The U.S. Digital Service

A lot of us complain about how the government is not very good at technology. The U.S. Digital Service is actually trying to do something about it, by applying the way startups build products to make government services work better for veterans, immigrants, students, seniors, and the American public as a whole.

This is clearly a good idea. (See U.S. Digital Service Playbook for more details.)

Inspired by the successful rescue of HealthCare.gov, small teams get deployed inside government agencies to improve critical government software.

It seems to be working. To use HealthCare.gov again as an example, the Digital Service effort helped replace a $200 million login system that cost $70 million per year to operate (I know...) with one that cost $4 million to build and less than $4 million per year to operate, and worked better in every way. In another example, at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, a Digital Service team has been instrumental in enabling green cards to be renewed online for the first time and a growing number of other improvements to the immigrant experience.

The Digital Service attracted talent on par with the best Silicon Valley startups, including talented veterans from Amazon, Google, Facebook, Twitter, Twilio, YC, and more – engineers, designers, and product managers who have committed to do tours of duty serving the country.

As an American, I am grateful to these men and women for doing this. Because of their work, the government will work better.

I often get asked about what people can do for a year or two to make a big impact between projects. Here is a good answer. Consider [joining](#) the ranks. I think it'd be great if it became a new tradition that people from the tech world do a tour of duty serving our country at some point in their careers. We need better technology in government.