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**FEDERAL AGENCIES WORK TO BALANCE THE CYBER
BIG DATA EQUATION**

18 Federal Big Data and cyber leaders explore steps agencies are taking to balance access and risk

Alexandria, Va., February 24, 2014 – [MeriTalk](#), a public-private partnership focused on improving the outcomes of government IT, today announced the results of its new report, “[Balancing the Cyber Big Data Equation](#).” The study, underwritten by [Northrop Grumman](#), examines the symbiotic relationship between Big Data and cyber security and captures insights from 18 Federal IT Big Data and cyber security experts, in their own words, on the emerging interplay between the two disciplines. Federal experts note that Big Data presents new opportunities to enhance cyber missions, but that more security controls are needed to ensure agencies can protect data, especially as data sets grow. The report examines this two-way street and explores what agencies are doing today, how they are balancing access and risk, and what’s next as technologies and policies mature.

Experts agree there is tremendous value in the data currently segregated across the Federal government. Many agencies are in the initial stages of addressing opportunities and threats related to Big Data and cyber missions. Opportunities range from improving operational efficiency; to reducing fraud, waste, and abuse; to improving America’s health. As agencies consider these opportunities, they flag the need for risk management, enterprise architecture, and governance.

“Continuous monitoring and advanced analytics of data provide agencies with an unprecedented understanding of their networks and security posture,” said Jim Myers, vice president and general manager, Cyber Solutions division, Northrop Grumman. “This paves the way for powerful predictive capabilities in the future that will empower agencies to focus on real threats and mitigate risk.”

However, experts note that agencies lack both infrastructure and policy to enable Big Data correlation, dissemination, and protection. They point out that while existing information security principles still apply, the product of data analytics is the element that becomes more sensitive – insight versus information. As data sets grow and come together, so does the data sensitivity, and the risks of unintended consequences. Most execs note there is much work to do – including initial steps such as filtering and characterizing data. And, agencies are facing severe budget cuts, limiting their ability to evolve and take full advantage of the Big Data opportunity while also managing the associated threats.

Looking ahead, the report found that as Big Data and security infrastructures and policies evolve, agencies need dashboards that can aggregate input from different analytical tools to deliver business insight and value. Some Feds believe that “intelligent analytics” will one day reduce the need for highly trained data scientists.

To achieve success, agencies should consider information sharing from an organization and policy perspective – and at the same time, focus on the technical issues. Government-wide, agencies need a cohesive enterprise security infrastructure, coupled with a sound risk management strategy. Federal executives on the front lines recommend:

- **Consider the Full Equation:** Develop a comprehensive enterprise information architecture strategy that encompasses both Big Data and cyber
- **Re-think Risk:** Ensure agencies adequately classify the risk level of their data analytics capability and take appropriate steps to mitigate risks, including considering threats within and beyond perimeter borders
- **Put Data To Work:** Invest in the tools to apply analytics to continuously monitor data, enabling the predictive and automated capabilities that will ultimately save time and money
- **Show Me The Money:** Pilot dashboards that provide mission owners with new insights and help track the ROI for Big Data/cyber efforts

The “Balancing the Cyber Big Data Equation” report is based on qualitative interviews with 18 Federal Big Data and cyber security experts. To download the full report, please visit www.meritalk.com/Balancing-Cyber-BigData.

About MeriTalk

The voice of tomorrow's government today, MeriTalk is a public-private partnership focused on improving the outcomes of government IT. Focusing on government's hot-button issues, MeriTalk hosts [Big Data Exchange](#), [Cloud Computing Exchange](#), [Cyber Security Exchange](#), and [Data Center Exchange](#) – platforms dedicated to supporting public-private dialogue and collaboration. MeriTalk connects with an audience of 85,000 government community contacts. For more information, visit www.meritalk.com or follow us on Twitter, @meritalk. MeriTalk is a [300Brand organization](#).

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