Unfinished Business: A Continuity Report on the 2011-12 Report, Déjà Vu All Over Again

June 2015

City and County of San Francisco
Civil Grand Jury, 2014-2015
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THE CIVIL GRAND JURY

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California Penal Code, section 929

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A copy must be sent to the Board of Supervisors. All responses are made available to the public.

For each finding the response must:
1) agree with the finding, or
2) disagree with it, wholly or partially, and explain why.

As to each recommendation the responding party must report that:
1) the recommendation has been implemented, with a summary explanation; or
2) the recommendation has not been implemented but will be within a set timeframe as provided; or
3) the recommendation requires further analysis. The officer or agency head must define what additional study is needed. The Grand Jury expects a progress report within six months; or
4) the recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable, with an explanation.
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Executive Summary

In 2012, the San Francisco Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) issued a report on the technological environment and culture of the City’s government. Called Déjà Vu All Over Again: San Francisco’s City Technology Needs A Culture Shock, it covered the governing structure and management of technology citywide and focused on its key players including the Mayor, the Committee on Information Technology (COIT), the Department of Technology (DT), the City Chief Information Officer (City CIO), and departmental Information Technology (IT) units. This 2015 Continuity Report examines what has happened, and not happened, since 2012, to the management of City technology, looking particularly at five of the nineteen recommendations from the original report.

Although specific recommendations were rejected, much has changed including:

- the structure and reporting relationship of COIT;
- changes in the senior leadership of DT, the creation of new offices, and streamlining the CIO Review process;
- more communication among departments through CIO forums and informational sessions;
- a much improved Five-Year plan and funding for technology;
- near-completion of the email and data center consolidations; and
- development of an IT asset management system.

While these changes have led to improvements in city technology, some of the problems identified in the 2012 report continue to exist. The City has not prioritized the funding of much-needed network infrastructure investments. The DT does not serve departments well and has proposed a planned reorganization as a remedy. With a 20% DT vacancy rate, understaffing, particularly in its business analyst positions, has hampered new DT and other departmental initiatives. A skills inventory capability within the new eMerge PeopleSoft system has not been developed to enable City employees with skill sets in demand to be identified. The Department of Human Resources (DHR) new IT recruitment and hiring efforts are not expected to make a significant enough change to fill all vacant IT positions. More drastic measures need to be taken, including consideration of Charter change to make selected IT positions “at will.”
This report recommends that:

(i) the Mayor and Board of Supervisors (BOS) prioritize the creation of an upgraded and consolidated network infrastructure and monitor, through reporting and evaluation, the reorganization of DT;

(ii) the Office of the Controller give greater priority to development of a skills inventory capability in the eMerge PeopleSoft system;

(iii) DHR present the results of their new recruitment and hiring initiatives and report monthly on IT hiring; and

(iv) DT hire more business analysts and launch a taskforce to consider more options for IT recruitment, hiring, job classifications, and other alternatives to the current system.

Background

The technology environment of the City and County of San Francisco has been the study of several audits, consulting studies, and CGJ reports over the years. One of the more recent efforts was the 2011-12 San Francisco CGJ Report, Déjà Vu All Over Again! San Francisco’s City Technology Needs A Culture Shock. This report was the 2014 winner of the Robert Geiss Excellence in Reporting Award sponsored by the California Grand Jurors’ Association.

The Déjà Vu report focused on San Francisco’s governing structure and management of technology citywide. The 2011-12 Jury reviewed the workings of DT, COIT (the citywide technology policy and planning body), the City CIO, and departmental IT units, some of which have their own CIOs. The report presented a comprehensive picture of dysfunction and waste, caused by a stifling culture, a lack of leadership, as well as competing decision-making and operational processes at the departmental level. It pointed out the inefficient architecture of different departments using multiple email platforms and data centers and the corresponding failure of the City to optimize its scale opportunities and savings through consolidation. Déjà Vu also described an environment with software systems and hardware platforms that had been outmoded for decades, managed by an organization without sufficient expertise, and an administration without the political will, to modernize the IT environment. In addition, the report noted that the City was not in compliance with an Administrative Code requirement mandating two public members be appointed to COIT.

The report found that there was a lack of basic information, particularly regarding the equipment and software licenses owned by the city, and the need for a citywide IT asset management database which would enable DT: “to identify duplication in,
and opportunities to share, equipment and licenses”\textsuperscript{2}; set schedules for equipment upgrades and replacements; and consolidate future purchasing.

The 2011-12 Jury also evaluated the human resources constraints in the technology arena. It asked the City to build a database of IT skill sets possessed by its staff to better match those skills to department needs, identify skill resources and voids, and develop appropriate training opportunities. This was seen as a first step toward the establishment of a more creative and dynamic IT work environment.

It also emphasized the need for a formal and substantial evaluation of DT. This evaluation would first set a baseline level for DT performance against which annual measures of client satisfaction and system performance could be compared.

Finally, the report dealt with a need for a citywide staffing plan which would include a Charter change to classify IT personnel as “at will”\textsuperscript{3} and therefore exempt from Civil Service requirements, including formal testing to establish eligibility. This would facilitate hiring in the highly competitive IT environment of the City. In lieu of such an exemption, the Jury asked for the development of a plan to accelerate IT hiring in order to keep pace with changing technologies and technical demands.

The 2011-12 Jury made nineteen recommendations to remedy these problems, including:

- changes in IT governing and reporting structures;
- increased staffing of COIT;
- appointment of two public members to COIT;
- improvements to, and departments’ compliance with, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Five-Year Plan;
- periodic evaluations of DT;
- the creation of an asset management system;
- the creation of a skills database;
- revisions to the Charter to allow for the hiring of IT personnel on an “at will” basis or at least a speed-up of the hiring process; and
- stronger and more consistent leadership from the Mayor.

The 2014-15 CGJ chose to review changes in citywide IT governance that had occurred since the 2011-12 report and five of its nineteen recommendations. Our intent was to evaluate the progress the City had made in implementing programs, as a result of the report, and to understand what factors may have impeded progress.
In so doing, it was clear that many changes had occurred in the City’s IT environment in the intervening years. Many of the positive changes, we believe, were due to the focus the 2011-12 report had put on key issues. However, in the course of our research, we became aware of some flaws in the original report and discovered new concerns. The goal of this continuity report is to note the prior report’s impact and to draw attention to the continuing problems we found. Our hope is that, as a result of this report, the City will be motivated to adequately fund its IT citywide network infrastructure and related personnel needs. Directing attention to these critical areas should move a future jury to once again do a full investigation of this vital citywide function.

**Methodology**

The Jury interviewed staff and managers from the Office of the Mayor, members of the Board of Supervisors, the Office of the Controller, DT, COIT, City Attorney, Municipal Transportation Agency, DHR, Department of Recreation and Park, and the Department of Building Inspection. We also reviewed the 2011-12 CGJ report, some of the responses to that report from the Mayor and individual departments, documents supplied by various departmental staff and the COIT website, including the most recent Five-Year ICT Plan.

**Discussion**

**Changes to SF City Technology Management Since 2011-12**

Déjà Vu was a highly controversial report that found few areas of agreement about its findings and recommendations among the Mayor, the Board of Supervisors, and the individual departments. The Mayor denied that significant technology problems existed citywide and rejected more than half of the report’s recommendations. Some of the recommendations in the report, which were rejected and remain as issues today, include:

- The Mayor does not issue Directives around IT projects, to clearly establish his priority in this area, and feels no need to do so;

- The Five-Year ICT Plan is still the standard for developing budget and staffing plans for citywide IT and measuring adherence to those plans, although the 2011-12 CGJ wanted the plan to be more comprehensive and strategic;

*Unfinished Business: A Continuity Report*
• The City CIO position was not elevated in authority or separated from DT; no dotted line relationships with departmental CIOs were thought necessary to foster more cooperation in consolidation projects; and

• No audit of DT management practice has occurred, although many inside and outside of DT want an audit. DT would welcome an audit, but only after significant progress is made within the department.

Only two recommendations were adopted to improve the structure of SF City Technology: appointment of two non-voting, non-City employee members to sit on COIT and the provision of more support for COIT.

Even though specific recommendations were rejected, according to interviewees many changes have taken place because of the 2011-12 Report, including:

- Hiring a new City CIO and senior leadership team within DT. The leadership team now includes positions that were not previously staffed, including a Director of Service Delivery and Director of the Project Management Office;
- Moving COIT from DT to the Mayor’s Office, and in July 2014 to the City Administrator’s Office for higher-level control and leadership, restructuring its committees (allowing more focus and accountability on budgeting and performance) and adding more full-time-equivalency (FTE) staff positions;
- Improving the ICT Plan, though still not a fully strategic document, and ensuring compliance by instituting performance reporting;
- Establishing a Project Management Office and supporting training with the Center for Project Management for DT staff and selected personnel in other departments;
- Convening regular CIO Forums and information sessions organized by DT and COIT and attended by representatives of DT and departmental IT units, with the goal of improving communication across departments; and
- Streamlining, with near-term plans to digitize, the CIO Review process to meet the needs of the departments.

These changes in management structure, according to interviewees, have led to greater potential savings and set the City and County on the road to more cooperative relationships among departments. The consolidations of the citywide email systems and data centers are prime examples. Only 10% of City employees were under the consolidated email system at the time the 2011-12 report was issued, now 90% are. The nine data centers have been consolidated into four.

There is also greater funding (a proposed $91 million over the next five years) coming from the Mayor for major IT projects, centered on the Financial Systems Replacement Project, Public Safety & Public Service Radio Replacement, and the
Property Tax Database, but not for the network infrastructure on which these projects will rest.

Without a proper network, the $91 million is at risk. Over the years DT has requested $20 to $15 million for their “Fix the Network” project, but the City has only been willing to allocate $8 million over the next five years. The City needs to prioritize the creation of a shared services strategy and network infrastructure upgrades and consolidation to ensure the success of their upcoming major IT projects.

While many are optimistic about the future, in our interviews with several departments, we continued to hear complaints of DT’s lackluster service performance. Some see DT as focusing on high-level projects, while neglecting day-to-day services. For others, dealing with DT is a headache because of siloes within the department. Departments with varied needs or requests must interact with different people within DT to have all their needs met. One DT unit does not necessarily know where to refer departments for other project, computer, or telephony issues, for example. Few departments are lucky enough to have a single point of contact for their many needs. Perhaps even more damning, though, is the lack of credibility DT has with its clients; clients do not want to entrust their technical needs to DT, because they believe DT does not have the competence or staff to deliver results in a timely way. This was the case three years ago, and it seems it still is.

To address these concerns, DT recently instituted a reorganization of their technical operations that includes the consolidation of their data center, network and applications teams under a single service delivery director. It has also begun to establish a new customer service division. Within this group are the service desk, network operations center, project management, and the client engagement unit which will identify a designated resource for each major department/client within the City. DT needs to build credibility and trust, to actually deliver on promises, and the CGJ hopes that this reorganization effort will begin that process. Some clients recognize that service failures are due to DT’s severe understaffing in key areas. These staffing voids need to be addressed not just with funding but with new recruiting and hiring structures, which we will discuss below. Business analysts are a particular need and are lacking in several DT units.

The Office of the Controller or the Budget and Legislative Analyst should consider the management and organizational issues within DT (as recommended by the 2011-12 CGJ) to evaluate the current process of flows and identify changes that could improve service delivery. Additionally, a future CGJ should fully investigate the Department of Technology, so it does not remain a weak link.
1. Recommendation 4: COIT appoint 2 non-voting, non-City employee members to sit on COIT without further delay.

According to the San Francisco Administrative Code Chapter 22A.4(a)(2):

There will be two additional non voting [sic] members of COIT selected by the voting members of COIT. These individuals cannot be employees of the City and County of San Francisco and shall have expertise in fields of ICT innovation and advances, emerging ICT applications, and public policy issues related to ICT.

At the time of the CGJ investigation, no public members had ever been appointed to sit on COIT. As of June 2015, these positions are held by Charles Belle and Alex Polvi.

2. Recommendation 13: The City CIO and the Controller create a citywide asset management system for ICT equipment.

The City embraced this recommendation. DT’s Citywide IT Asset Management system will pilot launch within the next six months, focusing first on DT’s internal assets, because it has the highest concentration of equipment with the top associated dollar value. The expectation is that DT will create an inventory of hardware and software, identify duplicate licenses and maintenance contracts, highlight underutilized and redundant machinery, and provide quantifiable scale opportunities when negotiating with vendors.

Currently, there are about five asset management systems in the city. Eventually, the new system will pave the way for subsequent department rollouts and more consolidation through 2017.

3. Recommendation 14: The City CIO and DHR create a citywide skills database for personnel, to catalog such skills as programming languages, web development, database, networking, and operating systems.

The 2011-12 CGJ envisioned a separate skills database for IT personnel with the hope that such an inventory would ensure continuing congruence between IT skills and the business needs of departments. Similarly, the intent was that appropriate training would be offered to reconcile the difference. Access to the database would be granted to department heads who could then draw on the talents of all IT employees, no matter their work locations, creating a more fluid and creative work environment for the resolution of IT problems. This approach was strongly supported by Local 21, but viewed by some interviewees as “utopian.”
The City responded that, as part of the development of its new centralized human resources management system, eMerge PeopleSoft will have the capacity to allow IT personnel to update their profiles, including skills and training records, on the system. It can be done either through employee self-service or via DHR. However, this essential update capability has not been fully defined and is not expected for a number of years.

As planned and for privacy reasons, so far only individual employees and their Department Heads are to have access to such information. That said, it is possible for a CIO in one department to ask a departmental CIO, if she has any people with, for example, Sequel server skills. Department employees could be borrowed by other departments to advise or work on a particular project, similar to the work order system that is now in place. However, interviewees said, given the current level of communication among departmental CIOs, it is unclear whether they would use this referral function.

4. Recommendation 15: Revise the Charter so that all vacant and new technology positions be classified as Group II exempt positions.

One of the chronic problems throughout the City and County is the hiring process. As part of its mandate to periodically review employment practices, the City Services Auditor in the Controller’s Office issued a report titled *How Long Does It Take to Hire in the City and County of San Francisco?* in April 2015. One of the motivations for the report is the fear that “lengthy hiring processes may discourage highly qualified applicants from applying for City jobs and if they do apply, they may accept other offers while waiting to hear from the City.” This was a problem recognized by the 2011-12 CGJ that led to Recommendation 15.

This point is underscored in the hiring of IT personnel; the glacial pace of hiring greatly impacts the service that IT units and DT can provide. According to figures supplied by the Office of the Controller for April and May 2015, the overall comparative position vacancy rates for the City and County are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>Vacancy Rate (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citywide (all positions)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citywide (IT positions)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Technology positions</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</table>

The excruciatingly long time to hire is partly due to the procedures required by the Civil Service System (CSS). Several interviewees commented that for many new technology workers, being part of the CSS is not an advantage; new tech workers often look at their jobs as two- to three-year commitments, and want the flexibility of “at will” employment. The current City IT hiring policies preclude this. Moreover, the overwhelming demand for technical talent puts the City’s slow hiring process at
a distinct disadvantage. As one interviewee described it, Salesforce can make an offer to a star candidate on the spot. Even if San Francisco can get its timing down to three months, that candidate will be gone.

Déjà Vu called for all future IT positions to be classified as “at will” and therefore exempt from the CSS. This change was, for the reasons identified below, clearly too far-reaching. However, there are other potential options. For example, those senior staff who are exempt from overtime, those designated as “Z” under DHR’s system, could be considered exempt from Civil Service on a going-forward basis. Alternatively, greater flexibility could be given, under new DHR rules, to the CIO and/or his designates to identify highly-rated temporary project-based personnel for transfer to civil service positions, bypassing the need for eligibility exams.

Exempting any staff member from the CSS, be it one classification or many, requires a change in the City Charter. In addition, it requires negotiation with Local 21. Most importantly, it requires the political will to make the change, one that is overdue for the City.

5. Recommendation 18: Pending revision of the Charter, the Mayor develop methods for speeding up the hiring process for ICT personnel.

The City’s commitment to the CSS is deep. When the 2011-12 report was issued, many in the City rejected the idea of a Charter revision to enable “at will” hiring until alternatives could be explored. In response to the 2011-12 CGJ Report and recommendation, an IT Hiring Group was formed by DHR to make improvements in the recruitment and hiring for IT positions. It included representatives from the Mayor’s Office, the Office of the Controller, DT, larger City departments, and the unions.

The IT Hiring Group has developed new techniques including recruitment on social media sites, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter; partnering with CareersInGovernment; posting jobs on job boards and aggregators such as Dice, GitHub, Stack Overflow, Coroflot, Behance, and Indeed.com; and the development of marketing videos for YouTube. The focus of the marketing strategy is on “... solving complex and interesting public service challenges, doing service to the community [...], and] the opportunity to have a work/life balance.” Work/Life balance appeals to tech workers who may be burned out by long hours in the corporate sector.

A recruiter was hired for these initiatives. However, the recruiter does not exclusively work on IT job recruitment. Also, the focus in terms of job fairs seems to be local only. The City and County does not send recruiters outside the local area. Given the demand for technology talent in our local area, this failure to recruit elsewhere is short-sighted.
For the hiring process, DHR instituted an expedited IT hiring pilot project. Its goal was to reduce the time for establishing an eligibility list for two IT positions, 1053: IS Business Analyst - Senior and 1054: IS Business Analyst - Principal. This would then decrease the hire time from the current interval of six to eight months to 30-50 days. This goal would be accomplished by delivering a new pilot examination on-line, un-proctored, but still utilizing position-based testing. After passing the core examination, candidates would be sent a link to an on-line oral test designed to measure narrower skill sets, by responding to situational questions regarding special conditions associated with these positions. Departmental subject-matter experts are given access to these videos to rate candidates and establish the eligibility list. Departments can also conduct candidate interviews on-line to make the final selection. This means that candidates do not have to be in San Francisco for testing on a set day and time. This was a problem with the prior system. The new process can widen the pool of applicants. If the pilot is successful, it will be rolled out to other positions.

Interviewees from departments did not expect much impact or benefit from the new process. Some IT units within departments have few vacancies or no need for 1053 and 1054 positions. Client departments seemed skeptical that a dent could be made in the problem. The CGJ was told that preliminary results of the pilot would be available in late March. No results have yet been shared.

To date, the DHR pilot project has not gone far enough to assist IT units and DT in their staffing needs. A new taskforce needs to be established to consider other ways to improve IT hiring including:

- the development of more IT internship opportunities (paid and unpaid);
- increased compensation, benefits, training, and better working conditions to make City IT positions more competitive with the private sector;
- a plan for recruiting IT staff using videos to focus on innovative projects and testimonies by existing IT personnel of what they like about their jobs; and
- an IT recruiter who would travel to job fairs at colleges and universities that are known for their computer science programs and general job fairs in regions with high concentrations of tech firms.

Conclusions

The City and County should be commended for the strides it has made in creating a more effective and cooperative technology environment in order to solve common problems. Significant progress has been made on its consolidation projects,
including email and data centers, and other citywide initiatives. However, continuing problems exist and need to be aggressively addressed. Primary among them is the hiring of IT personnel.

**Findings**

F1. The City has not prioritized critical network infrastructure investments, as demonstrated by their failure to fund essential network improvements.

F2. Significant problems still exist within DT that limit the services it provides to departments, largely due to their inability to fill job positions and funding constraints.

F3. The planned reorganization of DT to designate a responsible party to each department could be a positive step in building DT’s credibility.

F4. DT lacks business analyst capabilities to launch new initiatives and implement processes to make DT more efficient and effective.

F5. The skills inventory capability of the eMerge PeopleSoft system, as currently configured, will not enable Department Heads to quickly identify City employees with skill sets in demand.

F6. DHR’s efforts through the IT Hiring Group to stimulate IT recruitment and streamline IT hiring will not sufficiently impact departmental IT units and DT.

F7. The absence of a way to quickly bring in technology resources, whether on an “at will” or CSS basis, puts the City at a great disadvantage in hiring and potentially at risk in all of its technology initiatives.

**Recommendations**

R1. The Mayor should prioritize network infrastructure and fully fund the required investment in this foundational platform.

R2. The Mayor and Board of Supervisors should require a six-month and twelve-month report on the status of the DT reorganization.

R3. A user satisfaction survey should be sent to all DT clients, before the end of 2015 and later in six months after the reorganization, to assess whether the new accountability structure is making a difference for clients.
R4. The Office of the Controller should develop the skills inventory capability in the eMerge PeopleSoft system to update IT employee skills by the end of FY15-16.

R5. DHR should publicly present the results of its pilot IT hiring process to the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors before the end of CY2015.

R6. DHR should issue a monthly written report to the Mayor and Board of Supervisors showing the number of open IT positions at the beginning of the month, the number of new IT positions requisitions received in the current month, the number of IT positions filled in the current month, the number of open IT positions at the end of the month, and the average number of days required to fill the IT positions closed in the current month.

R7. DT should launch a taskforce to recommend options for recruiting and hiring IT staff, particularly on an “at will” basis.

R8. The Mayor and Board of Supervisors should calendar an interim review of taskforce proposals within six months of its convening.

R9. The Mayor and Board of Supervisors needs to allocate funds to DT for a recruiter dedicated exclusively to DT and other IT units’ staffing needs.

R10. DT needs to hire business analyst talent for the taskforce, new reorganization, and new initiatives.

Response Matrix

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7. **The absence of a way to quickly bring in technology resources, whether on an “at will” or CSS basis, puts the City at a great disadvantage in hiring, and potentially at risk, in all of its technology initiatives.**

7. **DT should launch a taskforce to recommend options for recruiting and hiring IT staff, particularly on an “at will” basis.**

8. **The Mayor and Board of Supervisors should calendar an interim review of taskforce proposals within six months of its convening.**

9. **DT needs a recruiter dedicated exclusively to DT**

Mayor

Board of Supervisors

Department of Technology
and other IT units’ staffing needs.

10. DT needs to hire business analyst talent for the taskforce, new reorganization, and new initiatives.

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.

Bibliography

City and County of San Francisco. Information & Communication Plan: Fiscal Years 2016-20. 2015


Endnotes

1 According to the 2011-12 jurors, former jurors from other counties were quick to point out that the jury had not attributed the title, as they should have, to Lawrence Peter “Yogi” Berra. We would like to right this terrible wrong. It was, indeed, Yogi Berra who said “déjà vu all over again,” when he saw “Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris repeatedly hit back-to-back home runs in the Yankees’ seasons in the 1960s.”


2 Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco, 2011-12 San Francisco Civil Grand Jury, Déjà Vu All Over Again: San Francisco’s City Technology Needs a Culture Shock, p. 20.

3 An “at will” employee is one who can be dismissed by an employer at any time and, similarly, can terminate his/her employment at any time without penalty.

4 As one interviewee, among others, noted, “[t]he improvements within DT are tangible.”

5 City and County of San Francisco, Office of the Controller, City Services Auditor, How Long Does It Take to Hire in the City and County of San Francisco?, April 2015, p. 9.
See the one minute twenty-eight second video at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXf9E_mAblw&feature=youtu.be

From a document supplied by the Department of Human Resources, “Marketing City and County of San Francisco Information Technology (IT) Jobs 2013,” p. 1.