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Washington Technology: Feds go looking for customers, step up marketing efforts

By Gail Repsher Emery

March 24, 2004 - "Build it and they will come" was the sentiment as managers across government built Web sites to offer services to citizens and businesses. But enough citizens and businesses didn't arrive at those sites, so now the federal government is taking a new approach.

Working with the Washington nonprofit Council for Excellence in Government, federal managers will determine how best to market their e-government initiatives, said Clay Johnson, deputy director for management at the Office of Management and Budget.

Johnson spoke today to federal managers and information technology contractors at FOSE, the government IT trade show produced by PostNewsweek Tech Media, which is being held this week at the Washington Convention Center. PostNewsweek Tech Media publishes Washington Technology.

The e-gov initiatives range from www.regulations.gov, a Web site where the public can comment on proposed federal rules, to www.recreation.gov, a Web site where citizens can learn about national parks and reserve campsites.

Marketing plans will be developed that identify the audience for each e-gov initiative and how best to reach each group, Johnson said.

The White House can also improve its use of the Internet to communicate with citizens, Johnson said. For example, he said the Web site www.results.gov "was a pretty lame effort."

The site initially gave President Bush a way to communicate with his management team and morphed into a site about the President's Management Agenda. Planned improvements to results.gov include a blog written by Johnson, he said.

"I'm a little nervous about this blogging thing," Johnson said, "but I'll do it as soon as they get me blogged up."

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