

# Podcast Episode

Public Sector  
Embracing Digital Transformation



## The Things I Wish I Knew as a Government CTO

Darren W Pulsipher, Jason Dunn-Potter, & Ron Fritzemeier – May 12, 2022

### A unique perspective of two former Government CTOs in the Department of Defense and what they have learned coming into the commercial industry.

In this episode, Darren Pulsipher, Chief Solution Architect, Public Sector, Intel, welcomes special guests Jason Dunn-Potter, Ret Chief Warrant Officer, US Army, and Ron Fritzemeier, Ret Rear Admiral, US Navy. Both are now five months into their positions as Solution Architects and Mission Specialists with Intel's Department of Defense Team.



**Video:** [Youtube Channel](#)

**Podcast:** [SoundCloud](#)

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#### *What have Jason and Ron learned since joining Intel that they wished they knew when they were in the military?*

Jason was surprised how much better industry integrated solutions and developed some incredible capabilities missing in the army. He learned that business use cases show that understanding the customer's problem set is more valuable than simply pushing technology. CTOs need to know the technology and learn how to change the culture of team members to adapt to it. Making the user experience friendlier, building the technology smarter, leaner, and faster, and getting people on board are what can make smoother transitions. He would have liked to have seen more outcomes and solutions in the army instead of simply products.

Ron agrees with Jason's assessment and adds that the challenge he saw from inside the government was how to get industry to come along as mission solution partners so they could better inform military teams on how to apply their technology to those missions. Without understanding how to solve the actual mission problem, great technology can be a train wreck.

Another element both agree is important is user experience. Matching the technology with the people that have to operate it is critical. Everyone using the technology does not need to have a Ph.D. in engineering. The user experience must be built for your people's level of skills. The outcome is seldom independent of humans. When bringing solutions to defense or industry, you need to understand the mission's technological needs, the entire space, and how to operate in that space. Particularly in the military, you have to plan to execute in moments when things have not gone well and make it work. Technology will not win the day if you aren't planning for the human element and challenging circumstances.

#### *What are the biggest or most exciting surprises for Jason and Ron as they have moved from military to private industry?*

Jason and Ron say that they didn't expect a distinct culture of teamwork inherent in military service in private industry at Intel. Both found the onboarding experience and ongoing support encouraging. They appreciate the general attitude of being in it together and the ability to create things with a dynamic team more incredible than you ever could on your own.

They both appreciate that they are not expected to sell Intel products merely but to help customers solve mission challenges and provide customer feedback to Intel. They are at Intel to solve problems, especially in the public sector, maybe with technology that hasn't been created yet.

***What are the technology gaps that Jason and Ron see in the Department of Defense or Intel?***

First and foremost, Jason says, are cloud operations, and it is a changing dynamic in the DOD. Commanders on the battlefield are risk-averse. There is no room for DDIL. As cloud operations evolve, you have to retrain and relearn all the work into accurate cloud operation and the benefits of edge to cloud capability that offers real-time, accurate information that gets to the right people at the right time. Everyone must have situational awareness and an operational picture of what is happening.

Ron believes the next thing on the list is increasing cybersecurity as the vulnerability surface increases. If the military doesn't drive in the direction of zero trust as it moves to a competent edge and highly mobile, the results during conflict could be disastrous. The DDIL issue is enormous, but it's got to be secure against the increased vulnerability surface.

Jason believes the technology must move forward despite the risk because the military always wins with the information. Whether it's FEMA missions, providing nuclear power to a city, setting up field hospitals during COVID, or the battlefield, technological advancement, especially 5G, is critical to operations. DOD leaders must have information and the ability to communicate to their

headquarters for guidance, especially in combat operations when leadership could change through casualties down to the lowest corporal.

Ron uses the example of the highest priority of the national defense is never to have to fight an adversary on home territory. Since the United States may not have a quantity advantage away from home during a conflict against an adversary who may also be technologically advanced, the military has to be more capable. The military must continue to provide increased capability to national defense forces and do it securely, despite the increased vulnerability exposure. Those problems must be solved so operators can trust the data and use it effectively in an away-game environment. There is no option but to drive in that direction.

Jason adds that another space where the DOD has been slow to adapt is AI due to a lack of people with suitable backgrounds. You don't come out of Army Ranger School as an AI expert. The same problem existed with cybersecurity for years until the DOD made a significant investment. Some complex resources need to go to AI operations because AI can change everything.

Ron, having spent the last few years in the service in the nuclear space, points out that the US will never take the human element out of critical decision loops. AI will be hugely valuable as it can ensure the technology can dynamically adapt. It will reduce the cognitive load and process countless data points so human decision-makers can have a more apparent situational awareness and be better prepared to make informed decisions quickly. That's the AI space that the DOD must pursue.



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