iDirect Government Professional Services Engineers Play a Role in Government Program Success

With their wide range of skill sets, Professional Services Engineers (PSEs) are an important part of the government information technology support structure. They often are embedded at a location in much the same way as a full-time government employee, with their specialized skillset, available to the customer on a daily basis.

iDirect Government, a wholly owned subsidiary of VT iDirect, Inc. and a leading provider of satellite communications to the military and government, supplies PSEs to a host of clients, including the special operations community. In this capacity, iDirect Government engineers provide targeted support.

The engineers are responsible, in part, for training government network and systems engineers, providing expert level recommendations for hardware systems improvements, designing and planning networks and enhancement strategies, and responding to network outages around the clock with immediate and targeted mitigation efforts.

Also referred to as professional subject matter experts, the engineers serve as customer support personnel – or, in some cases, they are the satellite communications network support office when government personnel is deployed or unavailable. They participate in meetings, travel to other government sites when needed in support of the customer, and forge partnerships with the customer. It is a relationship with many benefits, including more streamlined processes and procedures related to network planning, implementation and troubleshooting. The experts also transition smaller networks to optimize satellite bandwidth on current network bandwidth.

Perhaps the biggest value added benefit for customers is the on-site technical support. The experts have helped train government technicians to maintain and improve their networks.

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This training has become a constant exercise given the sheer turnover rate when soldiers and contractors rotate from one office to the next and customer requirements change. iDirect Government's goal is to mentor customer personnel and provide continuing education, while maintaining constant expert level guidance and performance enhancements.

Still, even with the specialized skillset, iDirect Government PSEs have run into their share of challenging engineering projects. The sheer volume of networks and users dispersed across a myriad of locations, for example, can create demanding circumstances.

iDirect Government PSEs define integrating a major new network service, into a customer's existing transport network, as requiring an extensive investigation into the system configuration. It also requires them to run a variety of different test scenarios. These tests ensure the new service will not adversely affect the customer's ability to continue to provide their existing services at the highest level of availability. Another challenging engineering project is implementing Quality of Service (QoS) policies on a government client's global networks. To do so PSEs utilize laboratory exercises and test scenarios to implement QoS on the iDirect Government system that best aligns with customers' priorities.

An iDirect Government PSE recently was tasked with helping a client begin the process of implementing Transmission Security (TRANSEC) on the government network. The engineer devised a plan to implement TRANSEC on a network, which included creating white papers, process and user guides for the operations technicians and remote users during the process.

Ensuring a smooth transition is all in a day's work. If there's one thing these engineers will tell you, it is this: With some of their greatest challenges, came some of their best rewards.

One of the greatest accomplishments for iDirect Government engineers occurred in 2013. Amid budget reductions and a climate of heavy scrutiny, a government customer commented: "I need you guys here. We have to keep you." This statement highlights how valuable iDirect Government PSEs are to government clients. One iDirect Government engineer said it was one of the best compliments he had ever received as a professional.

iDirect Government PSEs also provide a host of additional services, including:

- Isolating and correcting network faults using network management tools
- Managing service restoration activities and tracking trouble tickets
- Providing status reports
- Providing direct support for network operations
- Support and planning for hub installation and implementation
- Evaluating and proposing improvements in network management tools and work processes
- Assisting in the design of SATCOM systems and maintenance on network documentation
- Planning and execution of network software upgrades
- Providing support for new software releases
- Managing customer's hub assets
- Organizing efficient allocation of assets.
- Building new networks and coordinating satcom network engineering efforts with the teleports
- Keeping the hubs running clean and networks running efficiently
- Mitigating any potential issue that adversely affects satcom operations
- Offering ad-hoc training whenever possible to improve operator proficiency

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