

The Dreamers

Who are they?

Dreamers have big ideas. They are able to see the big picture and imagine possibilities to solve complex problems. They are passionate about their agency missions and are unafraid to ask, “Why not?” and “How can we do things better?” Dreamers use best practices and methods from outside of government to drive change. Successful dreamers are often, but not always, higher in the chain of command.

“I want to do service-oriented work that has actual impact on people. There is a sense of pride for people in government. You’re here to help the public.”

Attributes

- Passionate public servant who is mission-driven
- Excellent storyteller who inspires excitement and rallies people around an idea
- Approaches problem solving creatively
- Not content with the way things are
- Collaborative—good at building relationships and networks across silos and sectors
- Bureaucracy hacker—hacks the red tape! Asks for forgiveness, not permission
- Adaptable—able to compromise to achieve a solution
- Resourceful and scrappy—gets things done with little resources

Goals

- Wants to have the most impact possible for the public good through building transformational products and more effective services
- Make government work for the people by instituting user-centered approaches and data-driven decision making
- Always looking for ways to improve how things are done in government
- Introduce ideas and approaches from outside government and foster the talent and skills in-house to sustain innovation
- Pitch good ideas, pilot them quickly, and weed out the ones that don’t work

Frustrations

- Lack of managerial support for ideas
- Lengthy process to get leadership and inter-agency buy-in
- Limited resources (budget, technology, time, staff)
- Slow pace of change and a culture adverse to risk
- Departments working in silos that don’t innovate together
- Requirements, processes, and legal issues that make it difficult to test and move ideas forward

The Doers

Who are they?

Doers are driven by outcomes and like to execute ideas they believe in. When assigned a challenge, they willingly roll up their sleeves and jump right in to achieve more efficient and effective solutions. Doers bring ideas to reality, approaching the problem practically. They do best when there is a clear vision and tangible steps to achieve end goals.

“I don’t want to waste my time and have the project die. I want my work to count for something and be meaningful.”

Attributes

- Are grounded in reality
- As pragmatic problem solvers, focused on the task at hand
- Enjoy learning new things when it applies to the task
- Won’t give up if they believe in the idea and have a clear understanding of the vision
- Understand government standards and regulations and are able to navigate them to get things done
- Not deterred by setbacks and continue moving forward, leveraging existing tools they have
- Are self-motivated and prefer to work independently, but also work well with others when the task requires

Goals

- Want to get to a working solution that has impact on the public
- Recognize current processes and approaches could be more effective
- Want to implement a better way of doing things
- Want to bring the dreamer success
- Seek incremental improvements on existing services

Frustrations

- Balancing normal workload and innovation
- Lack of budget, resources, staff, and time to get things done
- Inability to get all the players together quickly
- Difficulty getting leadership support to take risks
- Time it takes to get things started and moving forward
- Unclear visions with ambiguous goals and undefined roles

The Champions

Who are they?

Champions are passionate about their agency mission, and support teams who want to do things smarter and better. By nature of their position and authority, they can advocate for ideas, gather more managerial champions, and protect Dreamers and Doers who are doing the work. They identify which ideas are feasible, have most impact, and align with their agency's mission and priorities. Champions tend to be in positions of influence.

“I see myself as someone who can try to remove barriers. Let people on the front line feel empowered to make changes. It's a matter of giving people the resources they need to do amazing things.”

Attributes

- Look toward the private sector, academia, and other agencies—for inspiration and to build formal partnerships
- Match the seeds of ideas with actual priorities and goals of the organization
- Provide teams with the environment to try new things and grow outside of their routine duties
- Understand, but aren't limited by, the organizational structure and culture
- Understand where risk is and take steps to mitigate it
- Socialize new ideas and knows whose buy-in matters most amongst stakeholders
- Gain trust and respect of colleagues through relationship-building and proven track records

Goals

- Empower their colleagues to find ideas and solutions, and allow the best ideas to surface
- Create a safe space for people to try new things, speak freely, and not be penalized for failure
- Leave a legacy at their agencies
- Influence a positive cultural change in their organizations
- Provide structure for adoption of new ideas and approaches

Frustrations

- Legal, budgetary, manpower, and regulatory hurdles
- Personnel who are fearful of risk and work in silos
- The necessity to “pick and choose their battles”
- Attracting new talent that has current skills and inheriting career staff who struggle with change
- Staff who already have heavy workloads and limited time
- Lack of resources and access to training to keep staff skills up to date with private sector approaches
- Government's reluctance to change quickly
- Culture of politics and restrictions
- Time it takes for new management to get acclimated to the agency

The Gatekeepers

Who are they?

Gatekeepers have the challenging role of enforcing a wide range of regulations that are interpreted differently throughout government agencies. Their job responsibilities often result in a default protective stance that can seem at odds with innovation. In actuality, Gatekeepers are creative problem-solvers who ensure innovation happens legally, securely, and in compliance with rules.

“I must understand what the problem space is and how the solution addresses it. It must be an improvement over how things currently are. I must understand and agree that it makes sense.”

Attributes

- Do more with less, within a high-stakes environment that is constantly changing
- Respond positively when given enough lead time and well-considered plans
- Aware that some colleagues view them as barriers, but don't let that influence their work
- Prefer to stay in their lane and are not focused on other agency disciplines
- Feel personally responsible for adherence to regulations
- Resilient, often staying in their areas of expertise for years
- Have a deep understanding of their regulatory requirements
- Are willing to fight high-level management, if necessary

Goals

- Ensure regulatory compliance
- Mitigate and protect their agencies from risks
- Make sure projects are feasible, legal, secure, and sustainable
- Be involved in the process early, so they have the opportunity to help the team succeed, rather than be barriers to success
- Avoid being blindsided at the end of the project
- Educate colleagues about their shared responsibility to meet requirements

Frustrations

- People who ignore or intentionally avoid regulatory requirements
- People who are unaware of regulations or make assumptions without asking
- Colleagues who bring them into the process late, forcing the Gatekeepers to halt or delay projects
- Limited budgets, staff, and time
- Being forced to bandage problems quickly rather than having time to create long-term solutions
- Colleagues who lack a sense of shared camaraderie and responsibility around requirements
- Vague regulation definitions and requirements