such as police and doctors, but they have little sense of the role or value of civil servants. Smith's comments struck a chord with Mikhail Pryadilnikov, Deputy Director of the Analytic Center for the Russian Government, who commented on the difficulties of "translating big national policies into a language that people can understand. We've put our Budget programmes on our website, but people don't care how many buildings have been renovated or how many schools built across the country – they care about the school in their local community."

To win public engagement and deliver policies successfully, Smith argued, governments have to demonstrate competence on three fronts: policy, action, and legitimacy. Of these, explained her colleague CPI Programme Manager Magdalena Kuenkel, good policy requires clear objectives, feasibility



Source: Centre for Public Impact



Magdalena Kuenkel, Centre for Public Impact

and strong evidence. Action demands good management, measurement, and alignment with other relevant agendas. And legitimacy rests on public confidence, political commitment and stakeholder engagement (see image above).

People want to be part of how decisions are made, said Smith, and to build a relationship with government – but too often, they feel that engagement is half-hearted. So governments' attempts at consultation, for example, are often restricted to binary choices over specific policy proposals – limiting people's influence. Citizens want to "think through the options that are available, consider the uncomfortable trade-offs they have to make, and – once they've made their decision – to track how it made a difference."

There are mechanisms for giving people that range of choices, commented Kuenkel: Australia's Melbourne People's Panel, for example, brought together 43 randomly-selected citizens to set the city council's priorities in spending over A\$5bn (US\$3.9bn). "They met over six weekends, talked with experts, deliberated like a jury and presented a plan to the council," she said. "A lot of their ideas made it into the council's strategy, and the participants really felt they'd been listened to."

Commissioning experts to help develop policies can also help build legitimacy, taking some of the politics out of debates – but Smith warned that this can prove counter-productive if governments then ignore the experts' recommendations. "People told us that the government commissions experts to write reports, but then doesn't implement what they've been told."

People can also be suspicious of experts, she added, asking "how were they chosen; do they look like me; can they empathise with me?" And this point extends to civil servants and politicians: building a more diverse workforce and rewarding leaders for empathetic behaviour, she argued, can help governments to understand and engage with communities. "How can policy be effective if those creating it don't understand the people it's intended to benefit?"

Asked for examples of effective ways to build public legitimacy, the senior officials had plenty. Andrew Kibblewhite, Chief Executive of New Zealand's Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, named the country's 30-year programme to address the injustices suffered by its Maori communities. Involving historical and community research, a panel of

judges and compensation payments, he said, it's "become a fundamentally important part of New Zealand's journey through and towards biculturalism."

Yaprak Baltacıoğlu, Canada's Secretary of the Treasury Board, responded that Canada has experienced similar problems in gaining the trust of its own indigenous people – who had perceived Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the agency responsible for them, as "a remnant of colonialism."

"So the prime minister came in and broke it up," she recalled. "We now have two different departments, and one of them is responsible for government-to-government relations" – meaning relations with the indigenous peoples' own councils. "That sent a huge message: that this isn't about us deciding what services you'll receive, but about two orders of government working together."

Several people mentioned forms of participatory democracy – from the Australian 2020 Summit, in which 1000 citizens debated the country's priorities and planned out new programmes, to local debates and referendums determining spending decisions. Vichet Seat, Director of the Public Service Department in Cambodia's Ministry of Civil Service, explained that his government has created an environmental forum bringing together activists, scientists and NGOs: "It's reduced tensions between the activists and the government, because in the past they didn't meet face to face," he said. "Now they discuss problems and try to find a solution."

John Manzoni, Chief Executive of the UK civil service, pointed out that sometimes sensible policies can be given momentum by third parties: he cited naturalist David Attenborough's Blue Planet TV series, "which is legitimising action on plastic bottles in a way that government couldn't."

Governments have to win legitimacy by demonstrating action and awareness on two fronts, argued Leo Yip, Singapore's Head of the Civil Service. "One is the here and now, showing on an ongoing basis that you understand people's concerns and that you're addressing them," he said. "And the other is about tomorrow: you've got to show that you're making progress for a better tomorrow – working to ensure their children have a better future."

That chimed with Smith and Kuenkel, who have examined case studies from around the world to derive "five common behaviours that people demand of their governments.



Yaprak Baltacioğlu, Canada, Paul Huijts, Netherlands, Leo Yip, Singapore, John Manzoni, United Kingdom, Andrew Kibblewhite, New Zealand, Peter Ong, Singapore



Youk Bunna, Cambodia, Savva Shipov, Russia

And the first is to work together on creating a shared vision for the future.”

The second is to “build an authentic connection” at a human level – so admit your mistakes; share personal experiences; don’t talk down to people. “We hear a lot about evidence-based policies, but people want to connect on a personal level – and they want honesty about what government can’t do,” commented Smith.

“People are more ready to take ‘no’ for an answer than you’d expect, as long as you’re genuinely interested in their problems,” agreed Paul Huijts, Secretary-General at the Netherlands’ Ministry of General Affairs. “It takes courage to tell them why you can’t do something, but a surprising number of people will accept the fact that they can’t have it all as long as they’re being taken seriously and brought into solving the problem. Our problem, I guess, is that in our wealthy societies we’ve created the idea that we’re going to help everyone all the time.”

Sometimes, he added, this view is fostered by politicians and government officials who over-promise in the hope of avoiding criticism: “But it’s a false idea of popularity, because they’d gain much more appreciation and credibility if they said: ‘I hear you, I understand you, but I’m not the person to help you.’” Expectations management is important, agreed Kuenkel: “Government needs to communicate what it’s there for and what it isn’t.”

The third behaviour is empathy – and Smith argued that this apparently inherent attribute can be taught, then used in service design. Bangladesh sends its civil servants out to experience services from the users’ perspective, added Kuenkel, with real impact on service delivery: one under-used health clinic for the poor saw a dramatic rise in visitors after it provided a waiting room, enabling citizens to avoid the shame of being seen in the queue.

Fourth is to value people’s opinions, and to show how you’re responding. And fifth is transparency – not so much in terms of publishing data, which Smith sees as a “minimum requirement”, but in explaining “how you’re operating; what your role is; what you can and can’t do; who’s influencing you; and where you are in the delivery cycle.” In Kansas, USA, said Kuenkel, the mayor not only updates performance indicators every week on progress against his priorities, but holds monthly meetings “where citizens are invited to call in and ask questions or submit ideas.”

These five behaviours made sense to the civil service leaders – but some highlighted the challenges facing central government leaders seeking to demonstrate them. “You’re talking about legitimacy at a local level: at the town hall,” pointed out Manzoni. “Sometimes, with the scale of the issues we face, there’s no perfect answer – so government just has to make a decision.”

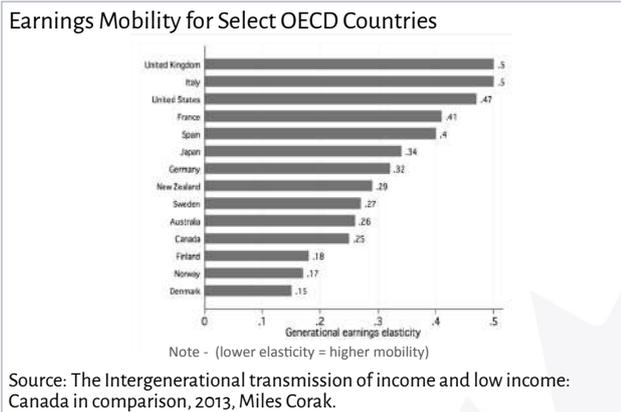
“That’s the role of government: deciding the collective good – and you’ll never get everyone happy with those kinds of decisions,” agreed Huijts. “Civil servants who are afraid of that kind of decision are in the wrong game.”

Sometimes, governments can win broad-based support for controversial policies by linking them to wider points about their country’s principles, culture and beliefs, argued Yaprak Baltacioğlu, Secretary of the Treasury Board for Canada. When same sex marriage was legalised over a decade ago, she recalled, the government built its case around “the constitution and human rights – and in Canada, human rights is part of the country’s psychology. So they were able to explain it in a way that meant people felt that, even if they didn’t like it, it was fair.”

Singapore’s Leo Yip added that governments can build the public confidence required to see them through difficult times by engaging and explaining on a more routine basis. “Often, people’s interactions with government occur when something goes wrong,” he pointed out. “There’s a case for government to be more proactive, talking about what we’re doing so that when we have a limited ability to help people with a problem, we start the conversation from a position of trust.”

In the long term, he argued, civil servants can also help build trust in government by identifying and focusing on the structural challenges facing a country – avoiding the temptation to get distracted by short-term issues whilst leaving underlying problems unresolved. “All too often – and we see it even more profoundly now – the pressures on governments and civil services are towards short-term fixes,” he said. “But we in the civil service have a responsibility to keep our focus on the long-term.”

“We must stay the course to build the civil services of the future, even while the political pressures and public demands are for short-term fixes,” he concluded. “A responsible government must deal with today’s pressures, whilst simultaneously creating a country and a civil service for tomorrow.”



Source: Government of Canada

Protecting social mobility

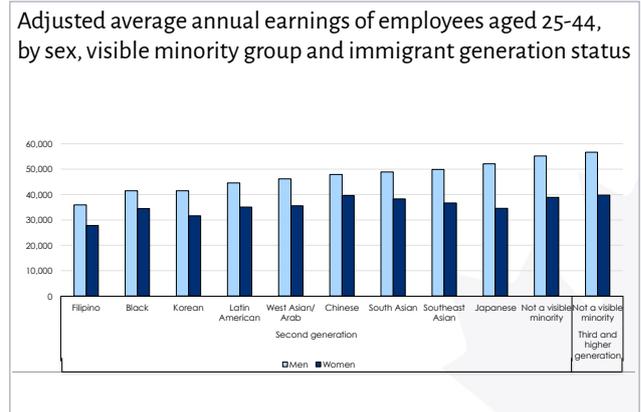
According to Canadian journalist John Ibbitson, “intergenerational income mobility is about so much more than your kids doing a little better than you,” said Yaprak Baltacioğlu, Secretary of the Treasury Board of Canada. “The expectation that each generation will become more prosperous than the one that came before helps us to erode class barriers, and gives us hope and determination. The future has to be better than the past.”

Income mobility does not, of course, work in only one direction: while countries expect to increase their GDP/capita over time – a process stalled in many developed nations since the 2008 credit crunch – equality of opportunity demands a merit-based society in which the poor-performing children of wealthy parents can slip down the income scale as easily as the talented offspring of poor families climb up it.

On income mobility, Baltacioğlu noted, Canada has a good track record: amongst OECD nations its earnings mobility is similar to those of Australia and the Scandinavian countries, with the UK, Italy, the US and France sitting at the foot of the table. So Canadians born into families in the bottom fifth of the income scale are twice as likely as their British and American peers to earn at least a middle-class income during their lifetime (see graph above, left).

This level of social mobility, Baltacioğlu argued, is rooted in Canada’s investments in education and its welfare state. “Close to 90% of Canadians have high school degrees; half of those have university degrees or diplomas,” she explained. “We have employment insurance to catch people who lose their jobs; we have parental benefits. Americans call us socialists, but we wear that with pride: we’ve worked to foster social mobility for many years.”

But her picture of Canada was not panglossian: she pointed to persistently higher rates of poverty amongst indigenous people, those with disabilities or living in rural areas, and immigrants from visible ethnic minorities. “We’re struggling to figure out why certain groups fare worse than others and why, when we’ve invested a lot with good intentions, we still can’t make this change,” she said (see graph above, right).



Source: Government of Canada

In part, she argued, “while these challenges may seem unique to the issue of social mobility, in fact they’re endemic to any complex policy issue such as environmental sustainability, healthcare or innovation.” Problems frequently prove intransigent, she said, “whenever the issues are horizontal and the solutions require collaboration and coordination between different government ministries or levels of government.”

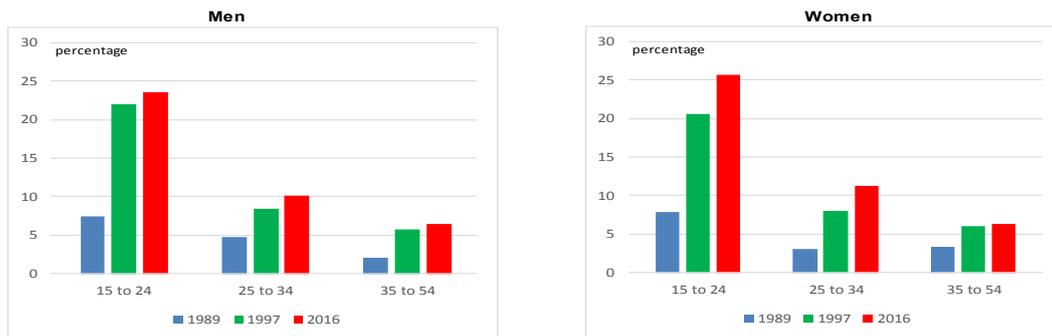
In the case of indigenous people, Baltacioğlu added, one key problem is a deep-seated mistrust of government – meaning that public bodies struggle both to win engagement with services such as education, and to gather the data to understand the problem. But John Manzoni, Chief Executive of the UK civil service, argued that all governments struggle to engage with some segments of their population: “In the UK, young white boys in the North of England are the most likely to fall out of the system,” he noted. “We’re probably all in the same place here.”

In part, argued Paul Huijts – the Secretary-General of the Netherlands’ Ministry of General Affairs – the solutions lie in recruiting members of minority groups into the civil service, making them better equipped to understand and engage with particular communities.

Canada has worked quite hard on this, responded Baltacioğlu: “We have good indigenous recruitment into the ministry responsible for these issues, and targets for every other department; most of us are halfway or three quarters of the way there,” she said. “But retention is a real problem, so now we’re hiring indigenous students in their summer breaks and giving them mentors.” The government is also looking at some of the barriers in recruitment; it could, for example, relax the requirement that officials speak English and French in favour of an indigenous language.

Like the UK government, the Canadians have also experimented with ‘name-blind’ recruitment – deleting people’s names and universities before applications are sifted by HR staff. But amongst those applications, Baltacioğlu recalled, “we actually ended up with smaller proportions of women and visible minorities. Because we’re always cognizant of making sure we’re providing equal opportunities, we often move them to the interview stage.”

Percentage of full-time employees working in temporary jobs, 1989 to 2016 (students excluded)



Sources: Updated from *Insights on Canadian Society*, 75-006X, July 2013; 1989 General Social Survey; Labour Force Survey.

Source: Government of Canada

Whatever civil servants do to increase their workforces' diversity or reach out to socially-excluded groups, though, their countries face big technological and economic changes that pose much wider challenges to social mobility. The rise in temporary employment and the 'gig economy' is one, said Baltacıoğlu – and its effects are greatest on women and young people (see graphs above).

The other is what Andrew Kibblewhite, Chief Executive of New Zealand's Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, called the "tsunami" of AI, robotics and automation. These innovations look likely to drive out many professional as well as skilled manual jobs, whilst further strengthening those in control of businesses and digital technologies.

This challenge, said Klen Jäärats – the Director for European Union Affairs in Estonia's Government Office – increases the need for governments to provide high-quality education for all their citizens. And as the pace of technological change continues to increase, "I suppose we need to go back to university three times in our lifetimes; that probably means changing our social systems."

Singapore, said its Head of Civil Service Leo Yip, is working to change universities' roles "so that they see their focus not just as preparing young people to enter the labour market, but also to retrain people already in the market. That shift is happening right now."

Meanwhile, he added, the government has launched a 'SkillsFuture' programme to get "everyone in the workforce back into skills training on a sustained basis. But this is just the start of a long journey."

This need to develop a workforce able to constantly adopt new skills and change career paths presents a particular challenge for schools, pointed out Kibblewhite. "Fifty percent of the children now entering school will end up doing jobs that don't exist today," he suggested. "It's difficult to train people at senior school and university for employment roles that haven't yet emerged." Even businesses have similar problems, responded Yip: "Many companies can't envisage how the work they carry out today will

be delivered in five years," he said. "So it's almost impossible to ask them to develop a skills framework for the next five years."

It is, though, possible to draw some broad conclusions about the characteristics that will make people marketable in tomorrow's jobs markets. Beyond the obvious digital capabilities, said Yip, "I think the focus will be on 'high-touch' skills, because automation will remove the drudgery from many jobs. There are skills that only humans have – creative skills, personal services." Much of the work performed today even by highly-qualified professionals such as lawyers and accountants is likely to disappear; but the interpersonal and relationships-based aspects of their jobs, and the need to make fine judgements on the basis of uncertain data, cannot easily be passed to digital tech.

Take nursing, said one participant: "Why don't we get nurses to be much more interpersonal, and let the machines worry about taking observations? People are empathetic, machines are not; and I don't see this changing any time soon."

"We have to imagine a future where we humans work alongside AI, and make the best use of one another," added Nadine Smith, Global Director of Marketing and Communications at the Centre for Public Impact. "We have to show how they can be complimentary, and reinforce each other's strengths."

These changes might even help societies and economies to reward the interpersonal qualities that have traditionally lost out to technical and financial skills, suggested Manzoni. "I suspect that we've fallen into the trap of undervaluing empathy and human interaction," he commented. "There's an opportunity here somewhere to shift rent towards our nurses, our teachers, our prison officers – we need to value these professionals properly."

To begin to address these big, structural challenges, said Baltacıoğlu, "we need to challenge our workforce; we need to challenge our culture; we need to challenge our processes."

"We can never stop trying to be an excellent public service," she concluded. "Because if we fail, the country fails with us."



Leo Yip, Singapore



Last words

As the event drew to a close, *Global Government Forum* chief executive Kevin Sorkin asked the delegates which of the discussions and ideas they'd found most interesting: "What are you going to do differently when you go back into the office on Monday?" Among their answers, two key themes emerged.

First, the civil servants had been struck by the power and potential of AI technologies – both in their benefits for governments, and in the challenges they pose for policymakers, service delivery professionals and regulators. "I'm going to check this notion of government being left behind, and work out how we engage with this," commented the UK's John Manzoni.

Second, the officials had discovered both common ground in the need to foster better cross-departmental collaboration, and a huge variety in the ways that different countries are addressing that task. "I liked the discussion on cross-agency goals and where ministries meet," commented Mikhail Pryadilnikov, Deputy Director of the Analytic Center for the Russian Government. "Everybody's doing it in a different way, and I think we'll try to integrate some of those ideas and put them into practice."

"The challenge is how we get the civil service to address all these disruptions and challenges at the system level – because it's no

longer possible to deal with these profound changes at the single domain level," summarised Leo Yip of Singapore. Civil services need to develop "strategic coherence", with all their staff – particularly senior leaders – "thinking and operating with a system perspective."

As Sorkin wrapped up, thanking the civil servants for "following the first rule of *Global Government Summit* club: be frank with each other," Yip highlighted the event's value for delegates. "We meet once a year, but we can continue to share perspectives and interact" between Summits, he said. "We've heard so many rich perspectives in the last 24 hours; so many new ways to approach particular challenges."

Meanwhile, Yip said, the delegates will return to their home countries armed with new ideas, learning and contacts. For him, he added, one key task is to mobilise his workforce with a clear vision of the future – harnessing civil servants' sense of public service and their common identity to build a more effective civil service, and one better equipped for the coming challenges. "To galvanise people working under constant public pressure, we must explain that there's a better future that we must create together; one that requires us to rise above the daily fray and create a better system," he concluded. "That is key to the leadership that we need to exercise."

“ I feel inspired by all the discussions we've heard, which fuel the kind of debates that we have in our government – about how to serve the public; how to integrate the way we work. And I like the fact that there's lots of room for discussion, with the presentations sparking debate amongst ourselves.”

**Paul Huijts, Secretary-General, Ministry of General Affairs
(Prime Minister & Cabinet Office), Netherlands**

“ This meeting is very useful: the people who come are very professional, and have very rich experience in terms of civil service reform. And this year's agenda is very interesting because we're thinking about the same things, like digital transformation and working with data to achieve better public sector outcomes.”

Mikhail Pryadilnikov, Deputy Director, Analytic Center for the Russian Government

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