

The BAS2A Briefing



State and Local Government Hiring and Upskilling Through Digital Playgrounds

Every year for the last ten years, I eagerly awaited Deloitte’s *Global Human Capital Trends* report like I used to wait for the latest Sears Christmas catalog when I was a kid. The 2024 edition of *Global Human Capital Trends* has a great “digital playgrounds” section, which can be especially useful to state and local governments.

I have been working with simulations since I tried creating a starship simulator for my Commodore 64. In the Strategic Workforce Planning group at the Office of Personnel Management, I advocated building digital models of Federal agencies to simulate the effects of various workforce strategies. I promoted examples of companies that used simulations of their businesses to recruit and hire people. And I was an early adopter of using simulations and gamification to train employees.

Digital playgrounds can revolutionize state and local governments’ talent development practices.

[From the Deloitte report:](#)

“A digital playground is not a singular place or virtual platform. Rather, it’s a mindset and an approach in which technologies are curated with intention and opportunities to use them are democratized. It’s a safe space for workers to build confidence, learn new skills, and hone their human capabilities. Safety in this context refers to psychological safety—where individuals do not risk punishment or humiliation for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes, and where they are safe to take interpersonal risks. It also refers to spaces where workers can experiment with new processes and technologies without putting business outcomes at risk.”

Four Benefits of Creating Digital Playgrounds

Improving capabilities: Digital playgrounds offer a secure space for workers to try out and discover new methods of working with advanced technologies, such as generative AI, digital twins, digital doppelgangers, augmented and virtual reality, analytics, and sensors. Digital playgrounds help workers to gain confidence, learn new abilities, and sharpen their human skills.

Enhancing collaboration: Digital playgrounds foster co-creation and exploration, which can result in more productive cooperation among workers and stakeholders. The digital playgrounds can help to eliminate barriers and encourage cross-functional teamwork.

Enhancing customer experience: By trying out new technologies and processes in a secure environment, workers can create innovative solutions that enhance the citizen experience. These digital experiments can result in more citizen satisfaction.

Delivering shared benefits: Digital playgrounds can deliver shared benefits for workers and organizations. Workers can learn new skills and abilities that improve their career prospects, while organizations can enjoy more innovation, productivity, and profitability.

Democratizing Access to Digital Playgrounds

Democratizing access to digital playgrounds involves providing opportunities for all state and local government workers to use the tools and technologies available in the playground. Governments should select technologies relevant to the workers' needs and goals and ensure the technologies are accessible and easy to use.

State and local government talent development departments should make digital playgrounds accessible to all workers, not just a few specialists. Accessibility can be done by providing training and support to workers who are new to the technologies and by creating a culture of experimentation and play. Government employees should feel safe experimenting and exploring new ways of working. Encourage government workers to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from their experiences.

Digital playgrounds should be connected to the workers' day-to-day work so that they can apply what they learn in the playground to their jobs. Learning transfer can be done by creating opportunities for workers to share their experiences and insights with their colleagues. Government workers should be involved in designing and developing digital playgrounds to tailor the technologies and tools to their needs and goals. Finally, state and local governments should be transparent about how worker data is collected, used, and shared in digital playgrounds and should involve workers in the decision-making process.

Learn Fast and Break Things Virtually

A favorite thinking technique of mine is to imagine how I can make a situation worse. I've had training groups come up with ways to deliver horrible customer service, rapidly make a project fail, and increase the amount of conflict in a team.

You can learn much from negative examples. And digital playgrounds let you learn safely without breaking things in the real world.

With digital playgrounds, government workers can safely explore multiple scenarios to help them arrive at the optimal real-world solution. Digital playgrounds also aid in spotting talent that should be hired and aid in onboarding new employees. The Deloitte report has many great examples of how to [reenergize your talent development efforts with digital playgrounds](#).

For More Information, Contact
Dr. Bill Brantley at bill@bas2aOffice.com

About Brantley Advanced Social Sciences Applications (BAS2A) and Dr. Brantley:

BAS2A provides innovative training solutions for government agencies. We help agency leaders develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the changing public sector.

Dr. Brantley is an expert in digital workforce development. He helps government employees improve their competencies and adaptability, creating an innovative and flexible workforce.

At BAS2A, we create customized training that meets the specific needs of government organizations. Using our experience in instructional design and advanced learning technologies, we offer different types of educational programs—from short, focused learning modules to detailed, realistic simulations.

With Dr. Brantley's expertise, our training programs are tailored to the changing needs of our clients, giving them the tools and knowledge they need to face current and future challenges. Our goal at BAS2A is to create a lasting culture of learning and improvement within your agency, ensuring long-term success and innovation.