



## Deloitte AI360 Podcast

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**Ed Van Buren, GPS Artificial Intelligence Strategic Growth Offering Leader**

**Title:** S2:E5 | Agents, agencies & adoption: The state of AI in government

**Description:** Sensitive mission data. Citizens in need. A new breed of agents in the field—discover the top use cases and challenges surrounding AI in the public sector with insights from Deloitte’s Government & Public sector AI lead Ed Van Buren.

**Duration:** 00:07:48

**Jim Rowan:**

Hey everyone, this is Jim Rowan back with the AI360 Podcast. I’ve got Ed Van Buren here with me. Ed heads up our AI in the government and public sector practice. Ed, thanks for joining us today.

**Ed Van Buren:**

Glad to be here, Jim.

**Jim Rowan:**

Awesome. So Ed, a lot going on in AI this year. A lot of big activities happening. Maybe you could talk to us a little bit about first, what your role is in Deloitte, and then a little bit about your perspectives on what’s happening from an AI perspective in the government and public sector.

**Ed Van Buren:**

Sure thing. Jim, my role in Deloitte around AI is to help our teams across our federal, state, local, and higher ed spaces use AI with our clients more effectively. That involves working directly with clients, working directly with our tech alliance partners, coordinating our investments, and helping develop our workforce. So, there are a lot of moving parts associated with that, and it’s been an exciting couple of years in this space and it’s been a lot of fun. I think we’ve done some great things with our clients to help them adopt AI. In the government space lately, we’ve seen a lot of changes around AI. Before, we were spending a lot of time trying to explain to our clients the values and the benefits of AI. Right now, there’s a top-down push to deploy automation and AI powered solutions to help reduce the cost of government services. So, that’s been a big push in the last couple months.

**Jim Rowan:**

Yeah, clearly a ton going on. We see that—the same thing—in the commercial side too. And what’s interesting, I think, for folks who listen in is that Ed and I play this role together in the sense of connecting the dots between what we see commercially, in the public sector: what are the benefits, what use cases can we apply across those two areas and learn from each other. And Ed, maybe we could get into a little bit of detail from your perspective on some of the interesting use cases you’re seeing emerge from the use of AI in the government and public sector space.

**Ed Van Buren:**

Jim, in our government space, we’ve got a mix of traditional government front-office functions, as well as back-office functions that are much more like what we would see in the commercial enterprises, right? So, on the front-office side of things, you have everything from health and human services, benefits deployment. You’ve got regulation and oversight, law enforcement, defense, national security intelligence, public health, and all those classic government services for which AI can really make a big difference and already has been. And then on the back-office side, we have all of the things like finance and human resources, and we’ve got a lot of administrative processes that are very similar to what we see in the commercial space. Things like IT management, IT service delivery, and things like that. I think there’s a tremendous opportunity right now to take a lot of those capabilities straight from the commercial, we’ll say best practices playbook, and deploy them straight into the back-office functions. And then on the front-office functions, there are a lot

of common processes where we do see similar things going on. So, the idea of a customer service interaction is very analogous to a citizen requesting some sort of service from a government agency and all of the processes associated with that. So, we can leverage those kinds of capabilities—things like intelligent chatbots, for instance, to make those interactions much more efficient for everyone involved.

**Jim Rowan:**

That's great. And I think one of the interesting things too, we've got this conversation about is what are the barriers for people trying to adopt AI, and what's slowing down this kind of scaling of AI where we, in our *State of Gen AI* report, we talk about organizations and what they're able to scale in the production. Only about 30% of these POCs got to production last year. Are you seeing similar challenges around data regulatory situations, maybe the strategy or purpose, connection to mission, being some of the same challenges, from a GPS perspective?

**Ed Van Buren:**

Absolutely. The data connecting to the AI solutions, is a very long pole in the tent, and organizations in the government space are spending a lot of time and energy trying to make sure their data's accessible and clean. So that's an element. I think there's an overall sort of workforce leadership and governance dimension that's slowing things down, where there's a desire to make sure that everything is just right before it gets deployed. Not everybody is as aggressive about wanting to use AI. I think the government industries have very important and sensitive missions, and the leaders really want to make sure before they deploy something that it's not going to cause a problem. And that's a very admirable aspiration. At the same time, it does tend to slow down adopting new and innovative technologies. So that's an element. And then the last one is really around the overall security and risk posture. Government data—it's citizen data, it's national security information, it's very sensitive information, and the agencies want to make sure that they're safeguarding this information. A lot of the technologies that have rolled out over the last couple years didn't start in secure format, so it's taken time for the tech industry to migrate those capabilities into government-secure cloud platforms. So that's an element. And then government agencies also are looking to deploy those solutions, in their on-premise-based environments. And that's taking time, to make sure that they have the right components and elements. So, blending all of that together, creates some obstacles. But I think government leaders are working their way through those, and we're starting to see more and more solutions get into production, bringing AI to the United States.

**Jim Rowan:**

That's awesome, Ed. And maybe one thing, it's hard for us to walk down the street and not even talk about agentic AI, a hot topic everywhere. Is there a piece of advice you'd give government public sector leaders around what to think about AI agents, agentic AI, that whole space?

**Ed Van Buren:**

There is. When we think about agentic AI, we think of autonomous agents that are going forth and doing all of these things with no human interaction and oversight. And I don't think that's *how* we should think about it. We should think about AI agents as partners—partners for the government workforce, partners for the government leaders—and as you deploy these solutions, you can make choices about how empowered that partner's going to be. For very sensitive things, there should be lots of oversight and lots of interaction between the human and the machine. For things that become well understood and are lower risk, we can allow the AI agent to have more autonomy and pick up more of that workload with less oversight. I think that as you deploy these solutions, you've got to think those things through and blend it out so that you get a solution that gets you the benefit of agentic AI, but at the same time manages the risk of the deployment.

**Jim Rowan:**

I love it. That's super helpful. Ed, thanks so much for the time today. I really appreciate your insights on what's going on from an AI and government public sector perspective.

**Ed Van Buren:**

Thanks, Jim. Glad to be here. Take care.

**Jim Rowan:**

Take care.

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