**Program management** is defined as the process of managing several related projects, often with the intention of improving organizational performance. Today’s challenging fiscal environment combined with exponential changes in technology leads many to consider evolving technology to continue to streamline and/or eliminate resources / people. Twenty-five years ago, who would have dreamed you could “Google” a question and have it answered in seconds?

Yes, technology changes how we work, think and play. How will public sector program management be 25 years from today? Social media, digital networks, big data and the development of today’s youth will alter the field of Public Program Management, making it much smaller, nimble, and more effective.

**Program Management – in 25 years**

Future program managers and staff will have more responsibility for their workloads and increased capability to handle many more inquiries than presently due to data / technology. In addition to being reduced in number, federal employees will telework from home the majority of the work week, reducing the need for stand-alone resources and environmental support, and allowing for virtual teams of experts to come together no matter what their physical location. But how else will we see change? Here are 10 things that will have a tremendous impact on the field of Public Program Management and in turn will build the Program Manager and Public Sector of the future:

1. **Evolution of the Job Role**

Program managers that once relied on partnerships with departments such as Information Technology (IT) to supplement them with completing their jobs will find many of those former departments streamlined and in turn incorporated into their duties, forcing them to evolve and redefine their role. Emerging generations are living in a world that didn’t exist a decade ago – a digital nervous system that operates in real time with applications as Facebook, LinkedIN and Twitter. This is the world Millennials and our future leaders know. Future generations growing up with technology will embrace new technologies, methodologies, and processes of doing their jobs. They will utilize modern tools and develop innovative processes that enable them to bypass in-person IT support to complete their day to day activities.

1. **Diversity**

Tomorrow’s workforce will change. Employees at Headquarters and Regional / Satellite Offices will have mirrored responsibilities and roles instead of the segmentation they have today. Regional, lingual, and cultural differences will impact tomorrow’s business model. The expansion of diversity and continued transformation in culture will allow for the exchange of ideas verses today’s top down approach. The lines between management and staff will be blurred, even transparent.

1. **Information**

Employees of the future will have immediate access to huge amounts of both raw and structured information to complete daily tasks. Big Data and Business Analytics will change the way Public Program Managers work over the next 25 years. The dominance of information as well as metadata will offer Program Managers more data to utilize in data analytics to make smarter strategic decisions.

1. **Improved Communication**

Social networking and online collaboration / communications tools are rapidly changing and altering the way we do business. These new tools will empower Program Managers to chat online or face to face using tools to help expedite a claim, manage a process, or teach a class.

Program Managers using Social Media Sites and tools will engage their partners and staff using a variety of communications channels to elicit the “best” solution / ideas and information. The entire organization, whether one agency of the public sector or the entire public sector itself, will morph into an online community with the ability and tools to voice concerns and insights.

1. **Engaged Employees**

Communications will become more intimate and allow for everyone to have a voice, making the exchange of ideas and collaboration free flowing, empowering continuous change to happen. These heighten tools and communication practices will enlighten and engage all involved parties. When people are engaged, they feel respected, valued and part of the team. And when that happens, people dig deeper, give more, and are just plain happier and committed to the cause.

1. **Education**

Online learning networks are redrawing the lines between leaders, employees, agencies/organizations and culture, creating great community building tools. It turns the entire organization or enterprise into a global classroom. Virtual teams will be the norm, and the culture of the work environment will become one where all are comfortable with communicating electronically while maintaining the feeling of collaboration and personable exchanges.

1. **Advances in Technology**

Program Managers will lead their employees and organizations to achieving elevated product knowledge and skills using the skills and knowledge they themselves were exposed to ‘growing up’. The diversity and growth of their portfolio will lead to a greater exchange of ideas, facilitated by the program manager, to connect the dots of all their respective programs. By providing Project Manager’s with a broad view of issues, they’ll think universally, leading to the development and creation of global solutions.

1. **Big Data**

Big Data offers unprecedented insights, improved decision making and untapped sources across federal, state, cities / municipalities, and private institutions. With multiple sources of information and alerts, Big Data can identify and deter problems before they occur.

Using combined data stored, we have the ability to turn data into intelligence that reasons, plans, predicts, solves problems, understands, innovates, and learns in ways that increase organizational knowledge, create informed decision processes, enable effective actions, and help establish and achieve business goals. With this information, we have the ability to make better and more informed decisions that will have historical precedence.

Program Managers will have valuable information from other agencies and other institutions in their arsenal, and this will empower employees to make better informed decisions at a moment’s notice. Here are two potential examples:

* For government disability claim processing, financial institution data that contains financial connections to private health practitioner information will be incorporated to one information system enabling all claims information to be online in real time, ready for coordination, interfacing, and processing.
* Overpayments and underpayments for disability benefit programs will greatly be reduced with the help of inter-agency information which will be transparently shared with the cooperation and partnership of local, state, federal, and financial institution partners.

1. **Business Intelligence / Analytics**

Business intelligence (BI) and analytics will provide far more actionable information empowering the public sector to develop better analytics to programmatically resolve / remedy situations today that require IT review. Using BI, Program Managers will be able to empower employees to predict, process, and adjudicate claims more accurately and quicker than before. Ad hoc tools / computer dashboards will be at the Program Manager’s disposal allowing him or her to making real time decisions faster than before with more accurate information. For years financial institutions have used analytics for loan and credit card processing, for finding fraudulent activity within and outside the organization, and for risk management. If Public Sector management leveraged this technology, what are the opportunities of a seamless Federal Government? And consider seamless sharing between Feds, state, and local/city governments? Imagine the possibilities…

1. **Social Media / Knowledge Management / Collaboration**

With a smaller, more diverse future workforce, Social Media and Knowledge Management (KM) roles for tomorrow will be pivotal in order for tomorrow’s leaders to complete their jobs successfully. KM and collaborative tools and repositories will available and reviewed in a moment’s notice. A smaller, more nimble staff will be more adaptable and flexible knowing ‘where to find’ the solutions since there will be fewer veteran subject matter experts. KM will allow everyone to store, save and reuse procedures, queries, and lessons learned to avoid “reinventing the wheel” and in turn optimizing time.

Collaborative tools, KM resources and the use of analytics will help reduce and save tax payer dollars by allowing government employees to work more efficiently and effectively. Face to face exchange via technology, shared information, collaboration, resources, and information will promote the use and development of better tools.

In conclusion, with the ten factors / influences / inevitable drivers above, we all will certainly see change; the bottom line is that in these key areas it will be change moving in the right direction – for all employees as well as for Program Managers. With all of the innovation that will naturally occur in our ever changing global and technological world, the public sector will be more effective and easier to navigate through in the next 25 years, especially compared to today’s perceived bureaucracy. Not only will the federal government be seen as one serving entity vs. many agencies / bureaus as we are seen as today, but state, county, and city governments will all connect with transparency. Not a monopoly of government seen as ‘big brother’, but instead separate government agencies that ‘talk’ seamlessly to each other, eliminating redundancy and bureaucratic red tape. And the movement in this direction will be enabled by the Public Sector Program Manager. The sky is the limit.