



E-GOVERNMENT 2000 CONFERENCE

Robert L. Mallet, Deputy Secretary of Commerce;
before the e-Gov 2000 Conference,
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It is a distinct pleasure to be here today. I am honored that you would invite me and, all these talented people whose achievements we are recognizing today humble me.

I know that Secretary Daley would have wanted to be here, if he hadn't gotten that mid-night phone call from Vice President Gore. He is very proud, as am I, of what government, working with the private sector, has achieved over the past few years.

It is people like you who have helped make the U.S. economy the strongest it has ever been. And one of the main reasons is that the Internet, and information technology have made our workers and our businesses more productive than at any time in history.

They are producing a third of our growth. By the year 2006, we predict almost half the workers in the U.S. will work for industries that either produce information technology or use it intensively.

B2B (business to business) e-commerce is completely changing the way companies do business. And it is happening with breath-taking speed.

We issued our third annual report on e-commerce in June. Our first two were called "The Emerging Digital Economy." But the latest edition dropped the emerging from the title because after just 26 months, the digital economy is no longer emerging. It's here!

Now that B2B is old hat (by Internet standards) now it is time for B2G (business to government). It is government's turn to jump in with both feet, and radically change the way we do business.

Last year, when Secretary Daley spoke from this podium, he challenged the Department of Commerce to become a total digital department. He told us to come up with a plan, and to execute it immediately. Well, we have a plan. We are making good progress at putting it into effect.

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We have added a number of on-line services over the last year. For the first time, people were able to complete their census short-forms using the Internet. Sixty-six thousand people filed their forms this way.

While that was a very small number of the 100 million short-forms that we received, it was a highly successful testing of the system. We had zero security breaches (even the National Security Agency failed to hack into the system). And all those people had to find the website on their own because we did no advertising.

In 10 years, I dare to say; we will see a paperless census. Where everyone would file online, or Census would be able to enumerate people, using other technology tools. Undoubtedly, it would be accurate, timelier and less costly.

A year ago we announced at this conference that businesses could start applying for export licenses using a secure on-line service. Since then half the requests (some 9,000 applications) were done on line. And by early next year, the entire licensing process, including supporting documentation, will be paperless.

In many ways government is connecting with customers as well as industry is. But we have much more to do, as many of you know. We are way behind industry in using technology for internal purposes; to increase productivity, to improve quality, to link up with suppliers, to cut costs.

At the Department of Commerce, we are just starting to get a Department wide Intranet. We have a goal that by 2002, the Department of Commerce will be a truly Digital Department.

Our toughest job, however, is changing attitudes. Too many government people see cyberspace as simply new space to do their work in the same old way. So, we are encouraging them to think out of the box. We're saying: forget about boundaries and bureaucracies; stop thinking about serving your own departments; think big picture; identify your customers; figure what government-wide services they use, and use the new smart technologies to serve these customers quicker, cheaper and faster. This is not an easy task. We don't have the greed and fear incentives that the private sector has. We can't do an IPO for UncleSam.com to win people over on this. And no federal agency lives in fear of being put out of business by the competition. But we are not without some effective tools.

The President's Management Council, of which I am a member, is actively engaged in cutting across boundaries. Our members are the chief operating officers of government, and e-government is always on our agenda.

I am delighted to announce that at the Department of Commerce we are in the process of creating a special website just for U.S. exporters. We are the biggest trading nation in the world. Most of our exporters are small companies. Many seek help from the government. But they have to go to 20 or 30 different federal agencies to get assistance for exporting. When the new website is up and running, (by the end of this year) it will be one-stop shopping for exporters, from start to finish; at least that is the goal we set.

To help all those millions of people who are now using federal websites, by September, 2000 we'll have a single, customer-focused website where anyone can find every on-line federal resource. This new website is: www.firstgov.gov

With your help, we won't stop there.

What about putting federal grant applications on line?

What about government procurement?

What about creating an E-bay for federal agencies?

Most of all, we have had President Clinton and Vice President Gore behind us from the very beginning. The President has unveiled the new and improved White House website. He talked at length about e-government. He talked about our responsibility as public servants to use these new tools to expand the reach of democracy. And he talked about using them so more people have a chance to live their dreams.

After the ballot box, I cannot think of a greater, more powerful tool for advancing democratic rights and economic opportunity than the Internet and e-government. Let me end on this.

To use this very powerful tool effectively, to use it to bring government closer to the people, we must overcome many obstacles, despite all the progress we are making. We need more allies and better attitudes. And many of the steps we must take will require improved resource allocation; modernized infrastructure, including things as homely and un-sexy as re-wiring old government buildings for that end.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Congress must be partners not only in resource decision-making, but also in participating in sharing the mission and setting goals. Congress isn't the enemy; nor is OMB's sharp pencil!

The fact is, we haven't tried hard enough. Washington is one of the toughest places on earth to change. We all know that. But we have to try harder.

We need to educate the nay-sayers and the managers who fear change.

We have to show senior managers how to develop business plans that leverage the Internet. We need to show them how the Internet can work for them, even while they sleep (at night).

We need to help them recruit and train information technology workers so their systems work effectively. Maybe we need a GI-bill for federal computer jocks?

We need to do all these things and we need to do them immediately, because the e-revolution is upon us. It is relentless. It is moving at the speed of light; maybe faster. And there is no way we can get out of the way.

So let's get everyone on board and get this B2G train moving! Thank you very much.

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